# ASA MERCER INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

## SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

bassetti architects DESIGN FOR GOOD

*A Design Studio of HMC Architects*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY












Asa Mercer International Middle School is reimagined as a beacon of community, culture, and ecological restoration—a school that not only supports academic excellence, but actively connects students to place, identity, and one another.

Located on Seattle's Beacon Hill, the project responds to a diverse, multicultural community and a historically altered landscape. The design restores the site's ecological narrative through a regenerative landscape strategies. The project drew inspiration from the Lushootseed name for Beacon Hill qWátSéécH meaning "green and yellow spine." This concept informed the organization of both the site and building through the creation of a continuous "green-yellow spine"—a landscape system that restores native habitat, manages stormwater, and creates immersive outdoor learning environments. Serving as the organizing framework for the campus, the spine strengthens connections between building, landscape, and community while reinforcing the project's deep relationship to place.

At the heart of the school is a central circulation spine—a daylit, transparent connector that organizes the campus into smaller learning communities while fostering visibility, safety, and social interaction. As seen in the plan and massing studies, this spine acts as both infrastructure and social space, supporting informal learning, student gathering, and clear wayfinding .

Architecturally, the project expresses warmth, transparency, and structure through a rhythmic system of exposed timber framing. The entry sequence—highlighted by articulated structural "eddies" and a welcoming, scaled façade—signals openness and identity while reinforcing the school's role as a civic landmark . Interior learning environments extend into shared commons and flexible breakout spaces, supporting a range of teaching modalities and student needs.

Community engagement was central to the design process. Input from students, educators, and families shaped priorities around safety, inclusivity, cultural representation, and access to nature. The result is a school that balances secure, student-centered environments with welcoming, community-facing spaces, including outdoor gathering areas and shared facilities that extend use beyond the school day.

Ultimately, Asa Mercer International Middle School is designed as a living learning ecosystem—where architecture, landscape, and community are deeply intertwined. The project transforms a previously disconnected site into a vibrant, inclusive campus that supports academic success, social connection, and environmental stewardship for generations to come.

## SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

**Owner:** Seattle Public Schools

**Location:** Seattle, Washington

**Project Description:** Community-centered replacement middle school for 1,000 students, uniting flexible learning environments, integrated student supports, and a regenerative landscape, and a building that connects campus, culture, and community.

**Building Area:** 175,000 sf

**Sustainability:** Mass Timber / Cross Laminated Timber (CLT)

**Cost:** $111,874,610

**Completion:** Fall 2025

## LEARNERS FIRST

At Asa Mercer International Middle School, the design process began with a simple premise: learners come first. Through workshops, listening sessions, and ongoing dialogue, students, educators, families, and community members shaped a shared vision for a school that feels welcoming, inclusive, and deeply connected to its community.

Students consistently expressed the need for spaces that extend beyond the classroom—places to gather, decompress, collaborate, and feel a sense of belonging. Equally important was the desire for the school to feel like a "safe haven": an environment where students feel supported, visible, and connected throughout the day.

In response, the school is organized around a central spine that acts as the social and experiential heart of the campus. More than circulation, it is a place where learning, interaction, visibility, and community converge. Shared commons, informal gathering spaces, and transparency throughout the building support student wellbeing while encouraging collaboration and discovery.

The design also reinforces meaningful connections to the natural environment—another priority identified through engagement. Daylight, views to landscape, natural materials, and integrated outdoor learning spaces create an environment that supports both learning and wellness.

## BELONGING AND IDENTITY

The Mercer community reflects a rich diversity of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. The engagement process intentionally elevated these voices, ensuring that the design reflects and supports the full spectrum of its users.

Community members emphasized the importance of spaces that support educational equity, cultural expression, and multiple ways of learning. Flexible learning environments, shared commons, and informal gathering spaces create opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and different modes of engagement—moving beyond a one-size-fits-all model of education.

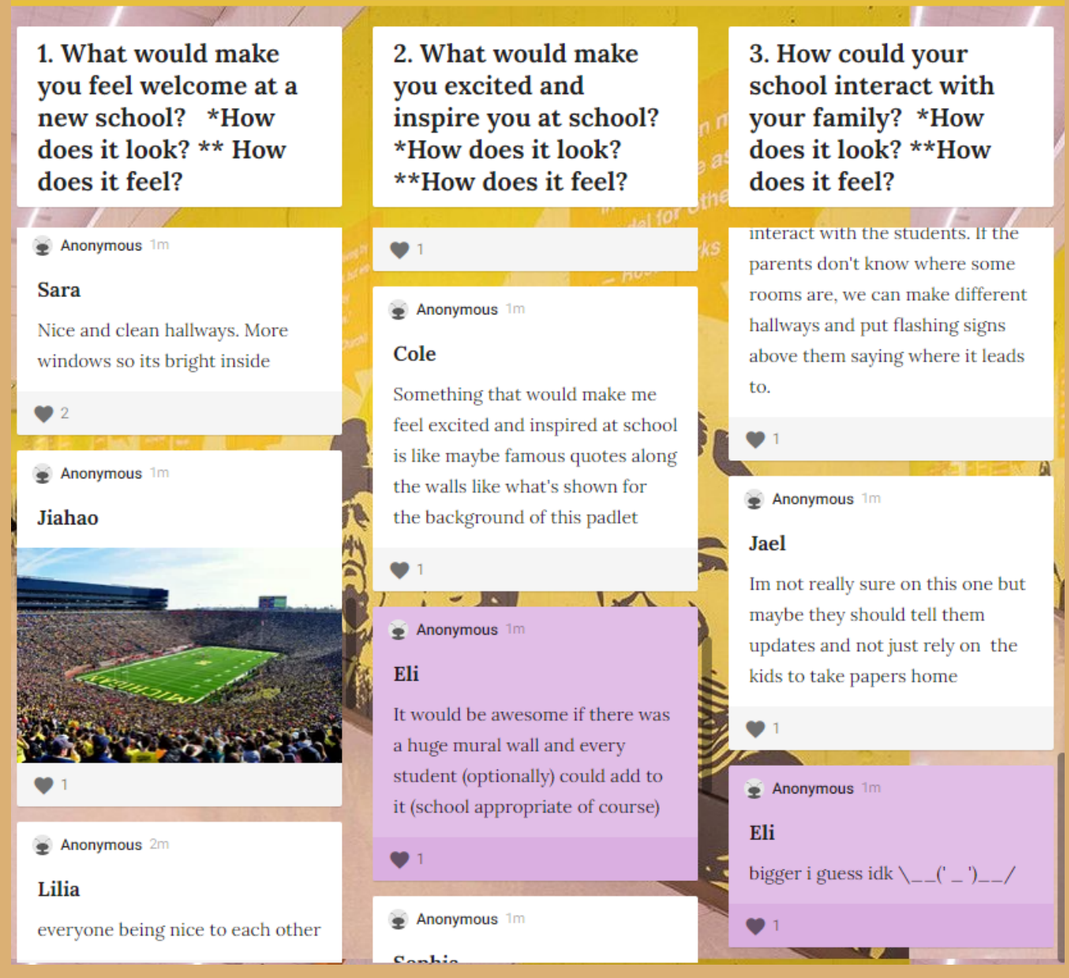
The resulting environment is designed to be adaptable, welcoming, and student-centered, allowing all learners to feel represented, valued, and connected within the life of the school.

## COLLABORATION, CONNECTION, AND RESPECT

The design process was deeply collaborative, bringing together students, educators, families, district leadership, and the design team through workshops, visioning exercises, and ongoing community engagement. This spirit of shared authorship is embedded throughout the architecture.

The central spine fosters visibility and passive supervision, allowing relationships between students and staff to remain present throughout the day. Spaces are intentionally designed to encourage interaction—supporting both structured learning and informal exchange while reinforcing a culture where ideas, perspectives, and people are respected and valued.

Interpretive elements integrated throughout the spine further connect students to the ecological and cultural history of Beacon Hill, transforming movement through the school into an ongoing experience of place, identity, and discovery.




## DESIGNING WITH STUDENTS, NOT FOR STUDENTS

*During the pandemic, the project team developed innovative online engagement strategies that allowed students to participate directly in the design process. By joining students during their morning classroom rotations, the team gathered feedback from the entire student body—ensuring student voice remained central to the vision for the new school.*

**PRE 1850**
INDIGENOUS LAND
DUWAMISH TRIBE
NATURAL RIDGE TOP
FOREST

**1866**
GEORGE RILEY - FIRST
AFRICAN AMERICAN
DEVELOPMENT/
SETTLEMENT HANFORD ST





**1883**
ANNEXED TO CITY OF
SEATTLE, GARDEN HOUSE
WAS ONE OF THE FIRST
LARGE HOMES







**1901**
INITIAL NORTH BEACON
HILL REGRADES START

**1910**
AFRICAN AMERICAN AND
JAPANESE SETTLEMENT. LESS
RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION
AND EXCLUSION LAWS



**1912**
12TH AVE S BRIDGE
CONSTRUCTED, BOOMED
DEVELOPMENT

**1915**
JEFFERSON PARK GOLF
COURSE OPENS, 1ST
PUBLIC COURSE WEST
OF MISSISSIPPI

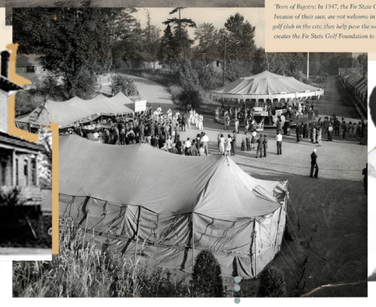






**1923**
JEFFERSON PARK
LADIES IMPROVEMENT
CLUB, FIRST WOMEN'S
ORGANIZATIONS IN
SEATTLE

**1941**
WW2, PEARL HARBOR.
JAPANESE INTERNMENT,
COMMUNITY LARGELY
DECREASED IN SIZE



**1941-1942**
JEFFERSON PARK USED
BY ARMY FOR ANTI-
AIRCRAFT AND ARMY
RECREATION

**1947**
FIRST STATE GOLF CLUB
FORMED– AFRICAN
AMERICAN GOLF CLUB



"Born of Bigotry In 1947, the Fir State Golf Club is founded by a socially diverse group of 15 men and women because of their race, are not welcome in the existing golf clubs in Seattle at the time. As the first African American golf club on the city they help pose the way for more minority acceptance on golf courses of the season. The club later creates the Fir State Golf Foundation to promote youth participation in golf and in the communities." Fir State Golf Clubs





**1967**
I-5 CONSTRUCTED,
REINFORCED ISOLATION
OF BEACON HILL

**1972**
FOUNDING EL CENTRO
DE LA RAZA, CENTER
FOR PEOPLE OF ALL
RACES

## ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

At Asa Mercer International Middle School, the design process began with understanding the people, histories, and cultures that shape Beacon Hill. More than a backdrop for learning, the neighborhood itself became a foundation for the school's identity—informing how students connect to place, community, and one another.

Beacon Hill's history reflects resilience, migration, identity, and change. Once forested and defined by water, the land was transformed through development and infrastructure over generations. At the same time, the neighborhood became home to diverse communities—including African American, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino families—whose histories reflect both cultural richness and periods of exclusion and displacement.

Through engagement, students, families, and community members expressed a desire for the new school to honor this layered history—not as a static narrative, but as a living part of everyday experience and student belonging.

The design responds by reconnecting both ecology and community to daily experience. Native landscape restoration reintroduces habitat, stormwater systems, and ecological diversity to the site, while the organization of the school fosters visibility, connection, and inclusivity. Spaces are designed to be open, flexible, and reflective of a diverse student body—supporting cultural expression and shared experience. In this way, the school becomes more than a place to learn—it becomes a place to understand where you are, who came before you, and how you are connected to a broader community.

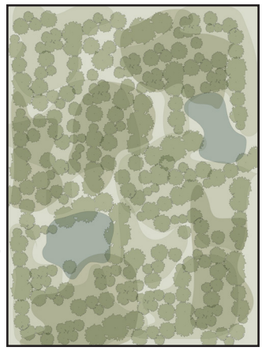
Here, place is both context and curriculum—a living framework that supports learning, identity, and belonging.

## INNOVATION THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Innovation in this project is rooted in the intersection of learning, place, and community. Rather than imposing a singular vision, the design evolves directly from stakeholder input—resulting in a school that is both responsive and forward-looking.

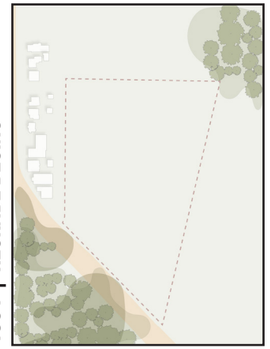
By aligning spatial organization, ecological systems, and community values, Asa Mercer International Middle School becomes more than a building. It is a dynamic environment that supports academic success, socialization, and a deep sense of belonging—shaped by the voices of those it serves.

PRE 1850 | UNDEVELOPED LAND





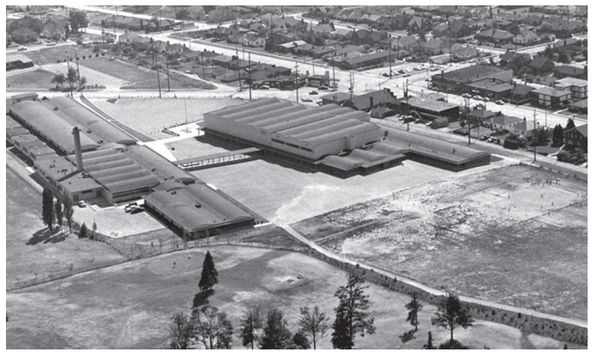
1901 | REGRADE BEGINS





1958 | MERCER CONSTRUCTED







## RESTORING THE FLORA AND FAUNA OF BEACON HILL

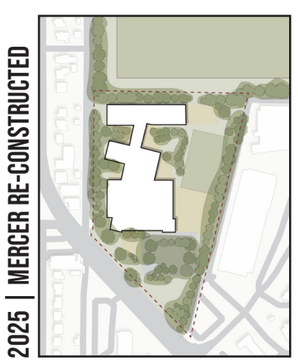
At Mercer Middle School, the physical environment is shaped by both the history of the site and the future of learning.

The site was once a densely forested landscape shaped by water and native ecology. Over time, much of that environment was cleared to accommodate a sprawling campus spread across the site, limiting outdoor cohesion and disconnecting students from the natural systems that once defined Beacon Hill.

The new design takes an opposite approach. By consolidating the building footprint into a more compact and connected form, the project creates space for the regeneration of the site's landscape and restores meaningful connections to nature. Native planting, restored topography, and integrated outdoor environments reintroduce ecological systems while creating healthier and more immersive learning experiences for students.

This transformation reframes the campus not as an object placed within the landscape, but as part of a larger living environment.

2025 | MERCER RE-CONSTRUCTED



## A CONNECTED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A central spine organizes the campus—linking learning communities, shared spaces, and outdoor environments into a cohesive whole. More than circulation, this spine serves as the social heart of the school, where movement, interaction, and informal learning intersect.

The building organization creates two complementary conditions: a welcoming community face that engages the neighborhood, and a protected student heart centered around nature, transparency, and belonging.

Daylight, visual connection, and intuitive wayfinding reinforce openness and safety, allowing students to remain connected to both people and place throughout the day.

### SITE KEY

1. ACADEMIC NEIGHBORHOOD
2. OUTDOOR LEARNING COMMONS
3. EXTERIOR COOL DOWN ZONE
4. ART
5. ART PLAZA
6. COMMUNITY PATIO
7. COMMUNITY ROOM
8. PRIMARY ENTRY PLAZA
9. FITNESS ROOM
10. COMMONS
11. EXTERIOR COMMONS
12. RESTORATIVE COURTYARD
13. OUTDOOR LEARNING COMMONS
14. ACADEMIC NEIGHBORHOOD
15. PROTECTIVE BERM
16. PARK ENTRY PLAZA













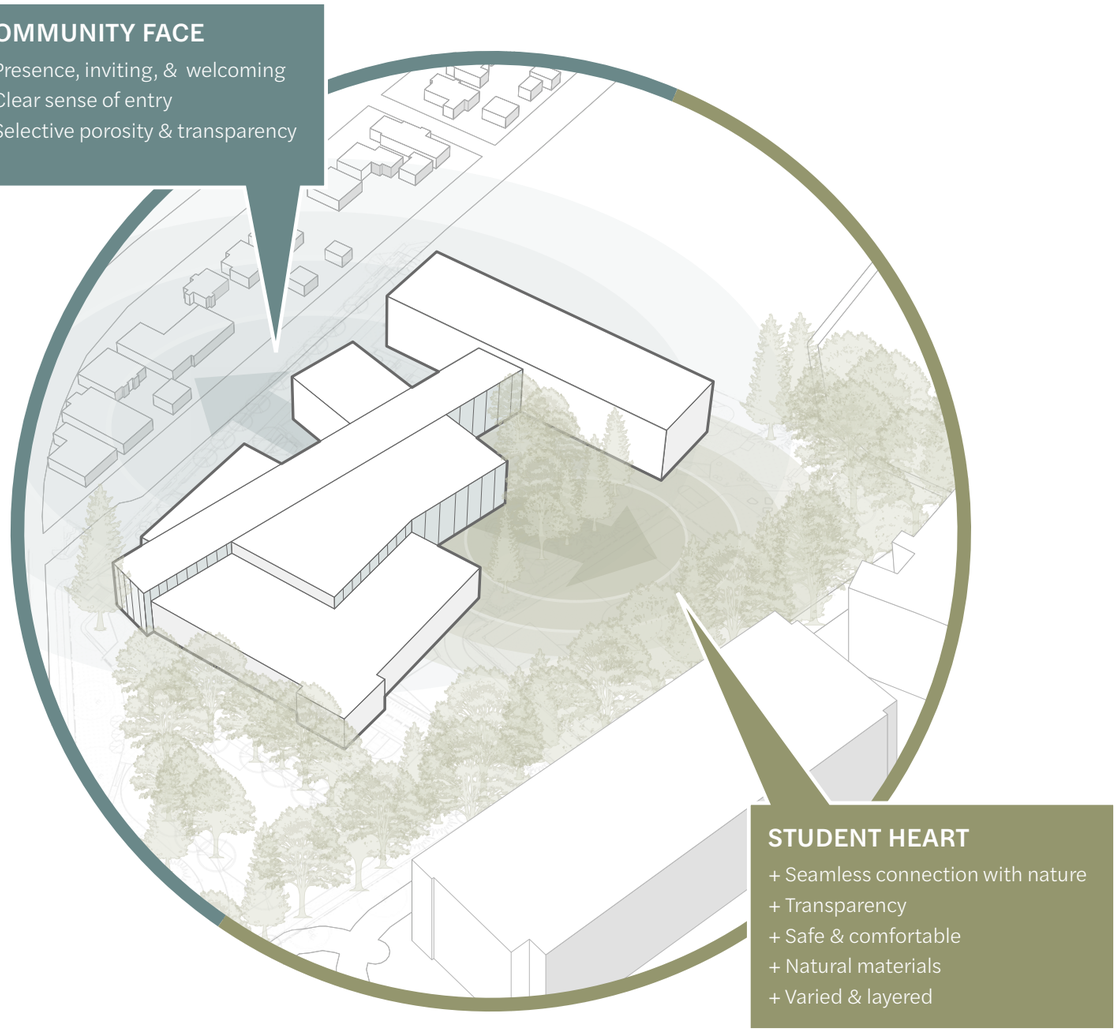


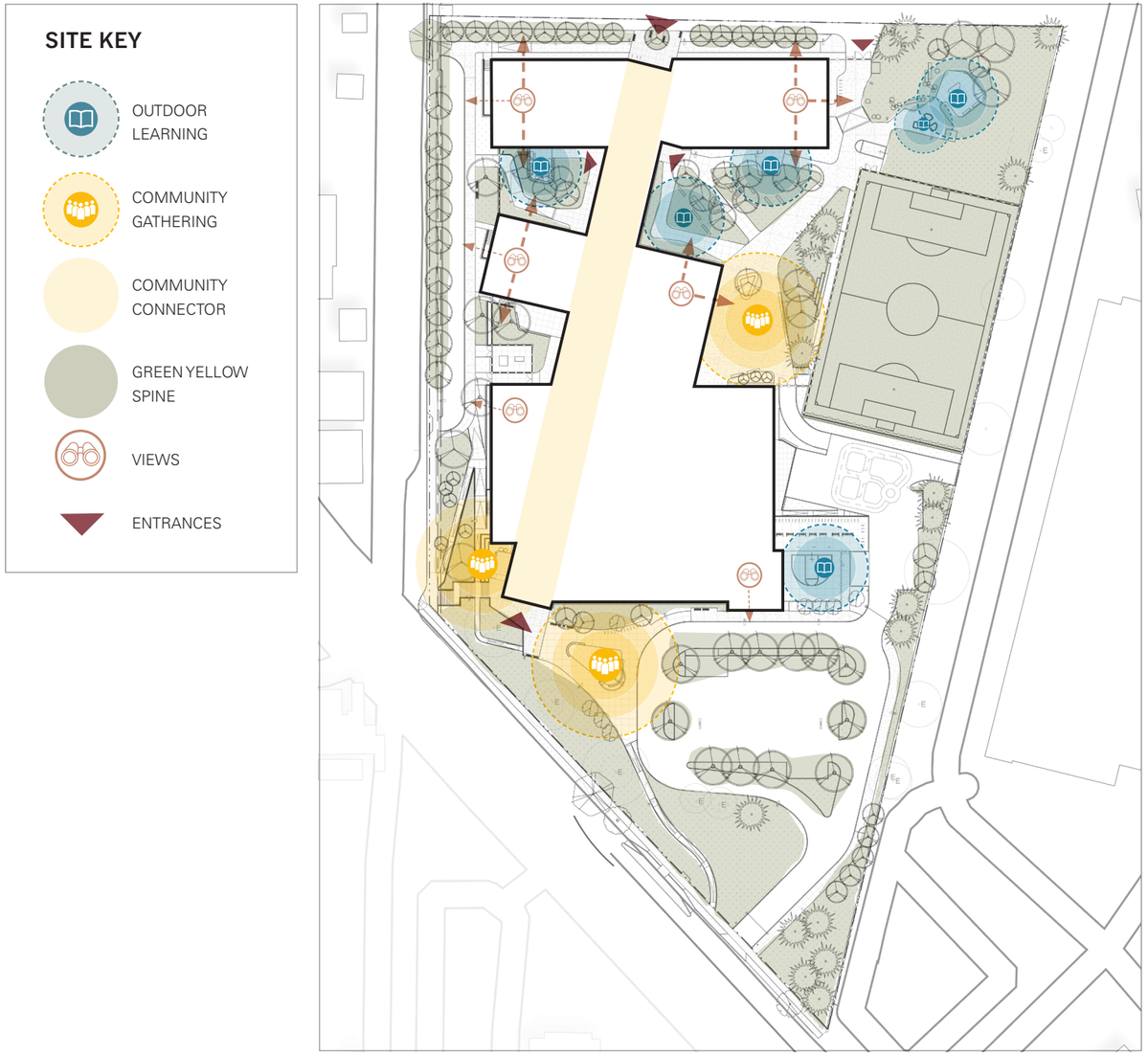
## COMMUNITY FACE, STUDENT HEART

The organization of Asa Mercer International Middle School is shaped by a balance between openness and refuge. Positioned at the edge of the Beacon Hill neighborhood, the school presents a welcoming civic presence to the community while creating a protected, nature-centered environment for students within.

Community-facing spaces—including the main entry, commons, and outdoor gathering areas—activate the public edge of the campus and support use beyond the school day. Transparent shared spaces and clear circulation strengthen visibility, connection, and a sense of welcome from the moment students and families arrive. At the center of the campus, the building opens toward a quieter student heart organized around landscape, outdoor learning, and connection to nature. Native planting, restored habitat, and integrated outdoor environments create opportunities for gathering, reflection, and learning beyond the classroom.

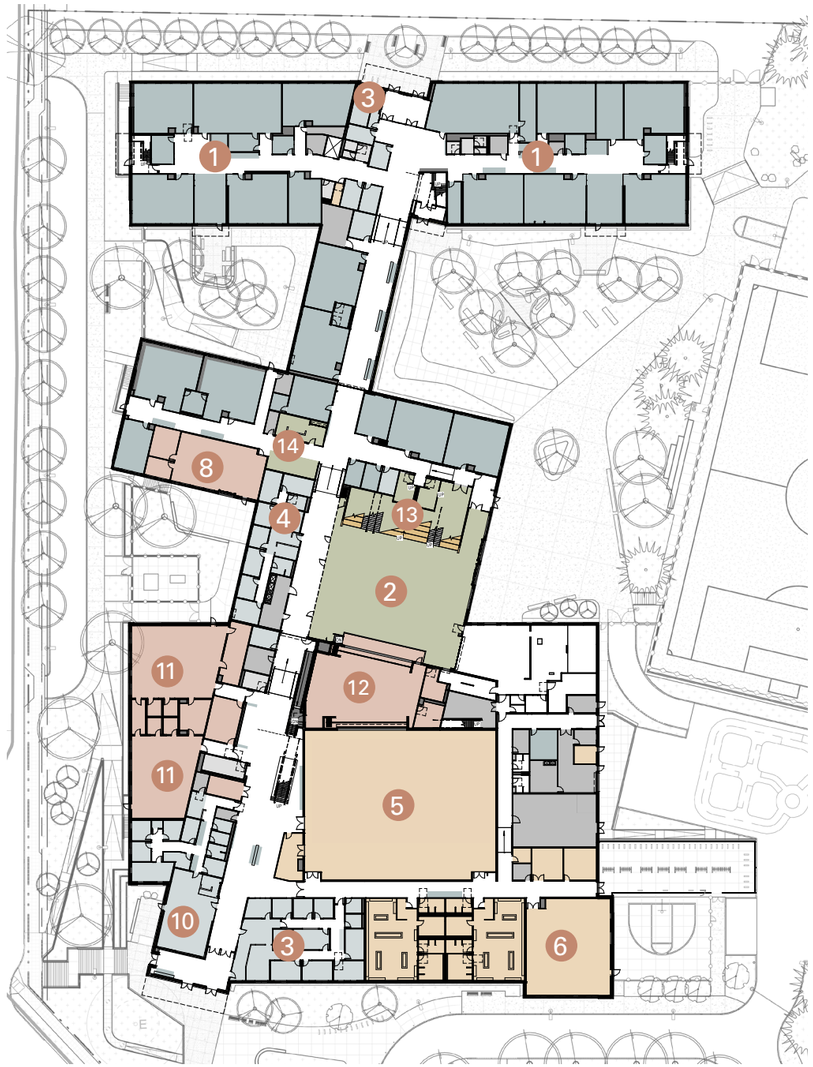
Together, architecture and landscape work as a unified system—supporting community connection, student wellbeing, and a learning environment deeply rooted in place.



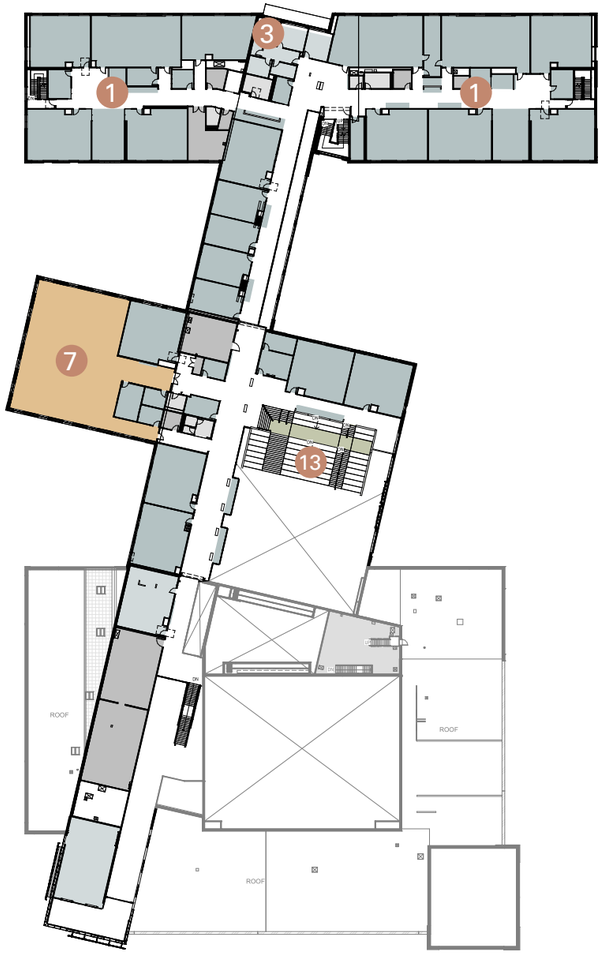





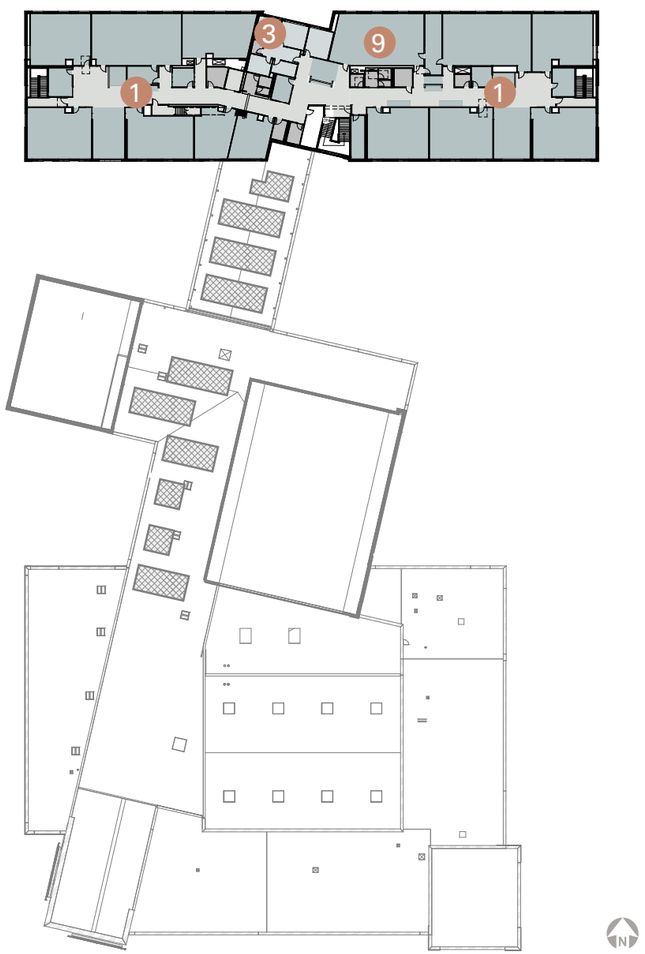



FIRST FLOOR




SECOND FLOOR




THIRD FLOOR

## LEARNING AT MULTIPLE SCALES

The school is designed to support a broad range of learning experiences—from focused individual work to large group collaboration. Classrooms are paired with shared commons and breakout spaces, allowing learning to extend beyond the classroom and adapt to evolving educational needs. These flexible environments support project-based learning, small group interaction, and informal gathering, empowering students with greater choice and ownership over how they learn.

## SITE KEY

1. ACADEMIC NEIGHBORHOOD
2. COMMONS
3. ADMINISTRATION
4. HEALTH CLINIC
5. GYMNASIUM
6. FITNESS CENTER
7. LIBRARY
8. ART
9. CTE CLASSROOM
10. FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
11. MUSIC
12. STAGE
13. LEARNING STAIR
14. COMMUNITY KITCHEN

## LEGEND

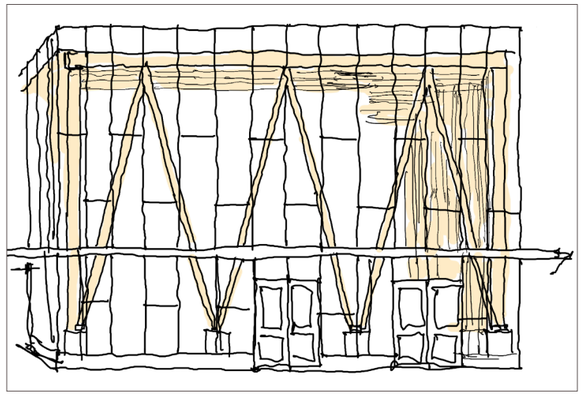
- CLASSROOM
- ADMINISTRATION
- STUDENT RESOURCE
- PHYSICAL EDUCATION
- PERFORMING ARTS
- STUDENT COMMONS
- SERVICE

## THE RHYTHM OF CONNECTION

A defining feature of the school is the glulam-framed central spine—a continuous social and learning environment that connects the campus both physically and experientially.

Rather than concealing the structure, the design expresses it as part of the daily life of the school. Repeating glulam frames create rhythm, scale, and movement along the spine, transforming circulation into an active place for gathering, interaction, and informal learning.

The angled timber supports establish a sense of openness and transparency while reinforcing the connection between interior spaces and the surrounding landscape. Daylight filters through the structure, creating warmth and visual continuity throughout the building.



*The glulam-framed spine transforms movement through the school into a daylit social experience—supporting visibility, connection, and informal learning throughout the day.*

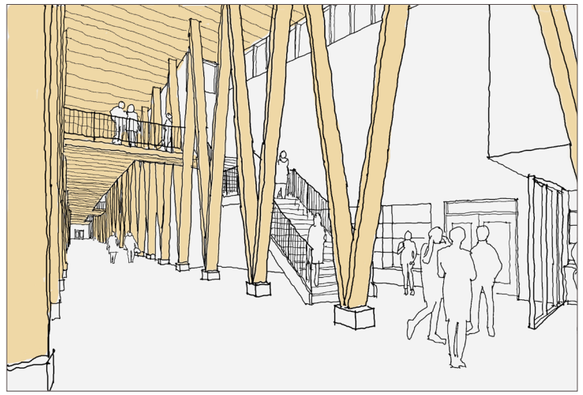
## A SPINE FRAMED BY LEARNING

The spine is intentionally varied and layered—expanding at commons and collaboration zones, compressing at moments of transition, and creating opportunities for students to pause, gather, and connect. Integrated seating, views to nature, and visual connections across floors encourage the space to function as both pathway and community hub.

Informed by principles of trauma-informed design, the environment supports safety, visibility, predictability, and student comfort throughout the school day. Clear sightlines, access to daylight, and a variety of gathering spaces allow students to move through the building with a sense of choice, connection, and belonging.

The exposed timber structure also reinforces the school's identity and relationship to place. Warm natural materials create a calming and human-scaled environment that supports wellbeing, belonging, and comfort throughout the day.

In this way, the structural system becomes more than support—it becomes an architectural framework for connection, visibility, and learning.

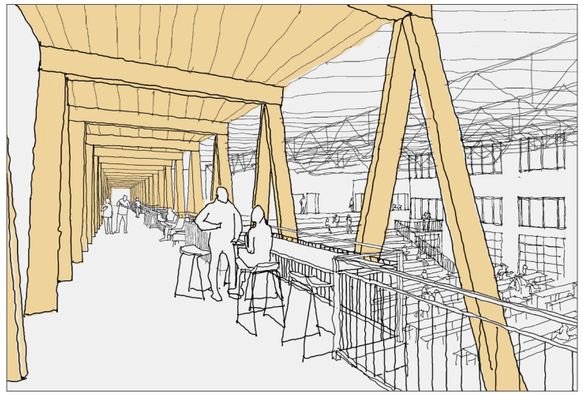


*Exposed glulam and CLT structure shape the central spine as both circulation and community space—creating warmth, rhythm, and opportunities for gathering throughout the school day. Integrated art created from salvaged seat backs of the original school reinforces continuity between past and present while celebrating the history of the Mercer community.*

## LEARNING IN VIEW

The central spine expands at key moments to create layered spaces for gathering, reflection, and informal learning. Overlooking the commons below, students remain visually connected to the larger school community while occupying smaller, human-scaled environments that support comfort, choice, and collaboration.

Exposed glulam and CLT structure establish rhythm and continuity throughout the space, reinforcing transparency, visibility, and connection across the campus.



*Overlooking the commons, the glulam-framed spine creates opportunities for connection at multiple scales—supporting collaboration, informal gathering, and visual connection throughout the school day.*

Transparency along the central spine reveals the life of the school to the community, expressing learning and belonging through structure and light.

Layered gathering spaces along the spine support collaboration, student agency, and community—allowing learning and social interaction to extend beyond the classroom.

## CONNECTION TO NATURE

Nature is woven throughout the daily experience of the school.

A continuous landscape strategy integrates outdoor learning spaces, courtyards, and restorative green areas into the campus environment. Views to trees, planted areas, and natural light are embedded throughout the building, reinforcing a constant relationship between learning and the outdoors.

These connections support student wellbeing while encouraging environmental awareness and stewardship.

## TRANSPARENCY, SAFETY, AND BELONGING

The physical environment prioritizes visibility, intuitive navigation, and student comfort.

The central spine provides clear wayfinding and supports passive supervision, creating a school environment that feels both open and secure. Transparency between spaces foster a sense of accountability and community while ensuring students remain visually connected to peers, educators, and shared activity throughout the day.

This openness contributes to a strong sense of belonging and collective identity.

## MATERIAL EXPRESSION AND IDENTITY

Materiality plays a central role in defining the character of the school.

A system of exposed timber structure creates warmth, rhythm, and visual continuity throughout the campus. The structural system is both expressive and functional—supporting large, flexible spaces while reinforcing a connection to the natural environment.

The repetition of timber elements along the central spine establishes a strong architectural identity while creating spaces that feel welcoming, human-scaled, and enduring.

*The glulam-framed entry vestibule serves as a visible beacon to the Beacon Hill community—projecting warmth, transparency, and activity to the neighborhood beyond. Daylight, exposed timber structure, and clear visual connections create a welcoming threshold that reinforces safety, belonging, and connection from the moment students and visitors arrive.*

## A CIVIC PRESENCE

The school is designed as a welcoming and visible presence within the community.

Clearly defined entries, gathering spaces, and community-facing amenities establish the campus as a neighborhood resource beyond the school day. Public spaces are positioned to support events, shared use, and connection, reinforcing the school's role as a civic anchor within Beacon Hill.

## INTEGRATED SYSTEMS, LASTING IMPACT

Architecture, landscape, and structure work together as a unified system that supports learning, wellbeing, and resilience.

By combining a compact building footprint with regenerative landscape strategies, flexible learning environments, and durable material systems, the project creates a campus that is adaptable, sustainable, and deeply connected to its context.

The result is a learning environment that restores ecological relationships, strengthens community engagement, and supports students for generations to come.



*Located at the main entry, the community room serves as a welcoming gathering space that supports collaboration, visibility, and shared use beyond the school day. Expansive daylight, views to the surrounding landscape, and exposed glulam and CLT structure create a warm, transparent environment that strengthens the school's connection to the Beacon Hill community.*

## LEARNING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

At Mercer, learning is not confined to the classroom—it is distributed throughout the entire campus.

The organization of the school around a central spine allows learning to extend into shared commons, breakout spaces, and informal gathering areas. Students move fluidly between environments, supporting a variety of learning modes including collaboration, independent study, and project-based work. This approach reflects a shift from isolated classrooms to a connected learning ecosystem.

## STUDENT AGENCY AND CHOICE

The educational environment is designed to empower students with choice and ownership over their learning.

A range of space types—quiet areas, small group zones, and larger collaborative settings—allow students to select environments that best support their needs. This flexibility supports different learning styles and promotes independence, engagement, and self-directed learning.

By providing options, the school encourages students to take an active role in shaping their educational experience.

## SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS

The design recognizes that students learn in different ways and require different types of support.

Specialized spaces for student services, counseling, and small group instruction are integrated throughout the school, rather than isolated. This ensures that support is accessible, visible, and normalized as part of the daily experience.

Inclusive design strategies create an environment where all students—regardless of ability or background—can succeed.







Daylight, warmth, flexibility, and views to the surrounding landscape shape the library as a shared learning commons—supporting collaboration, independent study, and student connection throughout the day.









## COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

Learning is designed to foster collaboration at every level. Shared learning commons serve as hubs for interdisciplinary work, peer interaction, and teacher collaboration. Visual connections between spaces allow learning to remain visible and connected throughout the school day, supporting both structured instruction and informal exchange. Integrated gathering spaces along the spine encourage students to work, socialize, and learn beyond the classroom—strengthening relationships between students, educators, and community.

## CONNECTION TO PLACE AS CURRICULUM

The integration of landscape, history, and culture expands the definition of the classroom.Outdoor learning spaces provide opportunities for hands-on, experiential education connected to ecology, seasonal systems, and environmental stewardship. Throughout the spine, interpretive displays tell the story of Beacon Hill’s layered history, connecting students to the people, cultures, and ecological systems that shaped the community. This connection deepens student understanding by linking curriculum to lived experience and place.

## WELLBEING AND BELONGING

A strong sense of belonging is essential to student success. Daylight, views to nature, exposed timber structure, and visual connectivity contribute to a supportive and uplifting environment. Spaces for gathering, reflection, and social interaction are intentionally distributed throughout the school, allowing students to choose environments that support comfort, focus, and connection. Warm natural materials and human-scaled spaces create an environment that supports both academic achievement and social-emotional wellbeing.

## DESIGN FOR RESILIENCE

Educational environments must evolve alongside the needs of students and educators. Flexible learning spaces, adaptable furniture, and integrated collaboration areas support a variety of teaching practices and learning styles. Shared environments along the spine allow spaces to shift between instruction, informal learning, presentation, and community use throughout the day.This adaptability ensures the building remains resilient, effective, and student-centered over time.



*Salvaged seat backs from the original Asa Mercer International Middle School were transformed into a large-scale art installation along the central stair—preserving a physical connection to the school's history while creating moments of memory, familiarity, and identity within the new campus.*












*Custom experiential graphics reinforce school culture, student identity, and connection to place throughout the campus. Interpretive displays developed in coordination with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) share the layered ecological and cultural history of Beacon Hill, allowing the building itself to become part of the educational experience.*

## A SCHOOL THAT REFLECTS ITS COMMUNITY

At Asa Mercer International Middle School, the outcomes of the design process are visible in how the school is used, experienced, and embraced by its community. What began as a commitment to listening—centering students, educators, families, and community voices—resulted in a school deeply rooted in the identity of Beacon Hill. The campus reflects the neighborhood's cultural diversity while creating spaces where students feel represented, supported, and connected to one another. Interpretive displays integrated throughout the spine connect students to the layered ecological and cultural history of the site, reinforcing the idea that learning extends beyond the classroom and into the community itself.

## BELONGING, SAFETY, AND CONNECTION

One of the clearest outcomes is a strengthened sense of comfort, visibility, and connection throughout the school environment. The central spine—conceived as the social and experiential heart of the school—has become an active space for gathering, interaction, and informal learning throughout the day. Students move through the building with clarity and confidence, supported by intuitive organization, visual connectivity, and access to daylight and views to nature. Informed by principles of trauma-informed design, the environment balances openness with refuge. Transparent shared spaces, human-scaled environments, and warm exposed timber structure contribute to a school culture that feels welcoming, calm, and supportive. Students are not isolated within classrooms—they are part of a visible and connected learning community.

## LEARNING IN ACTION

The flexibility of the learning environment supports a wide range of teaching and learning practices. Classrooms extend into commons, breakout spaces, and outdoor environments that encourage collaboration, small group work, independent study, and informal interaction. Students are provided with greater choice and agency in how and where they learn, while educators are able to adapt spaces to evolving instructional needs. The result is an environment that supports not only academic achievement, but curiosity, participation, and meaningful engagement with both community and place.

The commons and learning stair connect students to one another and to the outdoors—creating a flexible, daylit gathering space that supports collaboration, community, and informal learning throughout the day.









*Exposed glulam and CLT structure, integrated seating, and expansive daylight create warm, human-scaled environments that support reflection, connection, and informal learning throughout the school day. Along the spine, students are provided with spaces to gather, pause, study, and engage with one another—reinforcing the school's commitment to wellbeing, visibility, and belonging.*

## CONNECTION TO NATURE AND WELLBEING

Daily access to landscape, daylight, and outdoor learning environments shapes the student experience at Mercer International Middle School. Views to restored habitat and integrated outdoor spaces create moments of calm, reflection, and connection throughout the day. Rather than separating students from ecological systems, the campus immerses learning within them—encouraging awareness of seasonality, water, planting, and environmental change. Inside the building, exposed glulam and CLT structure introduce warmth, tactility, and a strong sense of material authenticity. Daylight filtering across timber-framed spaces creates environments that feel welcoming, human-scaled, and supportive of student comfort and focus. Students experience the campus not simply as a building, but as part of a larger living environment.

## A COMMUNITY ASSET

The school extends beyond its role as an educational facility to serve as a resource for the broader community. Community-facing spaces and outdoor gathering areas support events, shared use, and neighborhood connection beyond the school day. The design reinforces the school's role as a civic anchor within Beacon Hill while fostering a sense of ownership and pride among students, families, and community members.

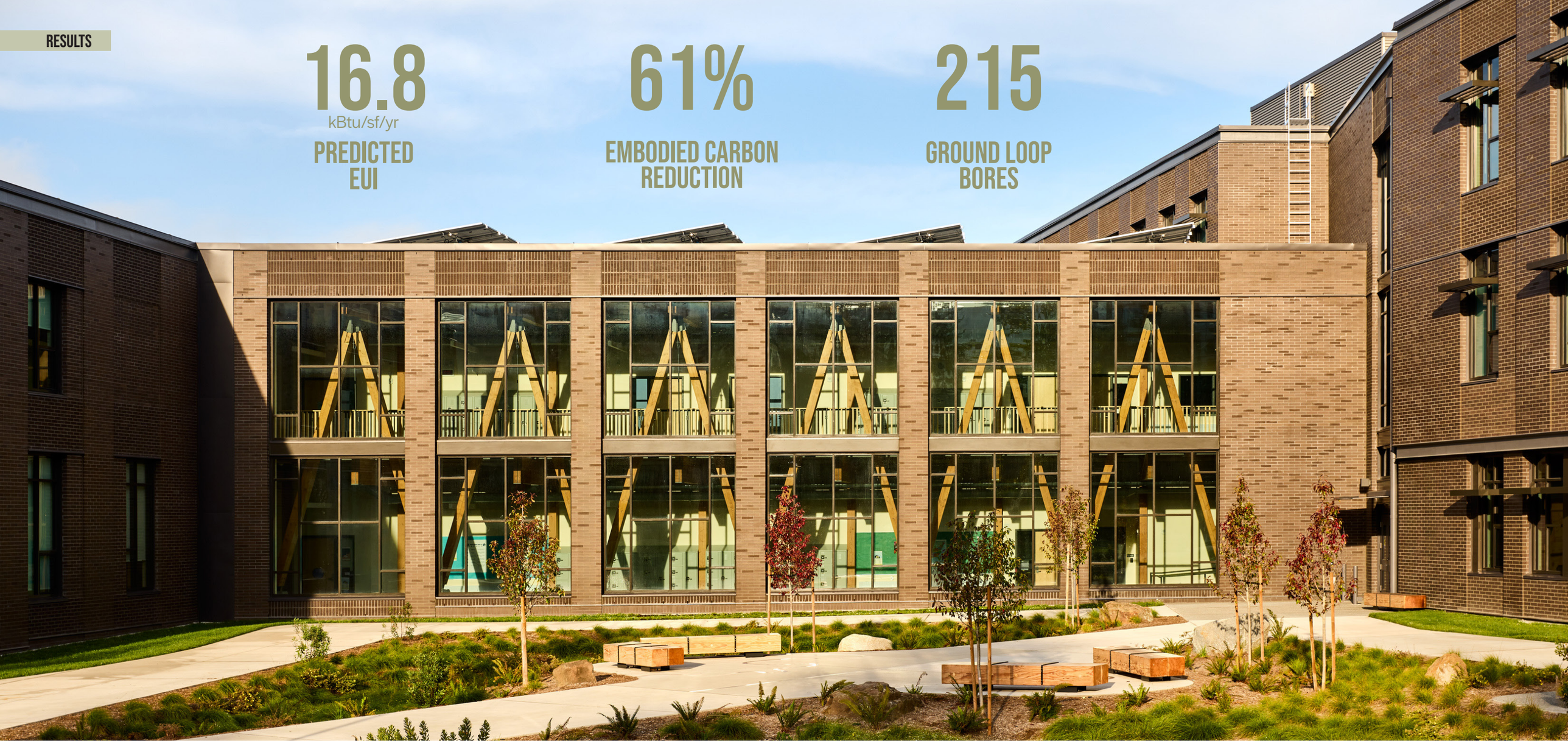
## A LASTING FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING

The project establishes a flexible and resilient framework capable of evolving alongside future educational needs. Adaptable learning environments, integrated commons, and shared collaboration spaces support a range of instructional models while allowing the school to respond to changing pedagogies over time. By aligning design with student needs, community identity, and environmental stewardship, Mercer International Middle School creates a durable and inclusive environment prepared to support future generations of learners.

**16.8**
kBtu/sf/yr
**PREDICTED EUI**

**61%**
**EMBODIED CARBON REDUCTION**

**215**
**GROUND LOOP BORES**



## LEARNING WITHIN A LIVING SYSTEM

Sustainability goals were embedded into the project from the earliest stages of design, resulting in a high-performance learning environment that supports both environmental stewardship and student wellbeing.

At Asa Mercer International Middle School, strategies focused on reducing operational and embodied carbon while strengthening connections between students and the natural environment. The project is designed as an all-electric, net zero ready campus with a predicted Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of 16.8 kBtu/sf/yr—significantly outperforming conventional school baselines. On-site photovoltaics further support long-term energy reduction and operational resilience, while a geothermal system consisting of 215 geothermal bores extending approximately 350 feet below the campus provides efficient heating and cooling with reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

Material choices were equally intentional. The exposed mass timber structural system contributed to a substantial reduction in embodied carbon, achieving approximately 20.8 $kgCO_2e/sf$ compared to a conventional baseline of 53.6 $kgCO_2e/sf$. In addition to reducing environmental impact, the use of timber introduces warmth, texture, and biophilic qualities that enhance the daily experience of students and staff.

Daylight and wellness were prioritized throughout the campus. Seventy-six percent of classroom spaces and sixty percent of all regularly occupied areas receive ample daylight, reinforcing student comfort, visibility, and connection to natural rhythms. Outdoor learning environments, ecological restoration strategies, low-VOC finishes and healthy materials, and opportunities for occupant engagement further support the health and wellbeing of the school community.

The project's sustainability approach extends beyond building performance metrics. By integrating landscape restoration, outdoor learning, water conservation, and environmental storytelling into the daily life of the school, Asa Mercer International Middle School encourages students to see sustainability not only as infrastructure, but as part of their lived educational experience.