

## **ANACOSTIA HIGH SCHOOL**

Washington, DC

Project Category: Institutional Architecture

**“Last year I missed a few days of school, but the way this new school makes me feel, I don’t think I’ll be missing any days this year.”  
- Anacostia High School Student**

Originally constructed in 1937 with subsequent additions in the 1950s and 1970s, Anacostia High School was in a state of severe disrepair, with broken down building systems and classrooms burned out or flooded. The facility was the focus of the community’s wrath and, at one point, seemed destined to be torn down. However, the architect envisioned a preservation approach to save this significant symbolic structure.

After establishing that the period of significance would include both the original building and the 1950s addition, spaces were slated for restoration, renovation, or rebuilding, with the poorly configured 1970s addition razed to right-size the school for its smaller student population. The architecture would support the academic mission, as well as efforts to curb truancy, a lack of discipline, and student pregnancy by giving the students a place to thrive.

The 200,000 SF modernization of this 1,200-student facility includes new classrooms, laboratories, cafeteria space, a gymnasium, auditorium, a media center, as well as new building systems. The architect’s approach encompassed highlighting the historic 1930s structure in architectural expression, while also reintroducing clarity to the building’s floor plan. Characteristics of this structure include fine architectural detail work, high ceilings, large windows, as well as terrazzo and wood flooring—all of which had been covered over or severely damaged.

Interior restoration efforts focused on significant historic spaces, such as the auditorium and gymnasium. The architect’s plan to reestablish each façade of the building entailed fully restoring the original structure and eliminating the exterior of visual impediments, which included years of patchwork and exposed utility work. Redesign of exterior entry points provided better security for the school and to control circulation to the project’s many shared facilities. In addition, this significant effort brought the facility up to current building code and accessibility standards.

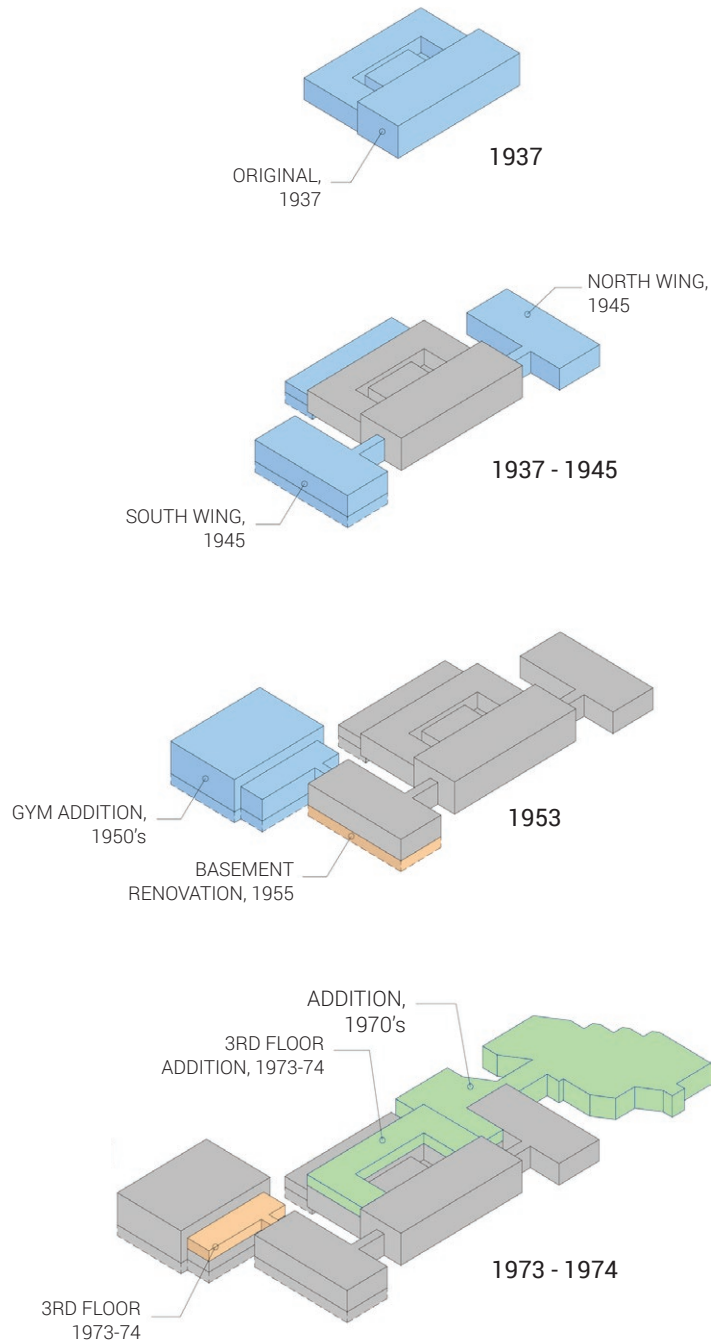
Intertwined from the outset in the concept design process, innovative green building strategies for existing and historic structures resulted in a LEED Gold certified Anacostia High School.



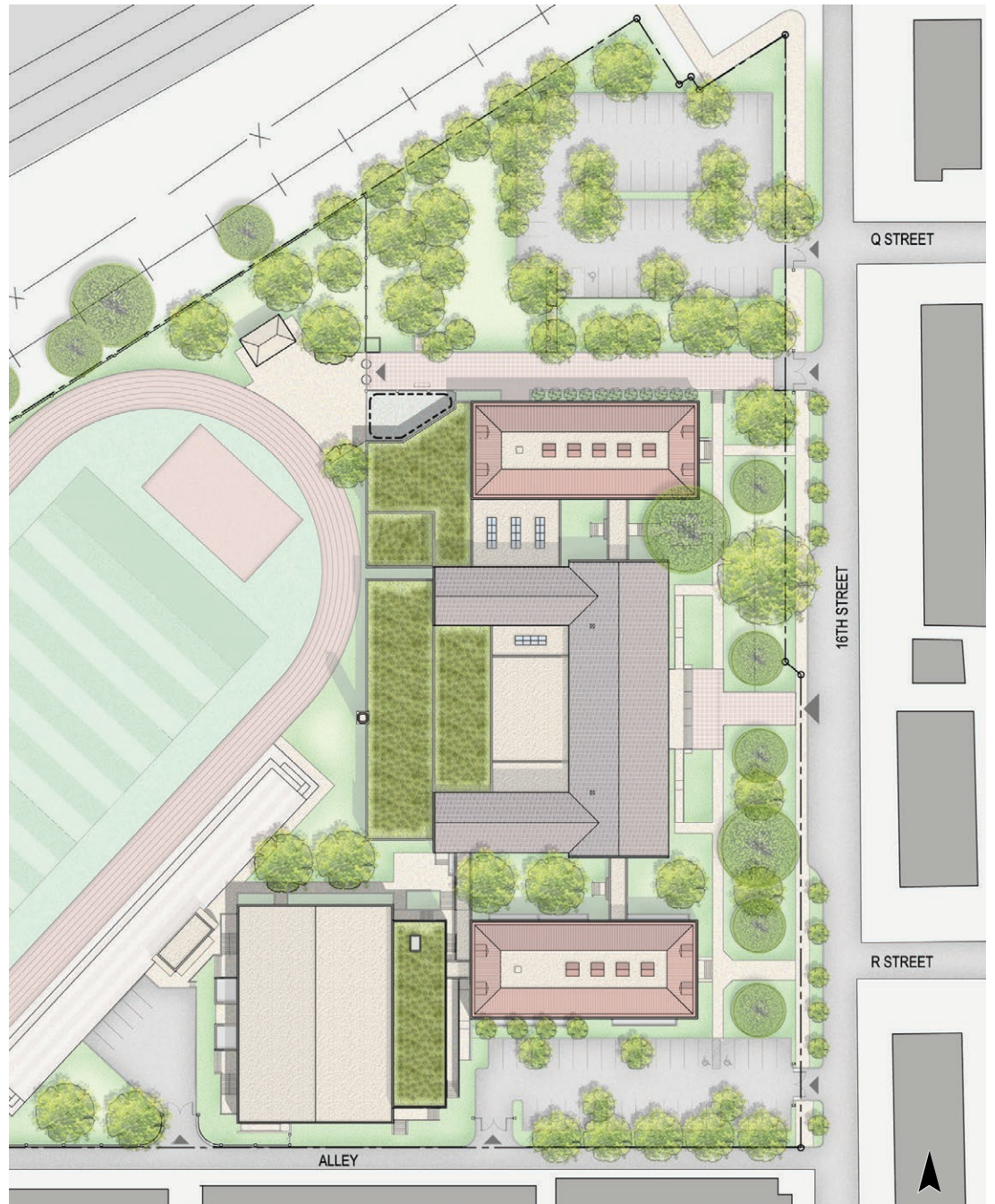


Exterior

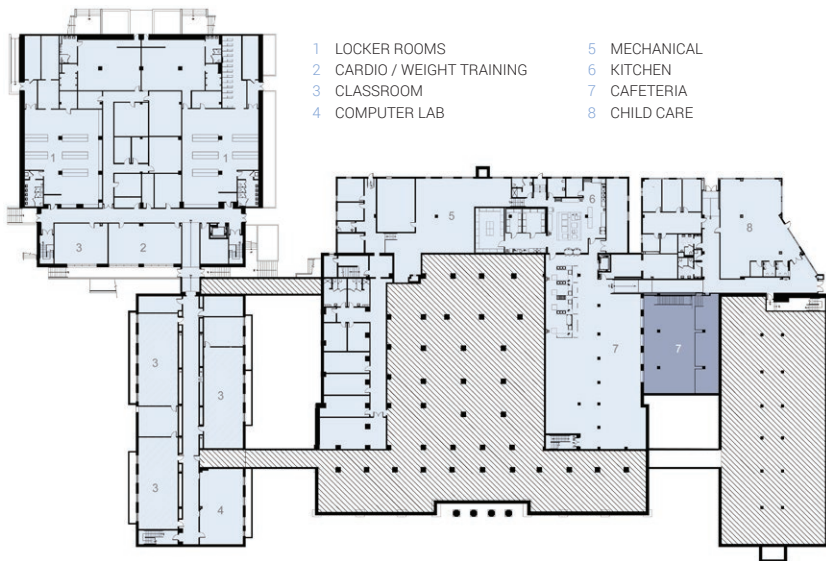




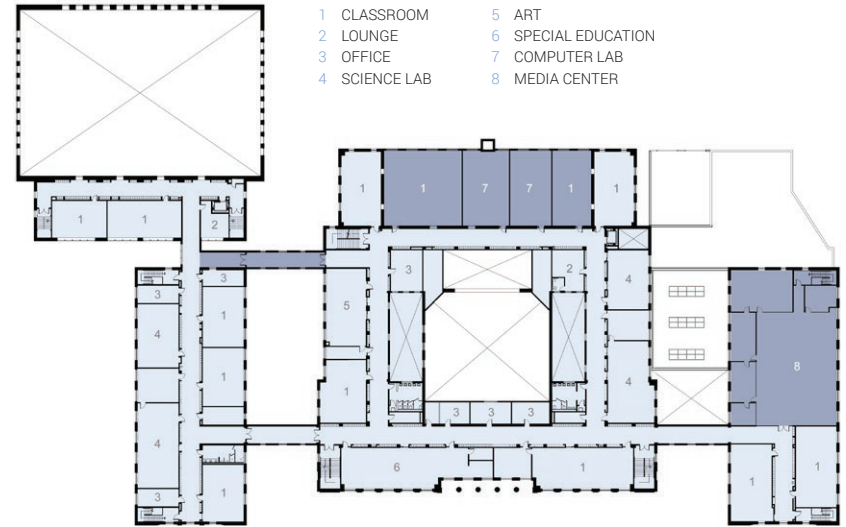
Existing Building Development



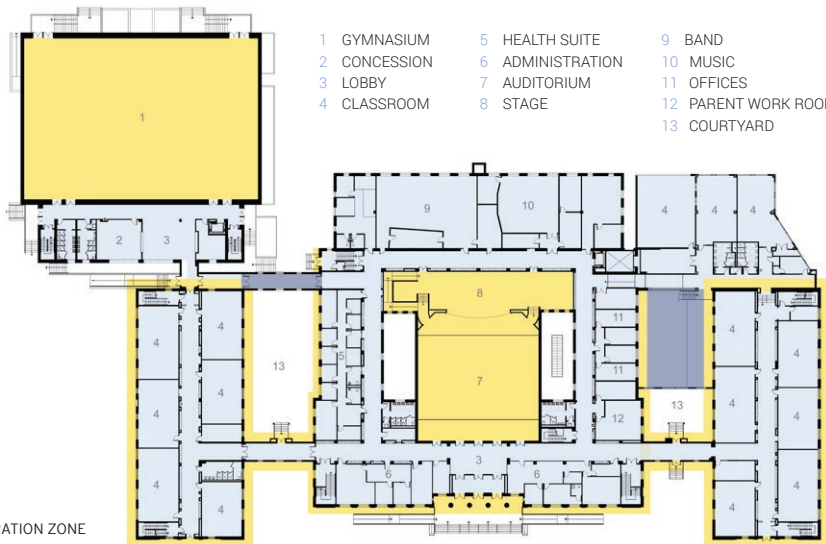
Site Plan



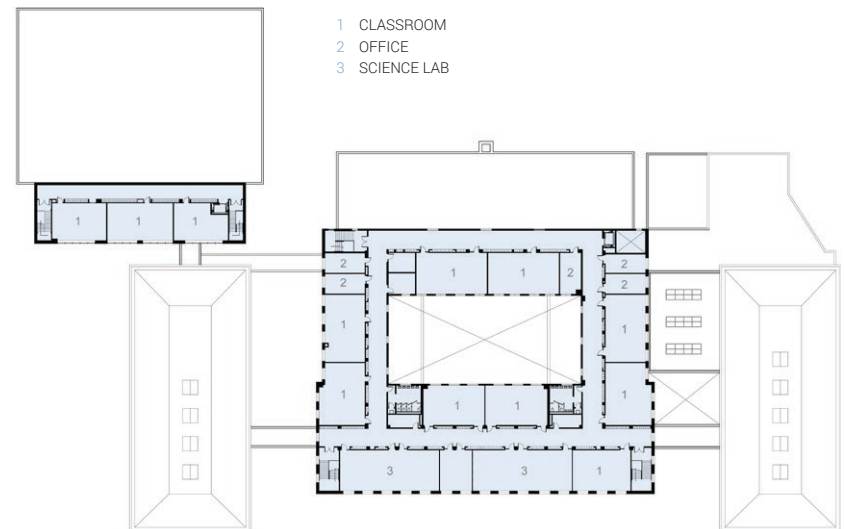
Basement Level



Second Level



Ground Level



Third Level

- RESTORATION ZONE
- RENOVATION ZONE
- REBUILD / NEW ZONE



The building's design leverages art as a primary design feature. In collaboration with an arts organization, a local artist was commissioned to collaborate with students to create murals that were adapted, screen printed, and elegantly added throughout the corridors of the modernized school.



Before



Corridor



Classroom spaces were fitted with clean neutral finishes and restored hardwood floors. Original ceilings were exposed for more daylight and transom windows were uncovered and restored.



Before



Classroom



The existing cafeteria on the basement level was characterized by worn and dated finishes, low ceilings, and a lack of natural light. The architect transformed the environment by carving a striking double-height space out of the existing structure, allowing for large windows and skylights to bring in daylight. In this volume, a monumental stair connects the cafeteria to the first level, allowing the space to become an organizing feature for the interior of the building.



Before



Cafeteria



Larger gathering spaces, such as the auditorium, media center, and gymnasium, were mined for restoration or reimagining. Dropped ceilings in the new media center were removed to expose the existing structure as a two-story volume, opening up skylights to provide ample natural light.



Before



Media Center



The restored auditorium space rehabilitates fine historic details, including existing trim and coffered ceilings, allowing the space to be used for community performances as well as school programming.



Before



Auditorium



*From the old school to the new school  
Anacostia  
Old wing, new wing, new new wing  
Anacostia  
Upgraded, elated, dedicated  
Anacostia  
Interactive, proactive, attractive, never a dull moment hall-active  
Anacostia*

*Today is a new beginning...to state the obvious  
For we cannot be predetermined-cuz...we keep it movin'...  
Ready to embark on our second resurrection*

*As we continue this journey let us remain conscious of being in the  
state of consciousness- simple observers reacting to what is and  
what will be... so-  
Let us eat from the bread of life and drink liquid courage- reject the  
forbidden fruit...while we remain diligent in good deeds*

*What would you attempt if you knew we could not fail, Anacostia?  
How high would you climb if you knew you could not fall, Anacostia?  
What would you dream if you knew it would come true, Anacostia?  
How far have you come... and how far will you run, Anacostia?*

- Gina Corneille

Delivered at Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, August 15, 2011



Gymnasium