

Project Program and Design Solution

The Orchard gardens K-8 Pilot School is one of three new schools which are the first new schools to be constructed in the city of Boston in 25 years. The construction of this school in the Roxbury neighborhood completes the transformation of a troubled public housing project that was the recipient of a Hope VI grant.



From the outset, the team met frequently with members of the surrounding community, many of whom had been active in the Hope VI process- to solicit their input and to explain design concepts as they evolved.



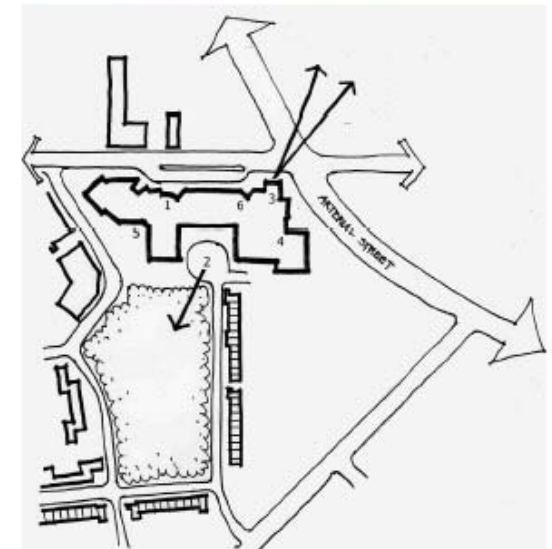
Because the school was programmed to accommodate more than 700 students ranging from kindergarten age to the eighth grade, the design parti is structured around three independent "strands" of learning communities which promote a more intimate learning environment.

Each of the strands is centered around its own pod of vertical circulation.



In the early grades most of the student's activities are clustered around these circulation pods. As the students move up into higher grades more of the school's ancillary facilities such as the library, the labs, the auditorium and the gymnasium become part of their daily routine.

In addition to its daytime use, portions of the school are open to the community for evening and weekend use. The plan allows for various portions of the building to be closed to the public at those times, with a separate entrance for after hours activities.



SITE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 1 PRINCIPAL BUILDING ENTRY
- 2 PRIMARY GRADES ORIENTED TO NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- 3 UPPER GRADES ORIENTED WITH LONG VIEWS TO DOWNTOWN AND BEYOND
- 4 SELECTED PROGRAM ELEMENTS ACT AS SOUND BARRIERS
- 5 SMALL CHILDREN'S ENTRANCE
- 6 AFTER HOURS ENTRY FOR COMMUNITY EVENTS

A very busy arterial street, bounds one end of the site. As a result, those program elements requiring fewer windows at the ground level, including the gym and the auditorium are located at that end of the site where they help buffer traffic noise.

One side of the school faces on a newly reconstructed city park. The three learning strands are organized to embrace the park with the kindergarten and first grade classrooms placed on the ground level looking out to the park. At the opposite corner of the building a



tower element anchors the building. The top floors of the tower are glazed and contain a



dramatic two-story space within the library. The juxtaposition of the tower with the lower school elements that look out on to the neighborhood park is deliberate. The metaphorical intent is that at the primarily school grades the park and the surrounding homes are the child's world. As they move up, literally and figuratively through the school, the tower room with its long views to downtown and the airport symbolizes the limitless bounds of the world beyond the neighborhood.



Because the principal users of the school are children of color many of the formal gestures are drawn from non-western precedents.



The colorful exterior palette is a response to the primarily industrial buildings which surround the site. The "school bus" yellow metal panels were selected to consciously bring color and life to an area that, save for the colorful new Hope VI homes, was a dreary sector of the city.

