

# 2014 Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

## Pacific High School

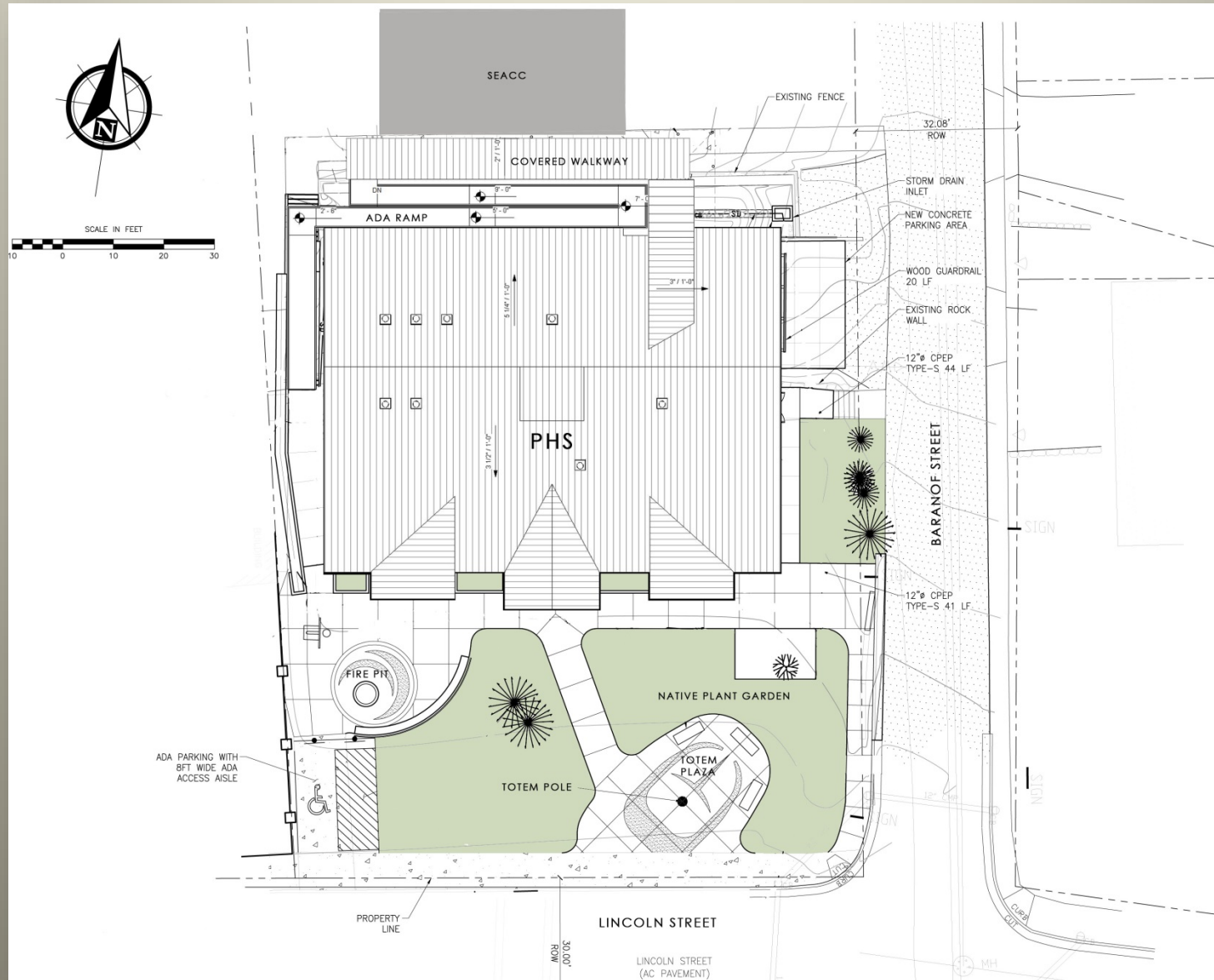
Sitka School District

Sitka, Alaska

# Pacific High School



# Site Planning & Context





# Untapped Potential

## Community Environment

Sitka is a dynamic, culturally diverse and independent maritime community. For a community of 9000, Sitka hosts some remarkable secondary education options including Mt. Edgecumbe, a state-run public boarding school, Sitka High School, the main public high school and Pacific High School, a public optional school built around an Expeditionary Learning model.

Prior to this project, Pacific High School (PHS) was housed in a squat 1957 building with 3 classrooms divided by a hallway and a humble entry off the side street.





# Transformation



## Community Environment – continued:

Meanwhile, the context of the site on Lincoln Street is a highly visible ocean front location on the main drag for tourists and locals with celebrated historic buildings on both sides. Immediately behind PHS is another newer Sitka School District facility built as a career education space for high school age and adult students. In its run-down condition, PHS had come to be seen by many as a school of last resort but the Superintendent and PHS Staff envisioned a transformation that would position Pacific High to become the premier alternative high school in Alaska.



# Connections



## Learning Environment

Pacific High provides an alternative education that differs from most public high schools in several ways. PHS is a small school, with small classes. There are 3 classrooms and enrollment hovers around 36 students. Much of the instruction is focused around student-initiated projects, or “expeditions”, that often take students out of the school building and into the community. To this end, the new school was planned to be open and connected with doors from the classrooms to the outdoor spaces and transparency between rooms.



## Adaptability



### Learning Environment – continued:

The atmosphere in the school is familiar and supportive, even as it is independent. Classes are referred to as “Crews” and each morning the school meets in a circle to discuss their goals, troubles and triumphs.

A central gathering space in the shape of an ellipse supports these meetings and provides a shared living room that connects to the front office. At the end of each term, students present their work in “Culminations”, evening presentations given to the whole school and including many families and other community members. In the new school two classrooms and an intervening flex room can be joined by folding glass walls to create a “super classroom” large enough for the Culminations.



# A Sense of Place

## Physical Environment

PHS is like a family and the building has the scale and feel of a schoolhouse. The new building was built on the footprint of the previous building, but returns the entry to the Lincoln Street side in a manner that is more similar to the 2 story brick school that occupied the site in the 1940s.

On the outside the school celebrates the beautiful context with a native plant garden and a plaza highlighting the school's totem pole. The façades of the historic schoolhouse and neighboring Russian Bishop's House were studied so that this new architecture would harmonize with the street while presenting a proud face to community, worthy of the school's ambitions.





## Bringing It All Together



### Physical Environment – continued:

The interiors at Pacific High School include warm local wood accents and vibrant colors. Access to views and daylight were priorities for staff and students. Where windows couldn't provide enough light, a light shaft and light tubes bring daylight in from above. To make use of local hydroelectricity and Sitka's temperate climate, an air source heat pump system provides heating and cooling with efficiencies approaching 300%.



# Community Vision

## Planning Process

At the core of the planning process was a building design committee (BDC) that included the superintendent, principals, teachers, a parent, past students and other community members. The BDC set the goals for the planning and vision for PHS. Then, through a series of planning meetings, design options were discussed and refined.

Pacific High students were brought into the process, as well, through in-class discussions of the planning and direct participation in BDC meetings. Because the building has such an important place in Sitka's historic downtown, public meetings were held to discuss the façade and site development, and the Sitka Assembly was involved in the final development and approval.





# Community References

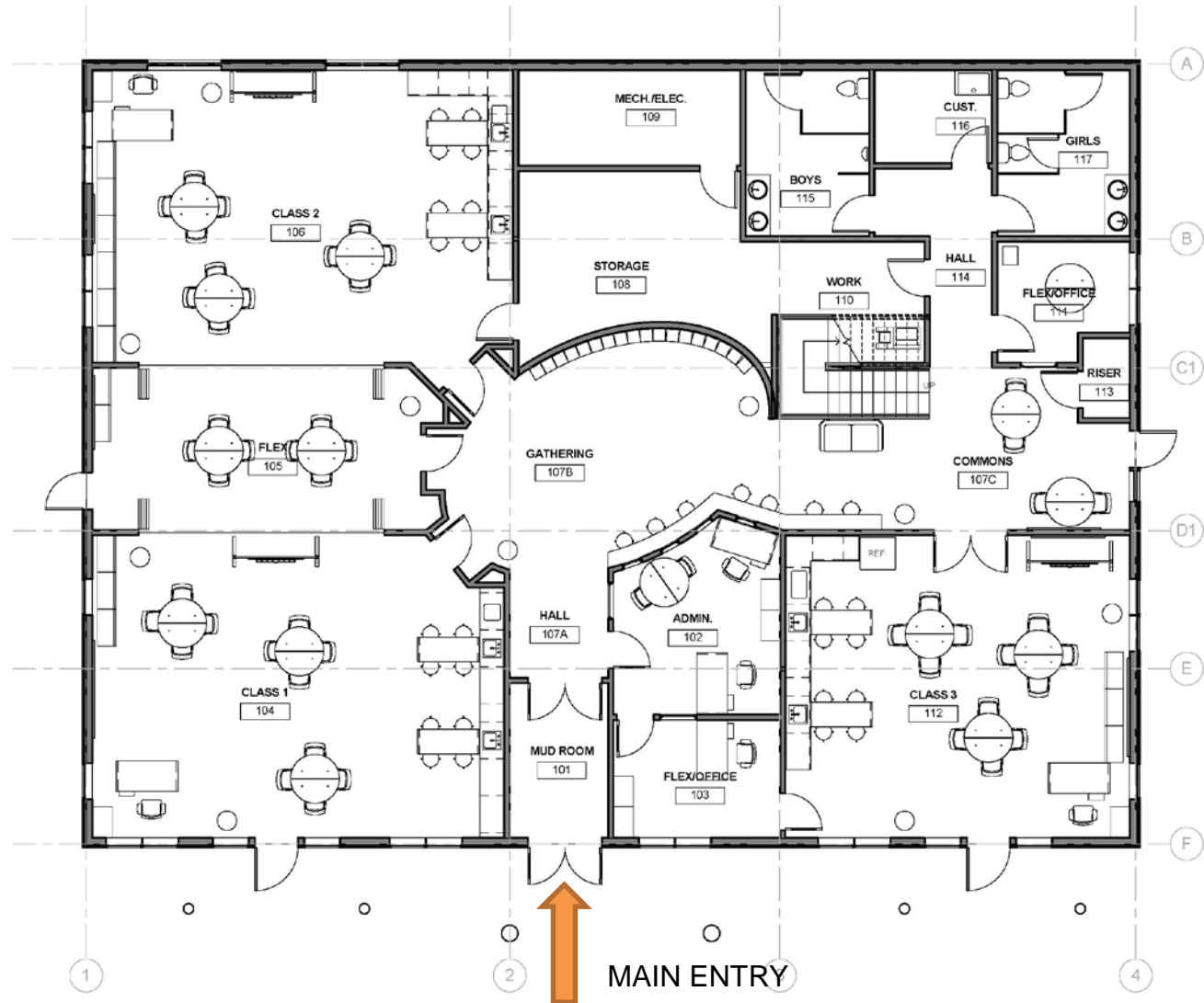
## Planning Process – continued:

While the building forms were developed to relate to the neighboring American and Russian colonial architecture, the site design is more connected with local Tlingit culture. An ovoid concrete pattern and cedar benches in the plaza around the existing totem were developed in consultation with the Sitka Tribe. The native plant garden and planter boxes connect the school to the local ecology and horticulture.

The planning process started in September 2011 and design was completed in summer 2012. Construction was completed in late 2013 and the school opened for the winter term in January 2014.



# Floor Plan





# Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

## Project Data

Submitting Firm :	McCool Carlson Green Architects
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	Garrett Burtner
Title	Project Architect
Address	421 W 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave Suite 300
City, State or Province, Country	Anchorage, Alaska
Phone	907-563-8474

Construction Firm:	Sunland Development
Project Role	Builder
Project Contact	Brian Byler
Title	General Contractor
Address	5140 Kachemak Dr.
City, State or Province, Country	Homer, AK 99603
Phone	(907) 235-6088

# Exhibition of School Planning and Architecture

## Project Details

<b>Project Name</b>	Pacific High School
<b>City</b>	Sitka
<b>State</b>	Alaska
<b>District Name</b>	Sitka School District
<b>Supt/President</b>	Steve Bradshaw
<b>Occupancy Date</b>	January 2014
<b>Grades Housed</b>	9-12
<b>Capacity(Students)</b>	72
<b>Site Size (acres)</b>	.37
<b>Gross Area (sq. ft.)</b>	5429
<b>Per Occupant(pupil)</b>	75
<b>gross/net please indicate</b>	1.26
<b>Design and Build?</b>	Yes
<b>If yes, Total Cost:</b>	\$276,699 Design / \$1.9M Construction
<b>Includes:</b>	Existing facility assessment, planning, design, construction, site work
<b>If no,</b>	
<b>Site Development:</b>	
<b>Building Construction:</b>	
<b>Fixed Equipment:</b>	
<b>Other:</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	



## BDC Supported Building Ideas

### Building Components

- More Natural Light; Higher Ceilings
- Active Roof; Green Space & Activity
- Large Common Space
- Highlight Student Work
- Need Personal Space
- Strong Entry And Multi-use core; “Community Street”
- Front Yard; Engage Street, Hard/Soft, Public/Private
- Green House
- Flexible Spaces/Movable Ways/Varied & Many

### Listening and Responding

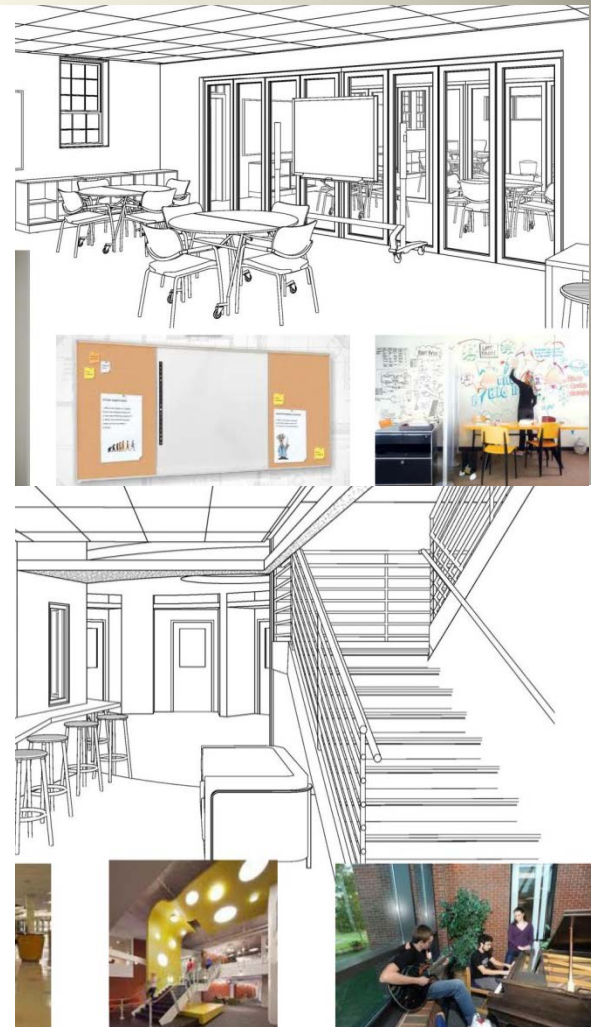
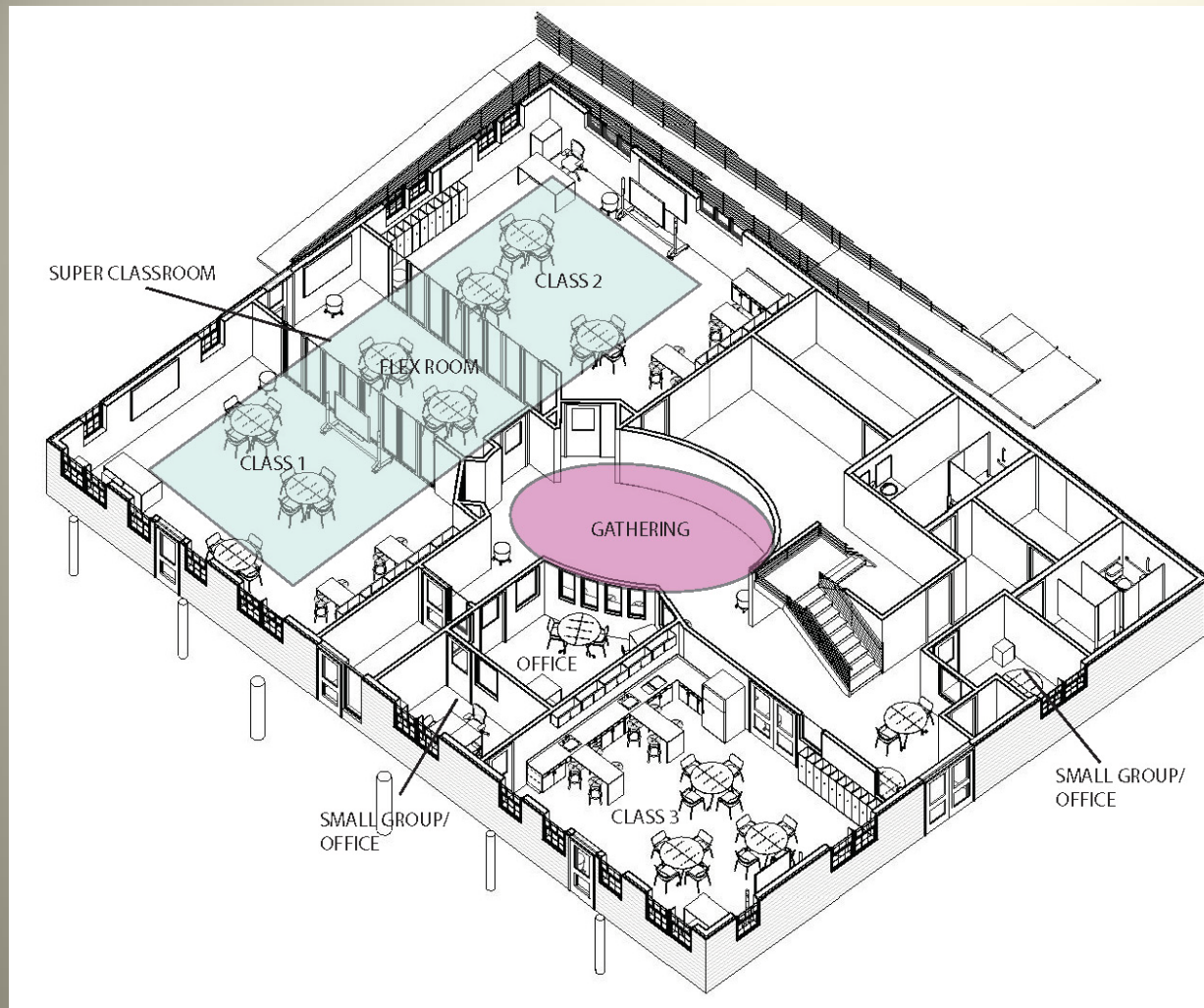
Planning and design workshops with the Building Design Committee also included an important feedback loop from the students who were asked to reflect on and share their own self-image as an alternative school in the Sitka community. Student priorities for the design were carried forward to the BDC and there was remarkable consistency in the vision of the users.

## Student Supported Building Ideas

### Building Components

- Murals and color; areas to personalize
- More natural light; skylights
- Writable walls
- Building with strong reflective character
- Basketball hoop, fitness area
- Garden on Roof
- Carefully design front yard; public/private

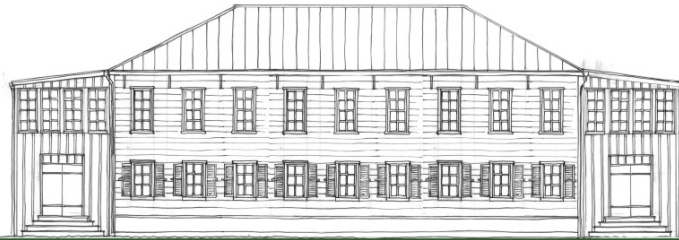




## Hard-Working Spaces

PHS is a small school building with big flexibility needs. To accommodate large Culmination events, 2 classrooms and a Flex room were joined with folding walls to create the “super-classroom”. Hallway spaces were reimaged as the Gathering and Commons rooms for socializing, eating and circle meetings. Staffing at PHS varies and includes itinerants so offices are set up to work harder as small group meeting rooms.

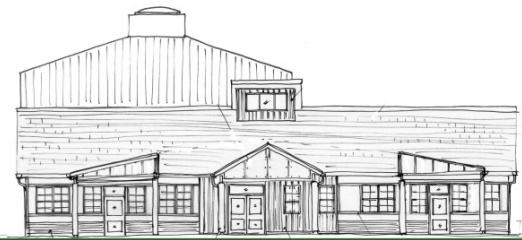




Russian Bishop's House circa 1842



Schoolhouse circa 1920



Pacific High School circa 2012



## Historic Context

Sitka has been the home of Tlingit people for hundreds of years, was the seat of government for Russian Alaska, the site of the US purchase of Alaska and, briefly, the territorial capital. The site of PHS is similarly layered with history. The foundations under the 1957 school were found to date from the 2-story brick school pictured here (at right) in 1941. Study of this historic context was an important driver of the exterior design of the new school.

