**Program Summary:**
This Master Plan shaped a new school's campus at the heart of a growing city, integrating the student experience of learning while connecting them to the land and the community.

**Program Statement:**
Deconstructed and situated precisely over a 26-acre site in a rapidly growing city of Northwest Arkansas, the Master Plan for this new high school campus creates a continuous indoor-outdoor experience, where students move between buildings and across the landscape as they move from class to class.

As a “private school” with a public face, community connections were instrumental to the development of the master plan. The academic curriculum was developed and enriched through over a dozen community organizations engaged during the master planning process—organizations that provide guest lecturers on a weekly basis and after-school experiences where students learn as active participants in their community.

The campus takes its visual cues from the region itself, providing a contemporary reinterpretation of local, vernacular architecture. The buildings, much like the extended campus, strive to establish an innovative vision for the future, while reflecting the rich, pastoral heritage of the surrounding landscape. The resulting master plan helped the school prioritize what to build first and identify opportunities for growth and intensification of their site, while simultaneously establishing an environmental trajectory in delivering buildings that use 70% less energy than typical schools.
A Sense of History

Even as a brand-new campus, the vision for the school stressed a historical legacy.

In lieu of any actual school history, the campus plan built upon the rich history and distinctive strengths of Northwest Arkansas, marrying themes of the vernacular landscape, Arkansas' early aviation pioneers, and historic architecture of the nearby city.

These architectural nods were then layered onto a complex, productive landscape, consisting of meadows and farms, to create a rich academic and cultural landscape at once both modern and rooted.
A crucial question emerged during the Master Planning process: How does one responsibly become part of a growing urban environment, and simultaneously create the vast open space needed to connect children with a longstanding regional agricultural identity?

Early on, the design team latched onto an idea for the campus of the “urban pastoral,” where the campus would seamlessly marry a modern notion of urban development as a catalyst for energizing cities and a historical respect for agricultural elements from the local vernacular.

The school similarly anchors the nearby development of two experience districts, the Arts District and Market District, providing another link between the two districts along 8th Street.
In developing the Master Plan, the design team took precedents from local vernacular, particularly the idea of the regional farmstead.

In the same way that buildings in the agricultural landscape might be loosely organized to create semi-enclosed spaces connecting to open spaces, the campus was defined around four main buildings that stretch across the landscape; bending and wrapping to define a new kind of campus.

A delineation was made early on between West Campus and East Campus.

West Campus, home of all main classroom components, was intensely developed as the school.

On the East Campus, historically a flood plain, the design team embraced the Osage Prairie landscape, choosing to explore its raw, untamed state as a tool for education and exploration.

The project was phased in such a way so that the two main campus buildings on the West side were developed first, followed by additional school buildings and eventual improvements to the eastern component.
A Tale of Two Entries

The liminal edges of campus acknowledged several distinct goals:
1) The practical need for safety in drop-off and pick-up of students
2) The desire for density and urban engagement along Main St.

The strategy proposed was modeled after small college campuses that successfully engage their host towns, where some buildings hug the street, while other pull back, and the landscape is not just the green space between buildings, but rather an equal part of the experience.

Two different entries into the campus show how buildings respond to this approach.

On SE C. Street, the front door for the students is a bosque of trees, from which they step down into a landscape and find their way to their class.

On the Main St. side of campus, a limited program stretches itself out to create an urban edge, with the notion that a more urban approach in this section of campus can catalyze continued development on the blocks further north.
Schools help build community, and the success of the school very much depended on its ability to form strong bonds with a vibrant array of local and regional community organizations.

The founding vision of the school fully embraced an ethos of "learning by doing," embodied by three signature programs "Wheels, Meals, and Reels." In this spirit, school leadership looked to extend student experiences beyond the classroom with participation in local community programming.

For this reason, the master planning process was kicked off with a gathering of nearly thirty individuals from the school’s leadership, the design staff, and more than a dozen community organizations.

After an initial warm-up describing the goals of the school and its pedagogy, individual were broken into separate working groups focused on the three signature programs and explored opportunities for collaboration—and how the new facilities and landscape could be configured to support student learning in collaboration with these community partners.
“Wheels, Reels, and Meals”

The school’s pedagogy was developed around three signature programs: Wheels (where the fields of physics and mechanics come alive through the construction and use of bicycles and other wheeled machines), Meals (where biology, chemistry, and community come alive through the growing and preparation of food), and Reels (where narrative and visual communication come alive through the production of film and video).

Students similarly achieve balance through motion, expected to move throughout the landscape over the course of a school day.

This attitude towards circulation was reflected in the distribution of buildings on campus, with individual academic program disbursed across the landscape, each with their own lab/makerspace, where students learn to integrate the movements of their minds and hands.
The landscape of the school was always intended to be a multifaceted one, relying in part on local, social, and ecological analogs for human use patterns, plant communities and indigenous land forms.

This guiding principle provided a dynamic, rhythmic template for how the design team approached the site.

Beyond guiding building program and people movement, the campus similarly guides the flow of water.

The landscape is a productive one. It supports natural ecological processes, restoration of the Osage Prairie, pollinators, models of production and consumption through farming.

The campus responds to a growing urban environment, creating buffer zones from the highway and residential zones while still opening the school to the surrounding community.

In delicately layering all these systems in a compelling way, students are afforded optimal opportunities to learn from their surroundings.
PORCHES

GEOTHERMAL WELL FIELD

AGRICULTURE

STORM WATER
Framing the Experience

Liminal spaces between buildings blur the edges between indoors and out while framing views to adjacent programs.

Porches create micro-climates and activity zones that encourage students to explore their surroundings, stitching together the use of site environment and building environment, and affording opportunities to learn outside the classroom.
Stormwater management is accomplished via several detention areas throughout the site, but it accumulates naturally in the southeast corner of the west parcel, the lowest point on campus, where it overflows into the storm drainage infrastructure.

This “water lab” detains 100% of all rainwater on water, while simultaneously providing a unique opportunity for students to learn via their surroundings.
“Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance you must keep moving.”
~Einstein

Bicycles, beyond being deeply integrated into the school’s pedagogy, are truly a part of daily life on campus.

A pump track adjoins a nearby “Bike Barn,” where students house their school-provided bicycles, and make repairs and maintenance on them.

Students, during leisure time and between classes, can similarly be found zipping around on campus via bike.
Interactions

Throughout the planning process, the school’s leadership stressed the importance of interactions: between students and the landscape, between students and teachers, between the school and its community.

In service of this, the campus is a porous one, highlighting the importance of buildings and spaces that aren’t insular, but truly connected to, not only the landscape, but the entire environment around them.
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Owner/Client: Thaden School

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