MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL
A FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL FACILITY PLANNING

A Project Of
THE TULANE CITY CENTER and
MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL
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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL

In Fall 2010, Morris Jeff Community School opened its doors as one of the most racially and economically diverse open-access public schools in the history of New Orleans. Morris Jeff Community School currently serves children in grades Pre-K to 3rd, with a heavy focus on languages, the arts and the development of the whole child. The school will grow over the next few years to serve children in all elementary grades (Pre-K to 8th).

This flagship school for the city of New Orleans would not exist had it not been for the grassroots efforts and shared vision of parents, educators and community leaders in the Mid-City and St. John neighborhoods. Their vision was to create a school that reflects the diversity of the city both in the children that will attend and in the education they will receive; a school that is child-centered and focused on more than just test scores. In October 2009, this vision was realized when the school’s Type 5 charter application was approved by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) called Morris Jeff’s application “one of the strongest applications they have ever reviewed”.

Despite these successes, the school community has continually been forced into action on three primary issues: the school’s future site, the school’s future size, and the timeline for the design and construction of the school’s new facility. The school community now feels confident that its relationship with the RSD and project architect is collaborative and shares an overall common vision for the process.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purpose of this project is to provide Morris Jeff Community School (MJCS) and its constituents with the necessary framework to effectively engage the Recovery School District (RSD), project architect, and Mid-City community in the school facility planning process for the Fisk-Howard site. It is important to state that this is not a design proposal, nor a substitute for the important work of the School Facilities Master Plan (SFMP) or RSD. Rather, this document simply presents background information critical to the design process to the Morris Jeff community. This pre-design information falls into three principle categories: the proposed school’s size, site, and program. Each of these areas of consideration will have major architectural implications that any design proposal for the facility must address. By encouraging a common understanding of these fundamental criteria, it is hoped that the school community will not only be able to effectively engage in the planning process, but will also be seen as a valuable partner in that process. The ultimate goal for all parties involved is to produce the best school facility possible; one that not only meets basic requirements, but takes full advantage of this historic opportunity by creating an excellent learning environment for the children of the Mid-City neighborhood and the New Orleans community in general.
PROJECT: PROVIDE MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND ITS CONSTITUENTS WITH THE NECESSARY FRAMEWORK TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE IN THE SCHOOL FACILITY PLANNING PROCESS

LOCATION: MID-CITY, NEW ORLEANS (THE FORMER FISK-HOWARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE)

PARTNERS: TULANE CITY CENTER AND MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL

GOAL: FACILITATE THE BEST FACILITY DESIGN POSSIBLE BY MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL, RECOVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT, NEIGHBORHOOD, AND PROJECT ARCHITECT
FRAMEWORK

The diagram below shows the principal factors that will influence the design process and their relationships to one another. Each will have major architectural implications. The success of any design proposal can, in part, be measured by its ability to resolve these sets of baseline criteria into a cohesive, functional, healthy, and spatially rich environment for learning.
MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL MISSION AND VISION:
As stated in Morris Jeff’s Vision, a community-centered, grassroots approach to education reform has helped to transform the school into “one of the most racially and economically diverse public schools in the history of New Orleans.” The curriculum at Morris Jeff is inquiry-based, encouraging the natural curiosity of children.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE CURRICULUM:
Morris Jeff Community School is a candidate school for the Primary Years Programme (PYP). The school is pursuing verification as an IB World School. These are schools that share a common philosophy—a commitment to high quality, challenging, international education. The IB curriculum focuses on “the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside.” (www.ibo.org)

RSD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:
As part of the recent master-planning process, the Recovery School District created a set of standards regarding educational programming and space planning. These standards specify a school model which embraces team teaching, thematic instruction and departmental organization. Space requirements regarding size and use for various program elements are also specified.

CURRENT PRACTICES:
Though not specifically required by code, any new school facility should reflect current standards and best practices for school facility design. Factors include: standards for day lighting, classroom acoustics, and the integration of technology throughout the building. These elements generally contribute to spaces which promote student engagement and learning while creating responsible, effective building systems.

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS:
The future site of the Morris Jeff Community School is located in the Mid-City neighborhood within the block bounded by Cleveland Ave., S. Rendon St., Palmyra St. and S. Lopez St. The approximately 2.27 acre site is the former site of Fisk-Howard Elementary School (now demolished). The site occupies a RD-3 zoning district with a larger scale institution to the north-east, intact residential fabric to the south-east / south-west, and the possibility of acquiring vacant property to the north-west.

CODE REQUIREMENTS:
As with all buildings, educational facilities are required to comply with relevant building and civic codes to ensure the safety and well-being of all occupants. Because of their critical function of providing a safe learning environment for the children, schools are subject to specific requirements. In combination with the available site area, these requirements have major implications on the locations of spaces within the building.
The School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish (SFMP) lays out standards for educational programming. The plan’s ‘Educational Program Requirements’ document calls for nine general programmatic elements and specifies ideal adjacencies between those elements. Total square footages are listed for each space type along with detailed breakdowns for individual spaces within each category. (Refer to the SFMP ‘Educational Program Requirements’ for more specific information on each of these general categories. An updated version will be available for download at: http://rebuildingnolaschools.wordpress.com/technical-info/).

SFMP Building Capacity Values for the Fisk-Howard Site:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student / Program Capacity</td>
<td>788 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Floor Area Per Student</td>
<td>135 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Building Capacity</td>
<td>986 occupants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Square Footage Total</td>
<td>106,757 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPACETYPE</td>
<td>SQ.FT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Academics</td>
<td>30,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>12,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Service</td>
<td>7,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library/Media Center</td>
<td>4,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td>4,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music/Performing Arts</td>
<td>3,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome/Administration</td>
<td>2,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>1,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>1,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial/Maintenance</td>
<td>1,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratories (Flexible Classroom)</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Net Subtotal</td>
<td>70,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Spaces (Services/Restrooms/Circulation, 51% of net)</td>
<td>36,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>106,757</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
S. Rendon St. (Possible Opportunity For Expansion / Incorporation)

Cleveland Ave. (Larger Scale, Three Story Institution)

S. Lopez St. (Intact Residential Fabric)

Palmyra St. (Intact Residential Fabric)
SITE
ZONING REQUIREMENTS / OPPORTUNITIES

WORKING VALUES:

Total Site Area 98,881 sq.ft. or 2.27 acres

RD-3 ZONING REQUIREMENTS:

Set Back: 20’ front and rear; 10’ sides
(New Orleans Comprehensive Zoning Ordinances (NOCZO) Sec. 4.6, See table 4.F This would require a variance.
Section 13.10 of the code calls for setbacks of 25 feet. Section 4 setbacks are more in line with neighborhood.)

Area of Setback: 18,200 sq.ft.
(useable for site circulation, play space, green space etc.)

Buildable Area: 80,681 sq.ft.
(area of setback minus site area)

Height Restriction: 40’
(NOCZO table 4.F and 15.5.5.2)

Parking Requirement: ~53 spaces (~13,780 sq.ft.)
(in accordance with NOCZO Sec.15 table 15.A)
BUILDABLE AREA

POSSIBLE 1ST FLOOR PROGRAM DIAGRAM

**Total Buildable Area:** 80,681 sq. ft.

**Possible 1st Floor Program Diagram:**
- Pre-K, K, & 1st
- Gym
- Performing Arts
- Cafeteria
- Outdoor/Play Space
- Parking
- Shade
- Entry/Admin
- Community Garden
- Drop off

**Intact Residential Fabric**
- Vacant Gym Building
- Vacant Lot
- Existing Curb Cuts
- Cleveland Ave
- S. Rendon St.
- S. Lopez St.
- Palmrya St.
- Cleveland Ave
- Preferred not parking

**Larger Scale Three Story Institution**
One of the most significant factors determining the distribution of program in a school facility is the requirements of the Life Safety Code. For example, spaces for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade are essentially required to be on the first floor. Second grade classrooms are required to occupy the first or second floor. Though not required by code, some other program elements, such as the gym and cafeteria, have characteristics making the first floor the most logical location for them. In combination, the specific space needs, site constraints, and code requirements have major implications for the location of spaces within the building. Furthermore, the relationship between the size of the site and estimated total square footage of the building suggests that the new building will need to be at least three stories tall. The diagram at right illustrates a possible distribution of programmatic elements across the floors of the building as well as the relationships between the available site area and the building’s footprint. This analysis suggests that maintaining enough contiguous free site area for outdoor play and green space will be an important consideration in the design process.

### MJCS, ESTIMATED 3 STORY BUILDING AREA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Square Feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Built Area Estimate</td>
<td>50,501 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built Area + Parking</td>
<td>63,885 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-built Site Area</td>
<td>34,996 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(area available for site circulation, green space, play spaces, etc)
In addition to guidelines for program adjacencies and square footage, the SFMP program requirements and specifications provide direction for creating optimum learning environments. The interior configuration of the school shapes the daily routine of students and informs the culture of the school. As such, every opportunity to enrich the spacial and functional qualities of the school interior should be seriously considered.

CURRENT PRACTICE | inside

flexible spaces provide break out areas adaptable for group meetings or performances

variation in classrooms avoids a sense of mass production

disbursing technology and offices amongst core academic spaces maximizes access and promotes interaction

hallways can act as collaboration spaces and encourage social engagement
Flexible Spaces

Kindergarten Sighartstein | Kadawittfeldarchitektur

Thoughtful Program Distribution

Heritage Heights School | Marshall Tittemore

Hallways as Collaborative Zones

Poquoson Elementary School | VMDO

Perch and Cave-like Areas

Knokke-Heist School Building | NL Architects
Morris Jeff Community School’s new facility will be new construction on a site that is situated within an existing neighborhood fabric. This provides an opportunity and obligation for the school to connect to its surroundings and implement choices that serve to engage the community within which it exists.
CURRENT PRACTICES | systems

Passive and mechanical systems present in the school building have a huge effect on student learning and health. As such, designers consider environmental impact, indoor air quality, acoustics, energy efficiency, and material sourcing as part of the design process. (Note: All new schools built under the SFMP are required to be LEED silver.)

- Maximizing day lighting while reducing glare provides good natural light for learning.
- Interior lighting conditions are most comfortable when there are various levels that can be adjusted within the classroom.
- Non-toxic materials should be strived for both inside and outside the school building.

In addition to energy efficiency, utilizing systems such as low velocity ventilation can improve health and acoustics.
# TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01.23.2012</td>
<td>architect begins work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.09.2012</td>
<td>community meeting #1 . schematic design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kick-off, information &amp; community input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.13.2012</td>
<td>community meeting #2 . schematic design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>preliminary site layouts, vehicle access, orientation &amp; massing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring.2012</td>
<td>community meeting #3 . design development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>site layout, floor plans &amp; exterior concepts</td>
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<tr>
<td>summer.2012</td>
<td>community meeting #4 . design development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>developed floor plans &amp; exterior elevations</td>
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<tr>
<td>fall.2012</td>
<td>community meeting #5 . contract documents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final review of project before going out for bids</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.04.2012</td>
<td>advertise for bids</td>
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<tr>
<td>01.04.2013</td>
<td>bid date</td>
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<tr>
<td>02.04.2013</td>
<td>contractor begins work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.13.2013</td>
<td>completion date</td>
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</tbody>
</table>