

29 BAINBRIDGE AVE
PROVIDENCE, RI



SITE ANALYSIS

The site analysis is a combination of elements that combine to make space and function. In a residential neighborhood between two commercial streets, Westminster St. and Broadway St, there is a small elementary school cluster built around the St. Mary's church and its mission. In the late nineteenth century, Pastor Thomas Grace made an effort with the Ursine nuns to work with the children of the community. Their efforts turned into St. Mary's Academy of the Visitation, built in 1904 adjacently perpendicular to the church. The school was built to teach children a number of educational programs, as a service to God. The glory of God was in the architecture. The stature of the rooms, the approach, and the material richness professed the grandeur of the work being done in the school. In the late 1970s, the school was purchased by the Public Schools department and an additional building was constructed, connected by a passageway in an L-shape to the existing building, housing a cafeteria, stage, gym and several multi-purpose rooms.

In 2000, the Paul Cuffee school's charter was approved, and the public charter school was opened behind West Broadway Elementary School in 2001, closing in the playspace now as a courtyard between the two schools. Recreational space, including the addition and the courtyard, was shared by both elementary schools until West Broadway Elementary School was closed in 2004 for code violations. It was used as substitute space in 2006 and 2007, but with very few modifications, none architectural.

The building has not been structurally modified since its founding in 1904, and has not been architecturally modified since the 1980 addition.



LITERATURE AND CLIENT REVIEW

St. Mary's School of the Visitation was established in 1904 to educate the youth of the West Providence Community in traditional Catholic elementary programs of the time. It is an 'old school.' To use this existing space as a new school, a challenge is set to define the 'new school.' What is the modern education system?

Through studies on modern education systems and research into the Providence Public school system, a few theories come out on what it means to be a modern school - overarching ideas center around creativity in the learning approach and healthy environments. All of these are aimed at getting information from point A to point B so that students are prepared and educated to enter the real world or go on to a community of higher learning.

The information traveling from point A to point B depends on the community, and sometimes on the student. The intent and program of the space is informed by the members of the West Broadway Neighborhood. At group meetings and public hearings, they have voiced their collaborative ideas on what will make a good school for their particular children. Because the neighborhood is fifty-three percent hispanic, and has a large number of members of the arts community living in it, priorities in education are:



MODIFICATIONS.

The school, over the years, has suffered a number of partial modifications. As the school took abuse, patches and small fixes were made. As a result, there is a “school within a school.” Where there was once a beautifully detailed wall, there is now laminate board put up to clean easily after the latest inhabitants, Career and Technical students. In the basement, bathrooms have been hung in mass across the whole rear unit.

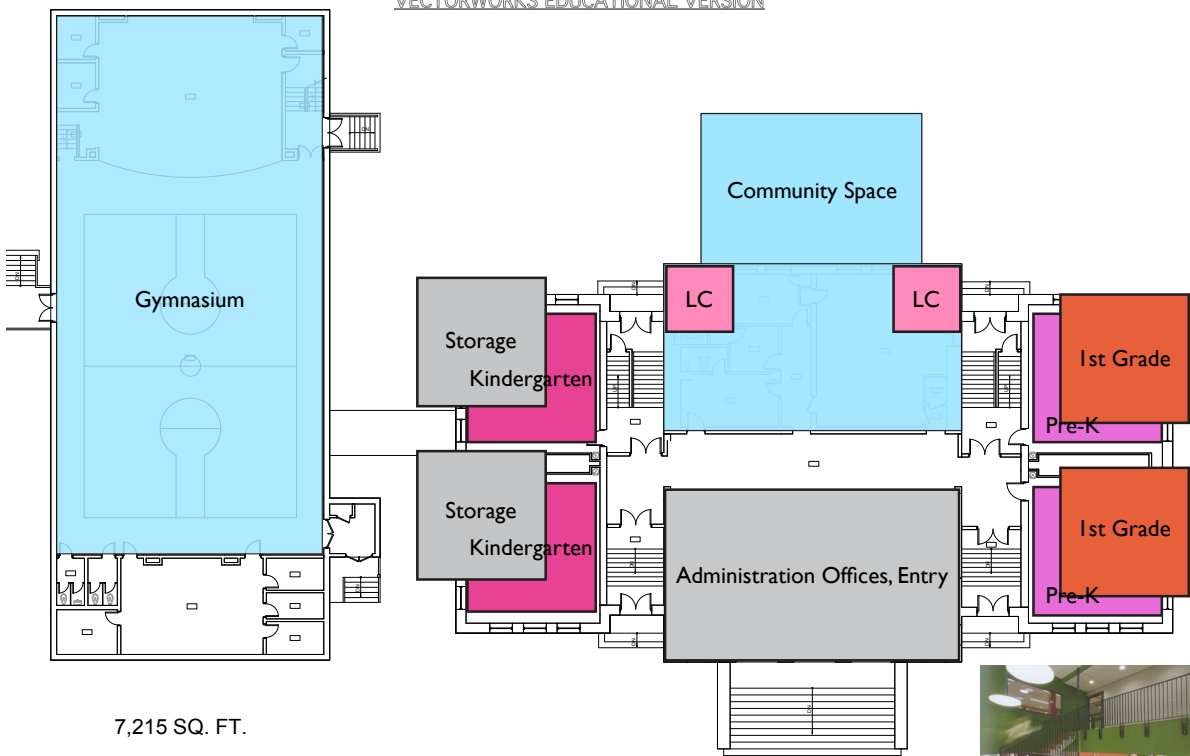
It seems that with each new use, a new wall was put up, but few were ever taken down. The building is an archeological ruins of a century of use.





The basement and first floors offer an opportunity to create programmed space.

Once the basement has been cleared of its maze of utility closets, it will be available for indoor recreation space with high outdoor light quality.



The first floor will be divided into two floors, so that the shorter legs have quick access to egress and smaller, cozier spaces to learn in.

Language centers are located throughout circulation to incorporate moments of the world in both languages.

7,215 SQ. FT.

689 SQ. FT.



VECTORWORKS EDUCATIONAL VERSION

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The second and third floors will be cleaned of any excess walls, while incorporating some of the history in them.

The original detail in the rear room on the second floor and the 20 year old mural in the hallway of the third floor define how the space will be reused in the future, as a library and an art classroom respectively.

In this manner, the history of the old building informs the foundations of the newer learning process. And the new school can grow into the modern hopes of neighborhood families.

