Samuels Elementary School

Landscape Master Plan

For Elementary School Campus Improvements

3985 S. Vincennes Ct. Denver CO 80237-1748 303-770-2215

Prepared For: Denver Public Schools
900 Grant St.
Denver, Colorado

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As part of a course: Finding Common Ground
Exploring the Urban Experience
Fall Semester 2002
University of Colorado @ Denver
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Samuels Elementary School
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PTA Advisor: Julia Fitzpatrick

Approved
Principal, Samuels Elementary

Approved
CDM Representative

Approved
Project Manager, Construction Services

Approved
Supervising Foreman, Grounds
Table of Contents

Title Page
Signature Page
Table of Contents
Project Introduction
Part 1: Assessing the Present Situation

Section 1: The Location
Section 2: History of the School and Neighborhood
Section 3: Demographics of the Community and School
Section 4: Constituent Groups
Section 5: Site Inventory and Safety Assessment
Section 6: Survey of Constituent Needs and Desires

Goals
Vision
Program Wish List
Diagrams
Photo Locations
Existing Conditions
Fullfilling The Goals Of The Master Plan
Project Introduction

Studies show that a well-planned and equipped exterior play area enhances the learning environment resulting in improved learning and achievement. Such play areas provide physical and mental challenges that translate to improved health and learning attention. Furthermore, with proper design, these areas themselves become outdoor classrooms or learning landscapes. One of the principal secondary goals of all schools, including elementary, is to provide a focus for community—a place to gather and to meet, a place to enjoy, a place that enhances the community’s appearance.

A reflection of this community importance is Denver’s Mayor Wellington Webb’s statement, “As Mayor, I have long recognized that we cannot have a great city and great neighborhoods without great schools.”

Denver Public Schools [DPS] is an urban school district with many of the same challenges of other urban districts. The infrastructure is aging—the average facility age is almost 50 years. The ongoing 1998 General Obligation Bond [GOB] will increase the number of schools to 130 but contains no funding for existing elementary or any other existing school playground. Approximately 75 DPS elementary schools require moderate to extensive renovations or upgrades to meet adequate playground standards. These include replacing playground equipment, providing irrigation and sod [to eliminate gravel and dirt fields], providing American with Disability Act [ADA] accessibility, and providing an outdoor classroom learning environment. Playgrounds lacking appropriate choices for children become arenas to bully and tease. Recess should be a positive experience that compliments their academic development; a place where children develop their emotional, physical and social skills.

The Solution

The "Learning Landscape" program is an entrepreneurial community-minded alliance of public and private interests that seeks to strengthen Denver Public Elementary Schools and their surrounding neighborhoods by designing new multi-dimensional playgrounds and social gathering places. The success of this program is founded on a mutual respect of aesthetic, maintainability, safety, and recreational issues. The University of Colorado at Denver’s Landscape Architecture department offers a seminar course called FINDING COMMON GROUND—EXPLORING THE URBAN EXPERIENCE. Students of landscape architecture, architecture and other disciplines have come together with Professor Lois Brink to research current educational, sociological, and environmental thought regarding urban space in general and elementary school grounds in particular. Each student in the course selects a school from a
predetermined pool and uses this knowledge to develop a vision and master plan for each school. The master plan approach will suit a multi-faceted contemporary existence—engaging a child’s educational and recreational experience with that of the community at-large.

The Intent of the Master Plan
The master plan is a written report and plan that sets forth the structure for future campus improvements. Each school has a vision that speaks to the desires of the school and surrounding community. The vision is further delineated into goals that identify the major components for implementation. These goals are defined through the use of text and imagery. A programmatic list of uses is also developed. Lastly, each master plan sets forth the aesthetic ordering system or systems that will be used on the design phase to organize the programmatic uses. This plan once approved will provide a framework for fund raising and future construction.
Samuels Elementary School is located in the Denver southeast neighborhood of Hampden South. It is defined by the boundaries of I-25 to the west, Hampden Avenue to the north, Boston and Yosemite Streets to the east, and Bellview Avenue to the south. It serves students from Early Childhood Education through the 5th grade. The school enjoys significant diversity in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parent educational levels, and national origin. The community includes single-family homes, town homes/condominiums, apartments, and subsidized housing. The current enrollment includes children from over 19 countries who speak 14 different languages.
“Ideally a child’s play space should never be finished, it should be in a constant state of change.”

- Goltsman
Play helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. Play is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time.

–IPA Declaration of the Child’s Right to Play
Isadora Samuels Elementary School was built in 1964

Rosamond Park is located across Tamarac St. to the west of Samuels
In 1963, the neighborhood known as Hutchinson Hills was annexed to Denver to become what is now known as Hampden South.
Section 3: Demographics of the Community and School

Community:
Samuels Elementary is located in the middle income Hampden South neighborhood. This area was annexed in 1963 from Hutchinson Hills and the school was built in 1964. Samuels embraces community support from parents, businesses, neighborhood associations, and service clubs. The school is well used by members of the community as a meeting place for many organizations year round. The population of Hampden South is 13,791 with 7,000 households. The average household income is $66,536 with 58% listed as owner-occupied. The average home sale price is $263,990. The general population breaks down as 80% White, 7% Latino, 7% African American, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .2% Native American. This neighborhood is predominantly residential. The demographics of this neighborhood are changing toward a younger population as older homes are sold.

School Membership:
Samuels celebrates the challenges and enrichment opportunities of serving their unique community. The total enrollment of Samuels Elementary is 511 students. The general enrollment breaks down as 47 ECE, 81 Grade K, 86 Grade 1, 82 Grade 2, 64 Grade 3, 91 Grade 4, and 74 Grade 5. The general ethnicity breaks down as 52% White, 23% African American, 18% Latino, 5% Asian, and .2% Native American. 42% of these students receive free or reduced lunches. The daily attendance rate is 96%.
Section 4: Constituent Groups

Students
511 students are currently enrolled at Samuels Elementary School.
161 students receive free or reduced lunches.
51 students are English Language Learners.
93% of students have attended Samuels for 3 consecutive years.
20 of female and 23 of male students are gifted and talented.
2 students are cognitively disabled, 3 are emotionally disabled, 20 are learning disabled, and 23 are listed as other disabled.
CSAP scores indicate that 84% of 3rd grade, 59% of 4th grade, and 61% of 5th grade test as proficient/advanced.

Staff
52% of the teachers have a Master’s degree, and 56% have 11 years of experience or more.
The principal has 8 years of experience as a principal and 4 years at this location.

Parents
Parents are active in the school PTA.

Community
Three Neighborhood Associations use Samuels as a meeting location
Samuels is also used as a voting center
Church
Summer camp
After-school program
PTA center
There are three baseball areas and two soccer areas contained within one large dirt field. The children are constantly getting scraped up on this hard and rocky surfacing. This exposed area offers no shade or seating.

Photo 1

There are three basketball courts, ten foursquare areas, three hop scotch, and eight tetherball areas contained within this vast sea of deteriorated asphalt.

Photo2

There is a small garden next to one of the play areas. This space has been pretty much abandoned.

Photo3
Playground Equipment:

There are two fenced play areas with playground equipment. The surface is pea gravel.

The intermediate area contains two swing sets, two travel rings, and horizontal bars.

Photo 4

The primary area contains one swing set, one travel ring, one metal slide, horizontal bars, and one multi-use set.

Photo 5

These areas do not accommodate wheelchair access.

The one cottonwood tree does not provide shade and no outside drinking fountains were noticed.
### Surfacing Area % of Whole

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surfacing</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>% of Whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asphalt: parking</td>
<td>27,741 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play area</td>
<td>38,511 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unused</td>
<td>4,004 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirt fields</td>
<td>204,481 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-usable sloped turf</td>
<td>49,816 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeded slope</td>
<td>11,361 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary and ECE Playground area</td>
<td>4,762 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Playground area</td>
<td>6,012 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List three words to describe the Current Playground Conditions

- Dangerous, inadequate, boring
- Unsafe, outdated, ugly
- Gray, large, traditional
- Static, unappealing, relic

school survey results 11-20-02
Three of the four types of play equipment at Samuels are non-compliant.

The number of children actually accommodated by the allowable playground equipment is 164. That is only 32% of the total enrollment of 511 students.
Section 6: Survey of Constituent Needs & Desires

Students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% of Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel safe at School?</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your school neat and clean?</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are most of the children in school nice to you?</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% of Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do your teachers care about you?</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your teachers want you to do your best?</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like the principal?</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% of Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your parent know what you are learning?</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Needs:

- Feeling of competence
- Social interaction
- Retreat and privacy
- Imaginative play
- Self Discovery
- Intramural outdoor activities
- Environment for active play and athletics
- Sensory involvement with the environment

Community Needs:

- Multi-purpose center
- Safety zone
- Weekend, evening, and summer usage
- After school activities
- Ease of Maintenance

Staff Needs:

- Academic Learning environment
- Curriculum Reinforcement
- Open-ended opportunities

As the world becomes a more dangerous place and children’s freedom to roam decreases, so the school grounds, as a safe open space, become even more important - a special place for generations of special people.

-Titman
Create a learning landscape that encourages involvement, enrichment, and diversity in an inspirational atmosphere while promoting Samuels as a beacon of pride in the Community.
Goals of the School:

1. Celebrate the rich historical and cultural heritage of the Hampden South neighborhood to encourage a broader participation and interest

2. Reinforce curriculum with hands-on outdoor learning opportunities

3. Create spaces in the landscape that allow and encourage programmed and non-programmed elements

4. Enable all physical abilities through the four seasons

5. Promote Samuels as a beacon of pride in the social, academic, physical, and aesthetic realms
Program Wish List

Gateways to announce entrances and to channel traffic flow width 10 to 15’
Amphitheatre /Outdoor Classroom 50x50
Benches for socializing or resting
Tables for working or playing
Plaza for public gatherings 20x20
Drinking fountains
Trees for shade
Landscape for gardening and sensory exploration 20x15
Separate play areas for each age group that are ADA accessible
  • ECE playground equipment area 25x35
  • Primary playground equipment area 40x50
  • Intermediate playground equipment area 40x60
Non-deteriorated Asphalt play areas 3000 sq ft
Quality athletic fields with new surfacing
  • Soccer fields 30x50 yds.
  • Baseball fields
Climbing wall 8’x15’
Interactive Water element
Non-competitive activity areas
Spaces for Children’s Art
Although beautification of dwellings preoccupies many a homemaker, comparable consideration is rarely given to child-care spaces. These settings, by virtue of their anonymous ownership...become an aesthetic no-man’s-land designed more to assist the custodian who maintains them than the users who must grow within them.

-Olds
1. Primary play area
2. Intermediate play area
3. Garden- not used
4. Asphalt- not used
5. Non-usable turf areas
6. Fields are hard dirt and hazardous
7. Dumpsters by garden
8. Large park- not accessible
9. Deteriorated play asphalt
10. Weed infested slope
11. Loose gravel gets on asphalt