



**COLUSA  
EDUCATION  
VILLAGE**



**COLUSA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

JAMES D. MacCONNELL AWARD SUBMITTAL PACKAGE

## Executive Summary

The Education Village is the first newly-constructed campus undertaken by the Colusa County Office of Education – a project 20 years in the making. The County Superintendent worked diligently to acquire funding to build this facility; foundational to her efforts was the goal to bring together the programs and services housed in rental properties or portables throughout Colusa County. The new campus would one day house in a single location the much-needed services for special needs and special program students.

The students planned to attend the new Village campus are from the highest need groups throughout the County - community school students expelled from other high school campuses, autistic students, emotionally disturbed students, medically fragile children who require daily medical procedures/care, adult transition students who must gain the necessary skills to function in real world settings outside of school. Relegated for many years to inadequate store-front and portable facilities, the Superintendent envisioned optimal learning environments for all of these students and their teachers; a site that would be shared by the Superintendent's Administrative offices, rather than far removed from them. That all of this was achieved with 100% hardship funding from the State of California is a testament to the tenacity of the entire project team, in a committed pursuit of the Superintendent's vision.

The Colusa County Office of Education (CCOE) provides educational programs and services that

nurture the development of children and adults, and the Education Village is now a cornerstone for new development in the City of Williams. The Village is located in the heart of the County to best serve its surrounding communities.

County Administrative Departments that assist local school districts, Children's Support Services focused on early childhood education, Special Education Programs/Administration, and the Community High School are located on the 14-acre campus. The Village provides recreational and meeting facilities to the adjacent Community College campus, the Williams community, and the greater Colusa County region. The Education Village efficiently gathers its programs and educational offerings, in service to the area's 21,000+ residents, in the center of this rural county that encompasses more than 1,100 square miles.

Drawing inspiration from the County's extensive farming industry, the campus is organized to resemble a village or large farmstead. Each "house" is individually designed to serve the needs of its department, while maintaining a cohesive campus aesthetic through materials use and scale. Clusters of "houses" with similar education programs are combined to bring a sense of unity throughout the site.

Village classrooms are individually designed to provide for the specific needs of the students who will learn there; for example, the Life Skills classroom resembles a commercial

The campus is Master Planned to allow for easy connection to the adjacent Community College site, and for expansion of classroom and kitchen areas. Planned site additions also include a jointly-funded County Library, a Preschool, and Administrative space for the County Superintendent's office.

The design incorporates several sustainability strategies - displacement ventilation, energy management, and day-lighting controls, combined with the use of rapidly-renewable materials, construction recycling, and public transportation access - to achieve CHPS certification.

A retention pond serves a dual purpose: collecting storm and irrigation drainage, while attracting a variety of local plant and wildlife, including native reeds and grasses, insects, migratory and song birds, fish, frogs, raccoons and jackrabbits. The pond is an outdoor laboratory, inviting observation and experimentation.



VIEW FROM DETENTION BASIN

## Scope of Work

### Phase 1:

#### SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTER

Adult Transition Classroom

Life Skills Classroom

shared: toilets, shower, changing,  
storage, vocational (office & workshop)  
living skills (kitchen, laundry)

Medically Fragile Classroom, Non-Severe

Medically Fragile Classroom, Severe

shared: toilets, shower, changing,  
storage (large), observation

Severe/Emotionally Disturbed with Quiet Room

Pre-School, Autism

Infant Classroom

Observation Room

Storage (one exterior, one interior)

Student Restroom (shared with CR RRs)

Staff Restroom for Teachers

#### COMMUNITY SCHOOL

General Classroom

Small Group Room ("borrowed" from CR)

Storage

Student Restroom

Staff Restroom for Teachers

#### SHARED SPACE

Lobby/Waiting Area for Visitors

Receptionist/Clerical (adjacent to offices)

Nurse's Office

Nurse's Restroom

Student Small Group Rooms

Small Meeting Room (6 people or fewer)

Medium Meeting Room (7-15 people)

all meeting rooms: data/AV & sink

Staff Restrooms

Janitorial

Greenhouse

#### ADMINISTRATION/STUDENT SERVICES

Waiting Area (students)

Assistant Superintendent

Small Office

Dept. Work Area (copy/fax/print/mail)

Storage (Dept. supplies)

Secure Storage (Student Records)

#### ADMINISTRATION, SPECIAL ED SERVICES

Waiting Area (students)

Assistant Superintendent

Open Office (4 workstations & files)

Small Office

Dept. Work Area (copy/fax/print/mail)

Storage (Dept. supplies)

Secure Storage (Student Records)

#### MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING

Multi-Purpose Room

Platform

Therapy Suite

Outdoor Theater

Kitchen (warming)

Kitchen Storage

Table Storage

Lobby

Janitorial

Restroom (Kitchen Staff)

Restroom (Public Use)

### Phase 2:

Warming Kitchen to Full Kitchen

County Superintendent's Office/Administrative

Facilities

Full Pre-school

County Library Site





**TEACHING STATIONS**

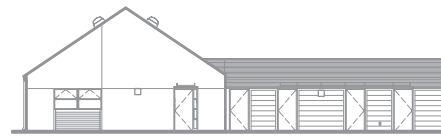
- 7 SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS
- 1 THERAPY SUITE
- 3 COMMUNITY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

- FUTURE DEVELOPMENT:
- 6 COMMUNITY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS
  - 3 SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

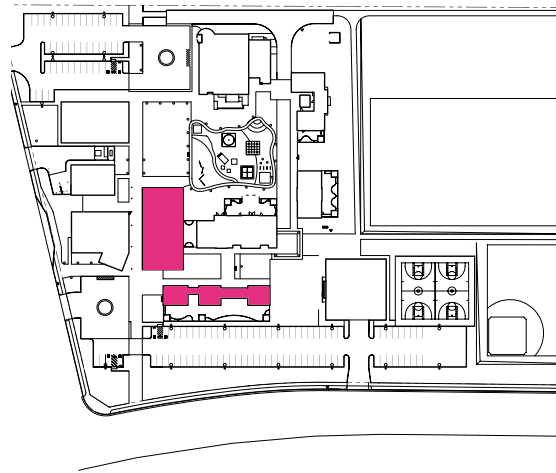


Future, D, Street

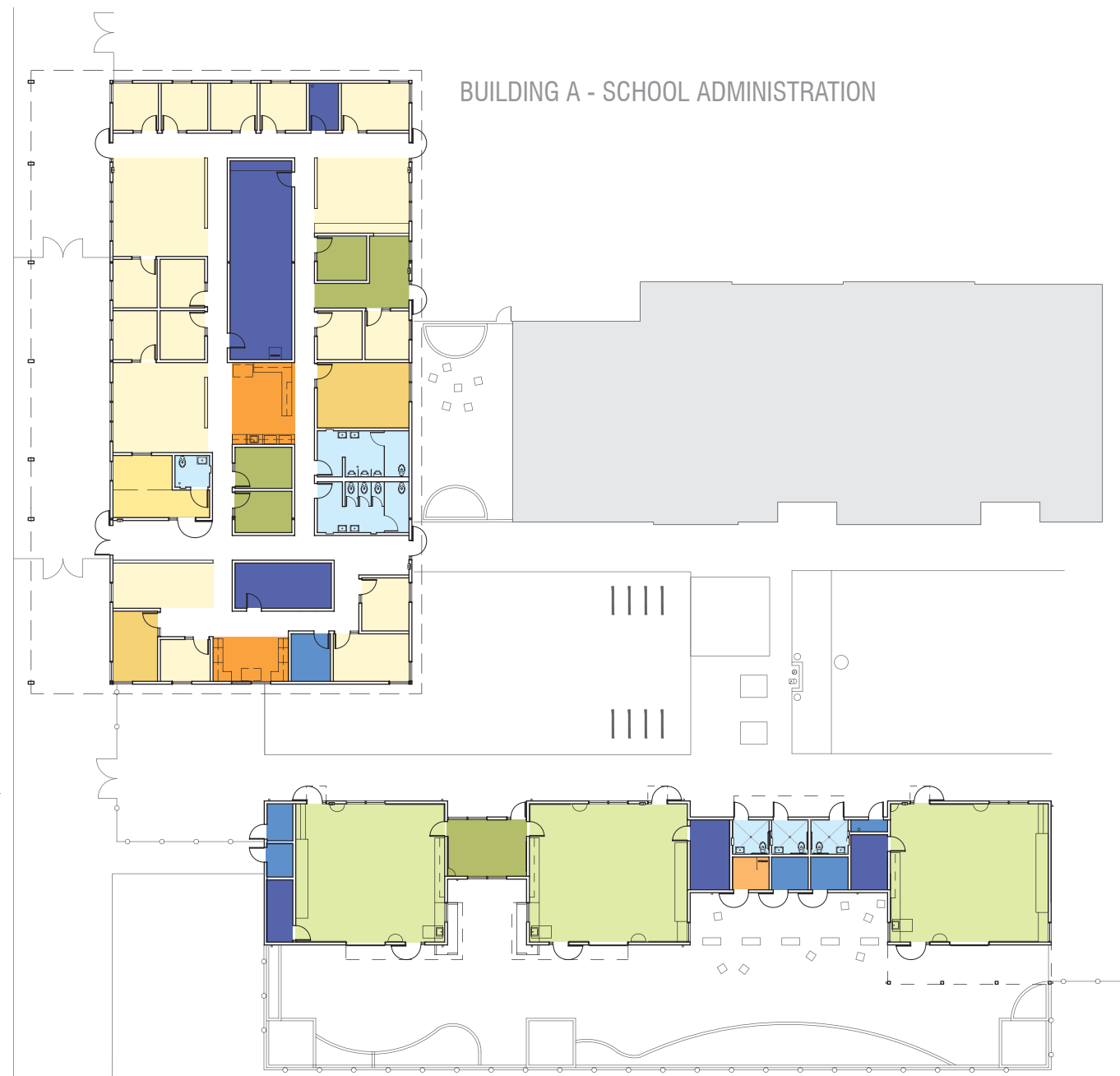
E Street



BUILDING C



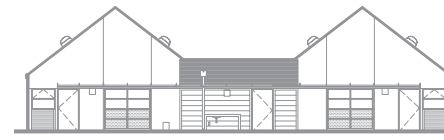
- STORAGE
- DATA, COMMUNICATION, ELECTRICAL, IDF, FSR
- RESTROOMS
- SMALL GROUP, STUDENT WAITING
- CONTINUATION, PRESCHOOL AUTISM, INFANT CLASSROOM
- OFFICE
- CONFERENC ROOM
- LAUNDRY, JANITOR, CHANGING ROOM
- WORK ROOM, VOCATIONAL WORK ROOM



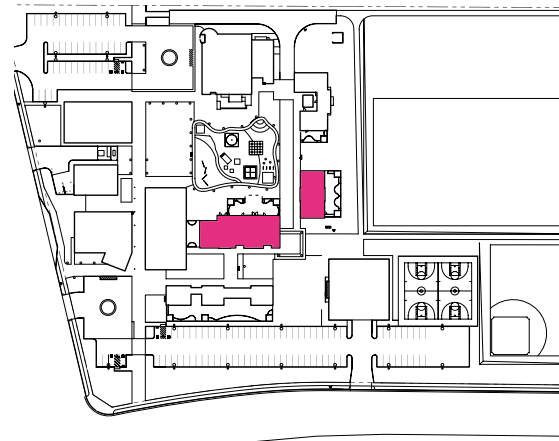
BUILDING A - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

BUILDING C - CONTINUATION SCHOOL

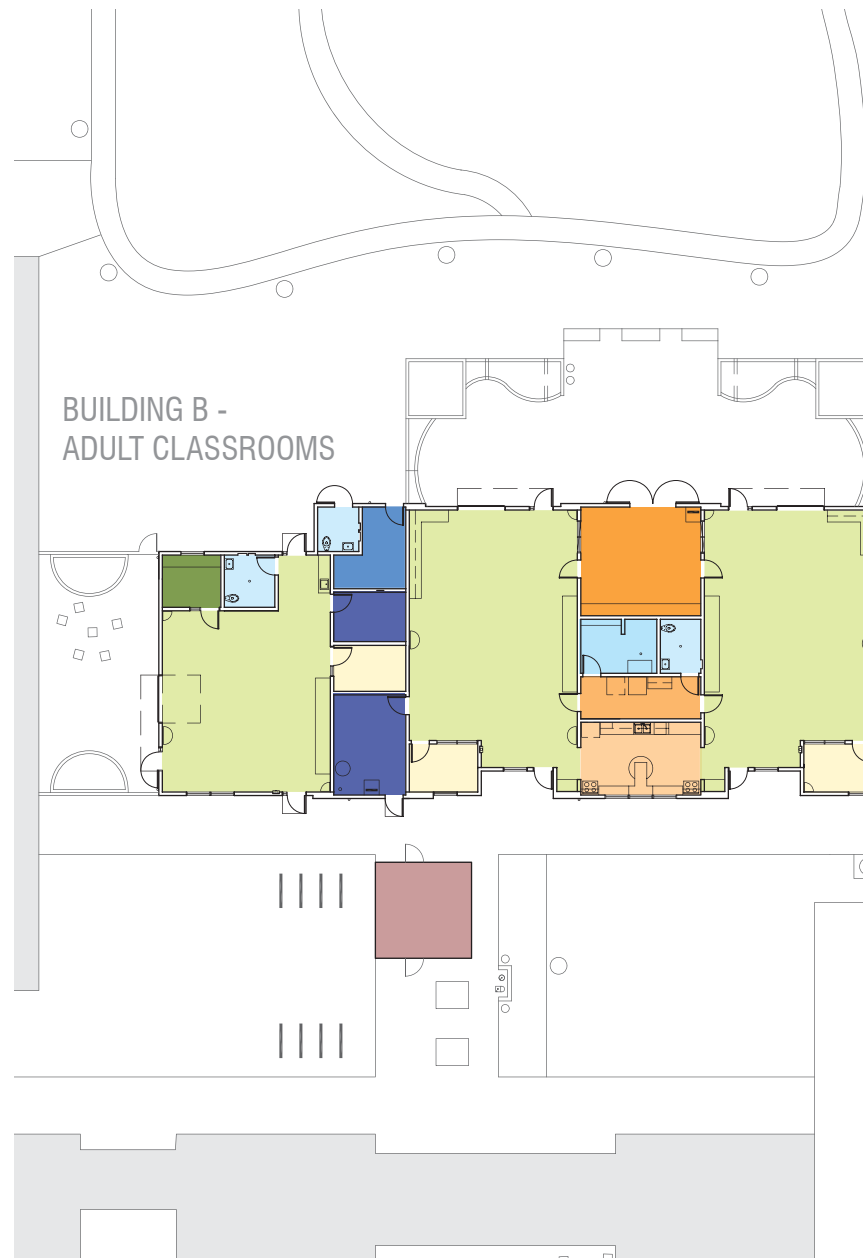




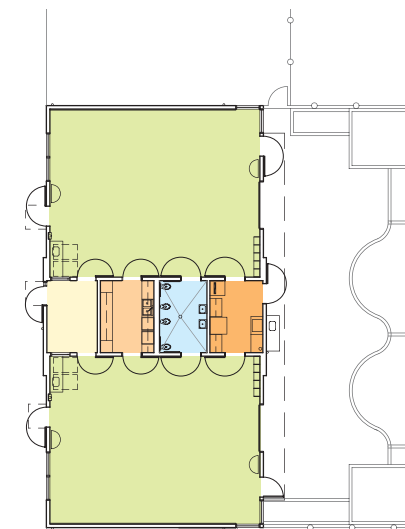
BUILDING D



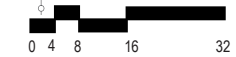
- STORAGE
- DATA, COMMUNICATION, ELECTRICAL, IDF, FSR
- RESTROOMS
- QUIET ROOM
- SMALL GROUP, STUDENT WAITING
- SEVERE, ADULT TRANSITION, LIFE SKILLS CLASSROOMS - BLDG B  
CONTINUATION, PRESCHOOL AUTISM, INFANT CLASSROOM - BLDG D
- OFFICE
- CONFERENC ROOM
- NURSE
- LAUNDRY, JANITOR, CHANGING ROOM
- WORK ROOM, VOCATIONAL WORK ROOM
- GREENHOUSE



BUILDING B -  
ADULT CLASSROOMS

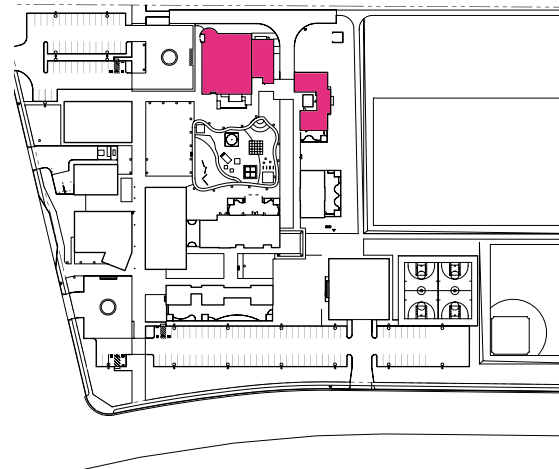


BUILDING D -  
PRESCHOOL

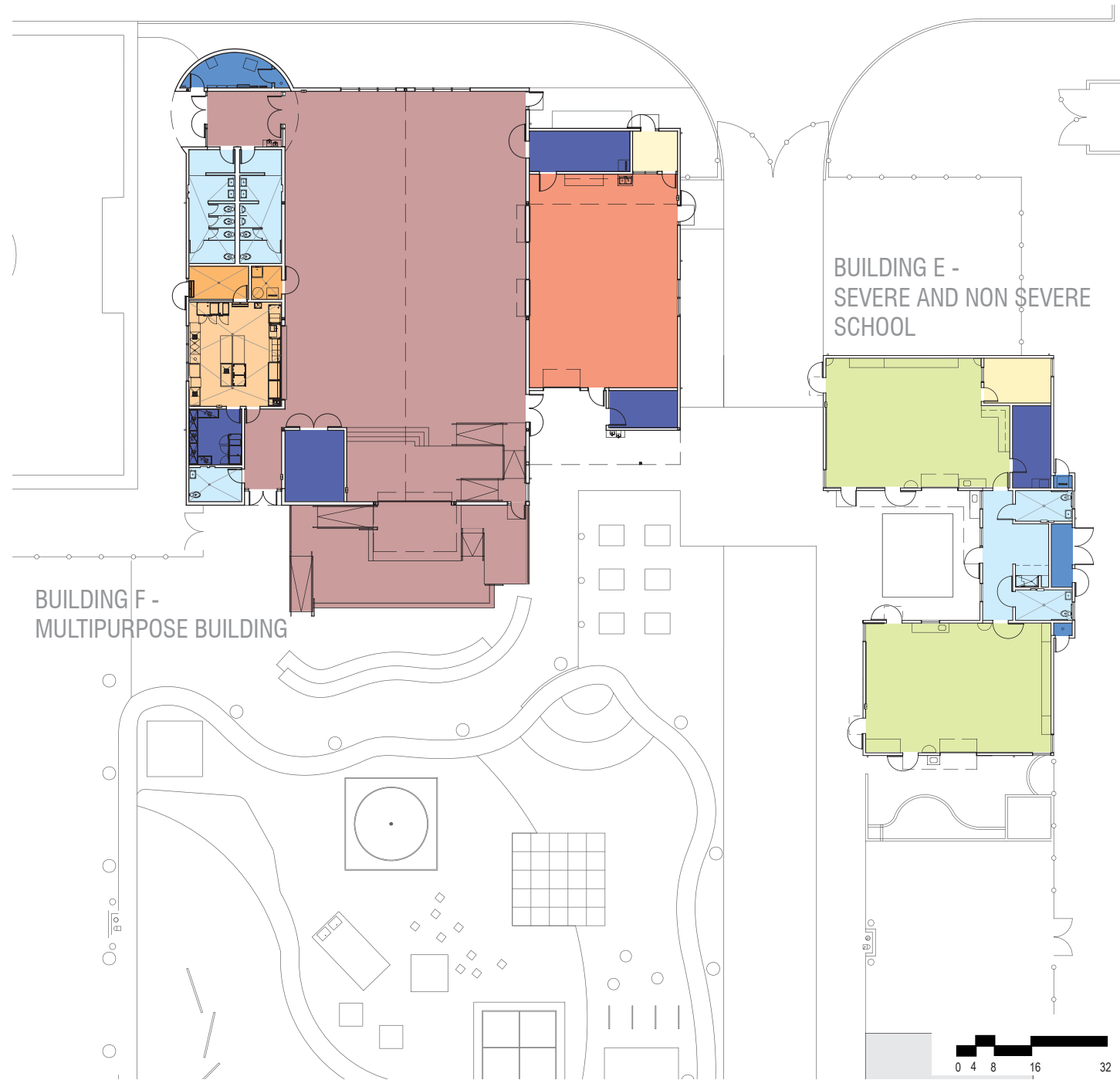




BUILDING D



- STORAGE
- DATA, ELECTRICAL, IDF, FSR
- RESTROOMS
- MEDICALLY FRAGILE CLASSROOMS
- OBSERVATION ROOM
- KITCHEN
- LAUNDRY, JANITOR, CHANGING ROOM
- THERAPY ROOM
- MULTIPURPOSE ROOM



BUILDING F - MULTIPURPOSE BUILDING

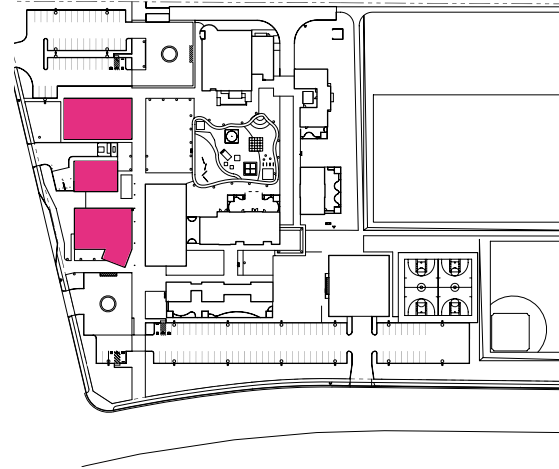
BUILDING E - SEVERE AND NON SEVERE SCHOOL







BUILDING G



BUILDING G - CHILD SERVICES

BUILDING H - MAINTENANCE AND STAFF SERVICES



BUILDING J - BUSINESS SERVICES

- STORAGE
- DATA, ELECTRICAL, IDF, FSR
- RESTROOMS
- MEDICALLY FRAGILE CLASSROOMS
- OBSERVATION ROOM
- KITCHEN
- LAUNDRY, JANITOR, CHANGING ROOM
- THERAPY ROOM
- MULTIPURPOSE ROOM



## Budget and Funding

The Education Village needed a place to put down its roots in this rural county. Despite the worthy character of this endeavor, considerable funding and public relations challenges faced the County Superintendent and Board as the intent to build the Village moved forward.

Limited funding was available from the State of California to construct the project and further, the County Office of Education does not have the opportunity to pass general obligation bonds. Colusa County patiently “waited in line” until State funding came available.

Next came the task of finding a suitable site; School Site Solutions helped the County to qualify three potential “homes” for the Village. The County first considered two sites in the City of Colusa; both were strongly objected to by local residents who did not want students with emotional/behavioral/physical problems housed at a school in their neighborhood. After much deliberation, the decision was reached to purchase the third available site, in centrally-located Williams; close to Highway 5, the main freeway artery that serves a majority of Colusa County’s residents.

Funding time constraints forced the Project Team to expedite the funding process; without this speedy effort, the high-need students of Colusa County would lose their new home. Initially limited by a modest budget, due to State Hardship Funding status, the Village has prospered all the same, taking advantage of every budget

opportunity to engage its students in abundant learning pathways throughout the campus.

Although the State of California has often limited the funding for community/special services schools because of their “portable” facility status, a concerted effort on the part of the County Superintendent and the architect ensured (after many Sacramento visits) that this project received every dollar it could possibly garner. A notable example: the Multi-Purpose Building is carefully integrated with the Therapy Room, accomplishing the construction of two spaces, with the funding provided for one.

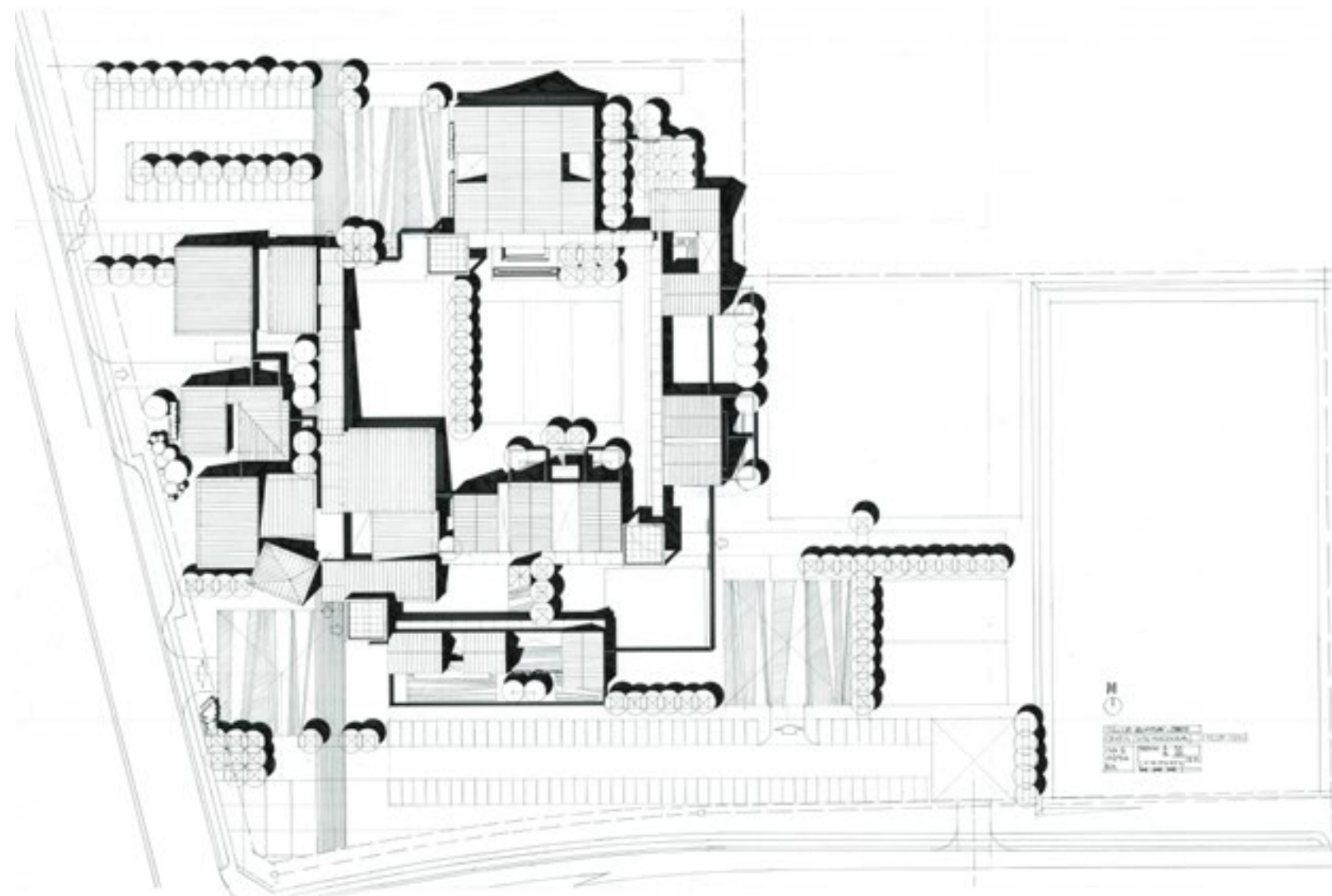
Careful categorization of each building program element, in accordance with the State’s complex funding matrix, put thousands of additional dollars into action for this unique project.

A partnership with the accomplished professionals at ECM Associates – and a slow-down in new construction that fostered a favorable bid climate - brought an initially over-budget bid analysis into alignment with the requirements of the Education Village, while including nearly every original design feature in the completed campus.

First estimates showed the project to be \$3M over budget, and this included only half of the Administration area, as well as bidding the Multipurpose Building - a centerpiece of the campus - as an Alternate. While the Project Team would not have proceeded with any

project elements that put the project over budget, listing them in later phases, this action was not necessary.

This project qualified for 100% hardship funding from the State of California. Cost per square foot for the Colusa County Education Village was \$256.



## Community Engagement

Many people in Colusa County worked tirelessly to make the Education Village a reality. To expedite and encourage the Planning process - and the important ideas that would stem from it - we hosted an all-day charrette. This lively community engagement event sparked interest and support from a wide variety of participants - students, staff, administrators, community members, business owners, service organizations, and of course, the Superintendent and members of the County Board of Education.

Workshop discussions, centered on exploring the latest trends in education, were vibrant and purposeful. The end result of the charrette gave us a detailed picture of the campus' conceptual design; even "filling in the blanks" on the elements of building colors and fixtures; identifying, for example, those colors that are most calming to autistic children. Play equipment is especially important to the students at the Village, serving recreational and adaptability purposes. The charrette feedback helped us to identify the equipment most beneficial to students with physical disabilities; play experiences that would help them to navigate real-world situations and the challenges faced there.

Our discussions with future Village students concerning their new school "home" were inspirational and informative. They looked forward to coming together on a campus that would gather students of varying abilities; relishing the opportunity to act as "big brothers and sisters", mentoring those who needed extra

help and support. Student art work was invited for submission and the student designs selected became part of the learning environment - as art glass panels placed throughout the school. A favorite panel is the "aquarium" window, featuring colorful tropical fish on a blue-water background.

Input from students is especially important; they can readily identify learning areas that may need improvement and may be overlooked by teachers or administrators. Working in a peer group setting, we encouraged their input and decision-making. And the design-related nature of the artwork submissions and brought about best results from the students, in a focused and structured timeframe.

We honored the Planning participants' input throughout the design development phase, continuing to narrow the focus on the architectural character of the Village; how it would fit into the surrounding community, evoke efficient spatial relationships between programmed areas, satisfy equipment requirements, and make use of the most effective color and materials. The result: a responsive, functional, and efficient facility, that simultaneously meets the needs of the great variety of students housed at this site.

The Colusa County Education Village opened at the height of the recession in California - for both economic and educational circumstances. Many Colusa County districts chose to keep their students at their own school sites, thereby continuing to receive the daily attendance

funding allowance for them. While these financially-based decisions clearly limited the learning opportunities available at the Village for special needs students, the budget issue nevertheless trumped that of student interests and needs.

The Village is currently operating below its physical capacity to serve the students of Colusa County. County Superintendent Dr. Kay Spurgeon remains undaunted as she

approaches her 80th birthday, continuing her steadfast service to all the students of Colusa County. Always open to new possibilities, Dr. Spurgeon is now considering housing a dependent charter school on the Education Village campus; one that will accommodate on-site and virtual/distance learning students - a new education choice for families who wish to take advantage of the many learning environments and pathways offered at this site.



## Educational Environment

The multi-faceted educational program at the Village aims to support every student, evidencing achievement and a holistic sense of well-being that is celebrated in each classroom on a daily basis.

Adult Transition and Life Skills students are learning to function independently, in the outside world. Their educational tasks center on caring for their personal needs (grooming, making appointments), socializing, learning to cook/bake and garden - even navigate a trip to the laundromat. Classroom atmospheres are business- or office-like, and include a kitchen/cafe environment. Goals for this student group are focused on understanding how to use various home and office machines/appliances, working in a garden, and shop for food or supplies. Cafe display windows display student food and baked goods; the diner has a real-world, bright and fun atmosphere. Workroom skills also involve janitorial activities.

Medically fragile students are providing nursing care, while practicing basic skills such as feeding themselves. Personal hygiene is also a learning focus. They experience a multitude of textures in their classroom, while noise is kept to a minimum.

Emotionally disturbed children experience a classroom with soft flooring, and a quiet ambience. Academics are accomplished in small break-out areas in the classroom; an observation room for use by professionals and

parents is adjacent, as well as the office for this department. The project area accommodates wet, messy activities.

The Autism Pre-school classroom accommodates parent interactions with their students. Similar to any pre-school environment, the educational emphasis here is on socialization, communication and mobility. Safety is emphasized throughout this classroom; calming colors, minimized distractions, and door hardware placement help to evoke a safe atmosphere. An adjacent observation room is available for use by professionals and parents. The Infant classroom is similar in its arrangement and goals, helping parents to effectively interact with their children while they learn socialization and mobilization skills. Here, the instruction is limited to 3 hours, at most.

Community School students participate in group activities, projects, and lectures. The students are in grades 7-12 and experience an atmosphere that is collaborative and collegial - not institutional. Roll-up garage doors lead directly from their classrooms to the outdoors; a classroom garden and outdoor work counters accommodate learning and experiments. Ongoing projects and individualized learning are emphasized; one-on-one testing and conferencing is easily accommodated, and quiet reading spaces are also available.



## Physical Environment

The architectural forms of the Village are reminiscent of local barn and farm architecture, resembling houses on the prairie that would have been evident in the region more than 100 years ago. Simultaneously, the campus buildings create both large and small community spaces that are filled with educational resources for students including: an interactive play area, and an assembly area filled with hands-on learning activities for students (sinks, work tables, innovative play equipment and surfaces).

Throughout the buildings and outdoor learning spaces, the environment evidences a variety of surfaces and textures, offering students real-world experiences (later encountered outside the school) in comfortable, compact settings. The smaller classroom courtyards include educational enhancements such as greenhouses, bicycle parking adjacent to classrooms, and outdoor learning and assembly areas.

The Education Village promotes a rich learning experience for children and adults; educational opportunities not previously available and now provided in a central setting that benefits the greater Colusa County community. The Colusa County Education Village serves a broad variety of constituents, each learning space adapted to the needs of specific student/user groups. A “walk” through the classroom and outdoor spaces illustrates this diversity and its overarching emphasis on educational achievement, for every student.

**Community School Students** experience a learning environment that is collegial, not institutional, while attending classes at the Education Village. The adjacency of the satellite Woodland Community College campus, a short walk down the footpath, further emphasizes this atmosphere; visual reminders that “next steps” in learning are just ahead.

Round tables, a mobile lab station, convenient data ports, and LCD projectors with document cameras are contemporary learning enhancements in the high school classrooms. Operable windows, and natural lighting from windows and skylights, are visible indicators of the Village’s commitment to sustainability.

Deeper-than-normal window frames permit window areas to double as display shelves. A roll-up garage door in each classroom takes learning outdoors in the often-favorable climate. Small-group areas, “borrowed” from the larger classroom space, accommodate groups of five or less with separate furnishings and tack-boards; this space doubles as an individual reading, testing and conference area.

**Medically fragile children** experience a classroom environment that is quiet and sunlit, appealing to their sense of touch and sight and encouraging development of basic life skills. Wide doorways with automatic sensors permit easy wheelchair access; additional sound insulation keeps outside noise to a minimum. High windows bring in abundant natural

light, while a sensory wall provides a textural experience with wood, masonry, tile, porcelain, rock and steel. Soft pine tack-boards permit easy poster/artwork displays. A full ceiling in this classroom cuts down on dust accumulation.

Dedicated circuits for medical equipment are placed throughout the room. A built-in music system, a lockable refrigerator, dishwasher, shower, low-boy changing table/bed, and close adjacencies to Therapy and Drop-off areas are part of this specialized environment.

**Preschoolers with autism** often share their classroom space with parents, who are learning the necessary skills to meet the needs of their children; an adjacent Observation Room aids in this learning process. As with the Medically Fragile students, the Autism classroom provides a “sensory wall” of various textures/materials and wide doors with automatic sensors.

Soft surfaces – carpet and sheet rubber - provide safe, quiet flooring. Door hardware is placed as high as possible, to minimize safety issues with “runners” - students who may bolt unexpectedly from the classroom.

Adult Transition students learn to work in society, acquiring the skills to accomplish cooking, gardening, laundry, and simple office or custodial tasks. The environment has a business or workshop atmosphere, with easy access to the outdoors to work in the class garden. This classroom is

floored with stained concrete in the cooking, eating, and shop areas. Tack-boards display student arts and crafts; window placement and skylights bring in abundant natural lighting.

**The Central Play Area**, bordered by the Multipurpose Building and Classroom/Administrative wings, is “floored” with a cushiony rubberized surface that gently steps up in height, to the center point. The height changes help students learn to navigate the uneven surfaces they may encounter outside a school environment. A plumbing bench doubles as a tetherball pole and spinning “cups” hold seated students as they twirl and sway, practicing balancing skills.

**Outdoor Learning** includes concrete project counters outside of the classrooms invite art, science, and gardening projects to move outdoors. A greenhouse offers the community school students a chance to raise plants for sale and campus use.

Raised garden beds throughout the Village can accommodate additional vegetable and flower projects. The Superintendent is currently working with a local Master Gardeners group, to set up student programs focused on gardening and horticulture.

The retention pond is a source of plant and animal life, changing throughout the year. It provides a perfect setting for science experimentation and observation.

**The Multipurpose Building** hosts gatherings large and small, served by a warming kitchen that will soon be converted to a full-service facility. A raised stage area opens to the central play area for outdoor performance use, as well.

Optimal acoustics, stage lighting, projection equipment, and sound system accommodate musical/theater performances and guest speakers. Exposed structural beams and a metal screen over the ductwork recall the elements of barn/farm architecture.

**The Therapy Room**, adjacent to the Multipurpose space, is equipped with a wide variety of movement and play equipment, including a free-standing A Frame to help teachers and aides lift/move students, and a painted trike path that circles outside and back through the roll-up garage door.

The floor surface is flexible, providing a soft-but-firm foundation for therapy activities. The space has abundant natural light from the numerous skylights. Space adjacencies to the Medically Fragile classroom and Multipurpose space respect important access pathways.



THE THERAPY ROOM

## Results & Achievements

The Colusa County Education Village provides contemporary, adaptable learning environments for the many high-need student populations served by the County's programs. The programs, once scattered throughout the county, are now conveniently available in a single location - and storefront rental spaces and portable buildings are no longer an impediment to the provision of those vital services.

Students now have bright, clean, properly equipped classrooms and support spaces in which to learn and practice their skills. Caregivers, aides, administrators and teachers are now better able to help their students take next steps forward toward achievement and independence. Educational opportunities are abundantly available throughout the Village, with specific programmatic improvements implemented in every classroom and outdoor space.

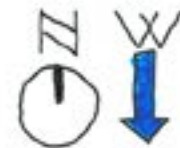
Staff members and administrators have adequate conference, meeting, storage, and work spaces in which to accomplish their tasks. Secure document storage, so important to the Special Education Center, is accomplished in a safe, on-site location. Student and staff growth can be easily accommodated on the 14-acre site, and has already been incorporated in the facility's Master Plan.

Initial opposition to the two "in town" Village sites identified in the City of Colusa, has placed the village quite literally in the heart of the

County. A new senior housing development quickly sprang up across the street, along with retail and office locations. The Village is at the center of it all, and partnerships possibilities are many. Community school students can move freely from their classes at the Village, to the Woodland Community College campus for more advanced coursework. Community groups such as the local Master Gardeners make the Village a center of neighborhood activity; the Gardeners are initiating plans to mentor students in a variety of gardening activities and projects. The Multipurpose Building offers residents a wonderful space in which to gather - and meal service is accomplished easily with the modern serving kitchen. The play fields and courts provide community members with a place to play. The retention pond is a beautiful feature already teeming with wildlife - a very visible reminder that the Village is committed to sustainable practices, indoors and out.

Although the County's districts have not yet been willing to send the majority of their special needs students to the Village, low enrollment numbers have opened up new education vistas. With a respected Charter organization eager to establish a dependent charter campus - one that offers virtual and on-site learning options - the Education Village will likely have a new group of student "residents" as part of the facility's visionary program.

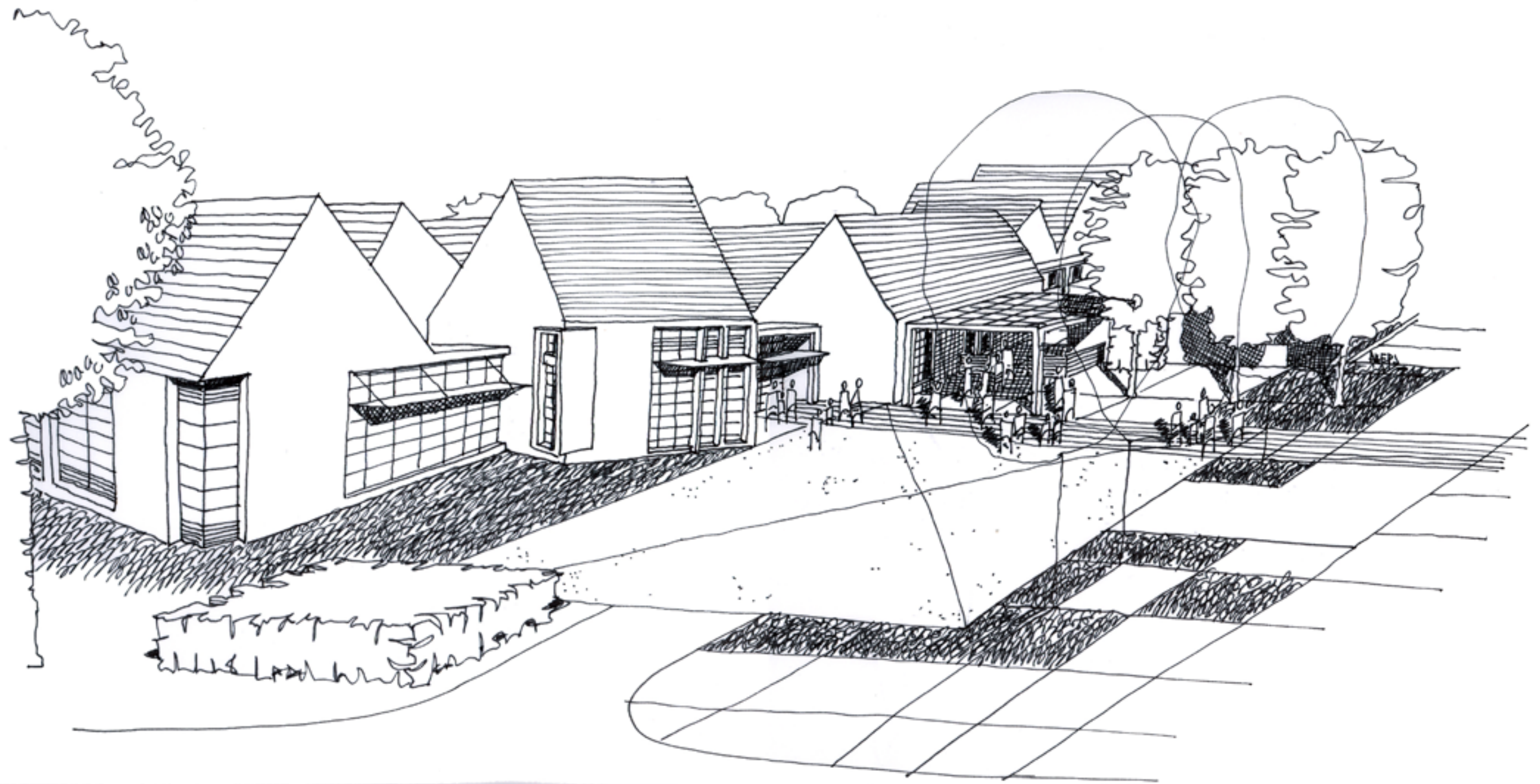








VIEW FROM DETENTION BASIN





SCHOOL MAIN ENTRY

Colusa Education Village



COMMUNITY SCHOOL PATIO & GARDEN



COMMUNITY SCHOOL COURTYARD



EXPLORATION FOREST

Colusa Education Village



PRE-SCHOOL AUTISM CLASSROOM



COMMUNITY SCHOOL CLASSROOM





MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING & OUTDOOR STAGE

Colusa Education Village



MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING

Colusa Education Village



MEDICALLY FRAGILE CLASSROOM