

Holly PK-12

Holly, Colorado



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

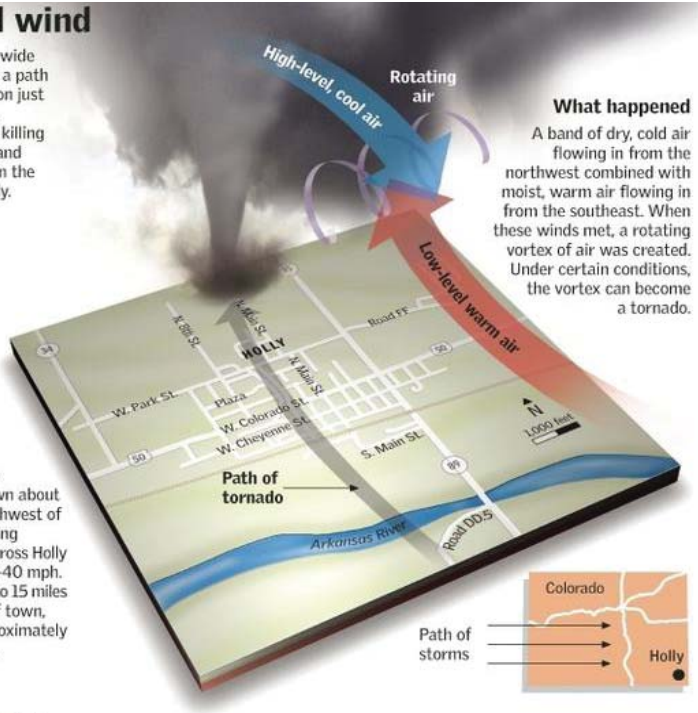


Lethal wind

A 600-foot-wide tornado left a path of destruction just after 8 p.m. Wednesday, killing one person and injuring 11, in the town of Holly.

The tornado touched down about 2 miles southwest of Holly, traveling northeast across Holly at about 35-40 mph. It ended 12 to 15 miles northeast of town, lasting approximately 20 minutes.

Sources: National Weather Service, Nick Carter/9News



What happened

A band of dry, cold air flowing in from the northwest combined with moist, warm air flowing in from the southeast. When these winds met, a rotating vortex of air was created. Under certain conditions, the vortex can become a tornado.

Jonathan Moreno | The Denver Post

Holly School: Building for A Brighter Future

Just four miles from the Kansas state line in southeastern Colorado lies the small rural agricultural town of Holly, population 802.

Holly's difficult history—from the dust bowl days of the 1930's, through survival of the great hundred-year flood of 1965, to the current longstanding drought—honed the strength of character of the community. It's difficult to imagine, when experiencing the lively activity around Holly's beautiful new PK-12 school campus, that just seven years ago a significant part of the town was destroyed by back-to-back natural disasters.

In January of 2007, an epic four-day blizzard paralyzed the town of Holly. It was followed two months later by a tornado that devastated a 600-foot swath of land, leaving a heavy shadow over the Holly community. The Holly tornado killed two, injured many, and destroyed or seriously damaged more than 160 homes. "Yes, we've had some challenges," explained Superintendent Carlyn Yokum. "After the tornado, we lost people because the housing was gone. As if that weren't enough, we've experienced severe drought conditions. We haven't had a crop for 3 or 4 years." Like other tiny rural towns, Holly experienced an exodus—a dying off that could have rendered the community extinct. But Holly persevered.

Faced with deteriorating buildings and very real concerns for student safety, the Holly School District pulled up its bootstraps and set forth on a master plan process in the fall of 2007 that would identify a positive vision for the school and community's future, with extensive collaboration from community members.

Colorado's BEST program gave Holly the boost it needed to assemble a team that would honor the community's spirit and build a new school that would become a source of pride and a center for learning and personal interaction—not only for its students—but also for the greater Holly community.

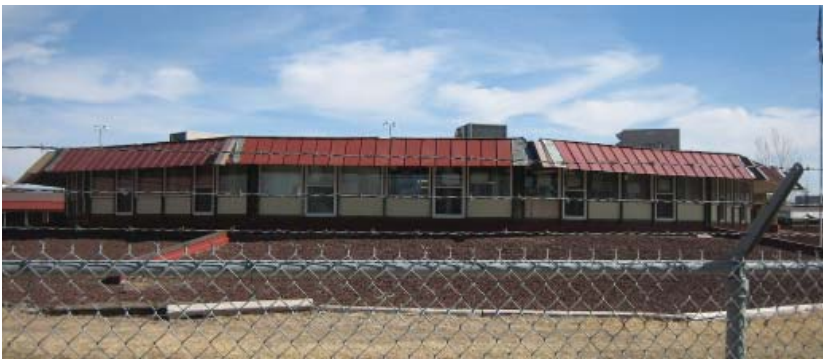
The Colorado Department of Education Division of Public School Capital Construction Assistance primarily administers a capital construction grant program known as Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST). The BEST Program focuses on helping schools with a multitude of capital construction needs; from new roofs and boilers, to major renovations and new schools. The goal of the BEST Program is to provide first class, high performing, 21st century facilities and help alleviate health and safety concerns



1935 Dust Bowl Photo near Holly
Credit: Andres Garcia



The historic WPA era gymnasium before renovation.



The old jr. high/high school was demolished to make room for the new state of the art PK-12 school.

throughout Colorado. The BEST Program is a competitive grant program available to all public school districts, charter schools, institute charter schools, boards of cooperative educational services and the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind.

Grant applications are reviewed on a yearly cycle and recommended for funding by the Capital Construction Assistance Board. The board consists of nine appointed members who in conjunction with Division staff review all grant applications. The BEST Assistance Fund has four revenue sources: State Land Trust Funds, Colorado Lottery Spillover Funds, and Interest.

The architect supported Holly School District's BEST Grant by developing three master plan options with supporting detailed conceptual cost estimates, utilizing Educational Program Area Guidelines established by the Colorado Department of Education, detailed facility assessments, and the established District goals and values. The option ultimately chosen would provide a new K-12 replacement facility with a combination of building demolition and retention/repair/remodel and additions to selected existing facilities, enabling the existing facilities to serve the District for the next 50-75 years. This option was the basis for a BEST Grant application and successful 2010 bond election.

According to Superintendent Yokum, the new school could not have been built without the BEST grant. "Our maximum bonding capacity was \$3.4 million. In spite of the hard times, we received great support from the community. The bond passed overwhelmingly. But even with the District's matching funds of \$3.4 million, we would not have been able to even begin building a new school. The \$25 million BEST grant we received made our new school possible."

Approximately 125,600 students in the state of Colorado are now benefiting from improved learning environments funded by BEST, which has improved health, safety, and security in 325 Colorado school facilities to date. It is this forward-reaching effort to improve education in Colorado that has helped to revivify small rural communities like Holly that otherwise might disappear. More than just fighting to survive, today's Holly community is infused with a pride and enthusiasm that serves as a foundation for a thriving future.

While providing a secure, safe environment for students, public access was greatly improved with the new school design. Community groups can use the school, the largest and most accessible community facility in town, for any worthy purpose through an application process.



The architect inviting input from students during the planning process



Students of "Through the Lens" photography class developed by the inspired architectural intern

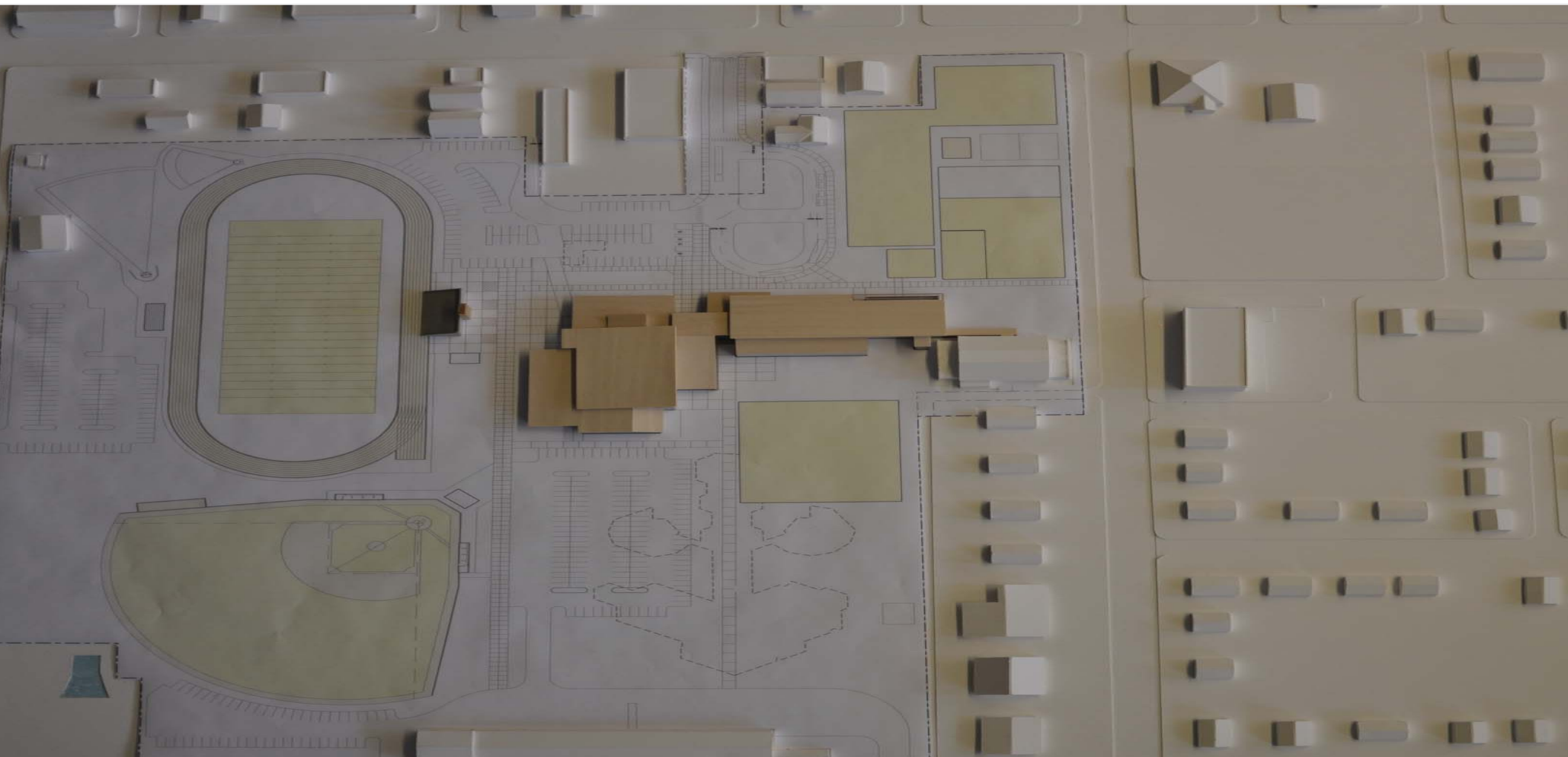
The alumni dinner will be held at the school, the 4-H club uses the school for meetings, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes meet after school hours, and when there are funerals that are larger than a church or funeral home can accommodate, they can be held at Holly School.

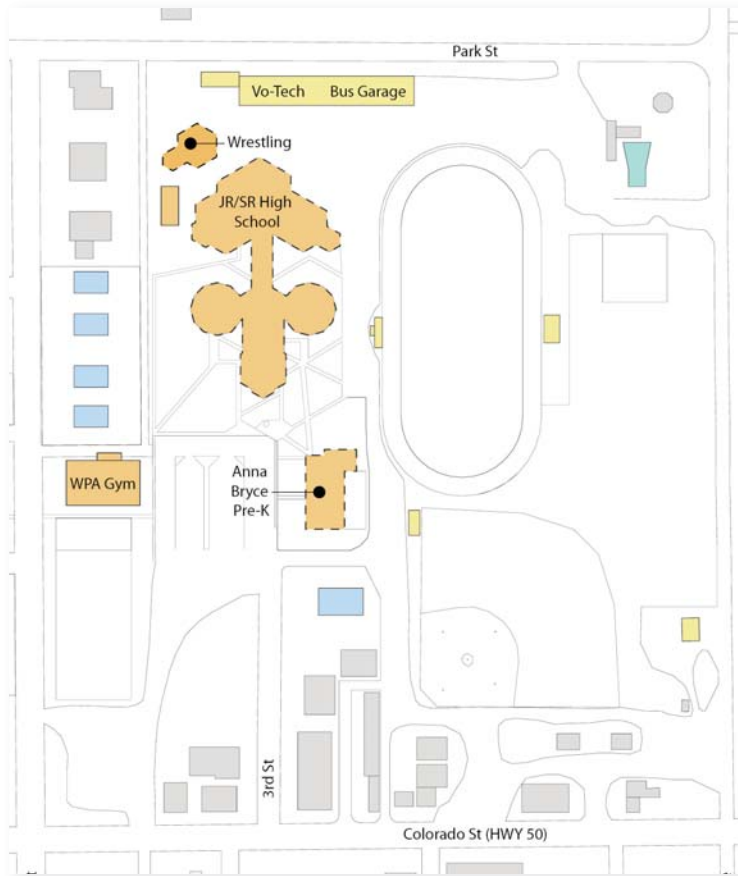
The Project goals included:

- Design "21st Century" educational environments that support academic excellence and achievement
- Ensure district-wide student safety, security and health
- Provide state of the art, regulation athletic fields and sports facilities
- Integrate proven, high-performing sustainable design principles into the design of the new school
- Honor the values of stewardship, propriety and operational efficiency
- Encourage "life long learning" through community access, local partnerships and global networks
- Promote a sense of "community" and "regionalism," by fitting the modern architecture of the new school building to the land, the people, their activities, and the "place" of Holly
- Support and enhance local commerce, development, and exchange

These eight principles served as the roadmap to develop and test the design solutions evaluated by the design advisory team.

SCOPE OF WORK





Site Before



Holly Aerial

Owner | Holly School District

Use | Preschool through Grade 12 Educational Facility

Capacity | 372 students

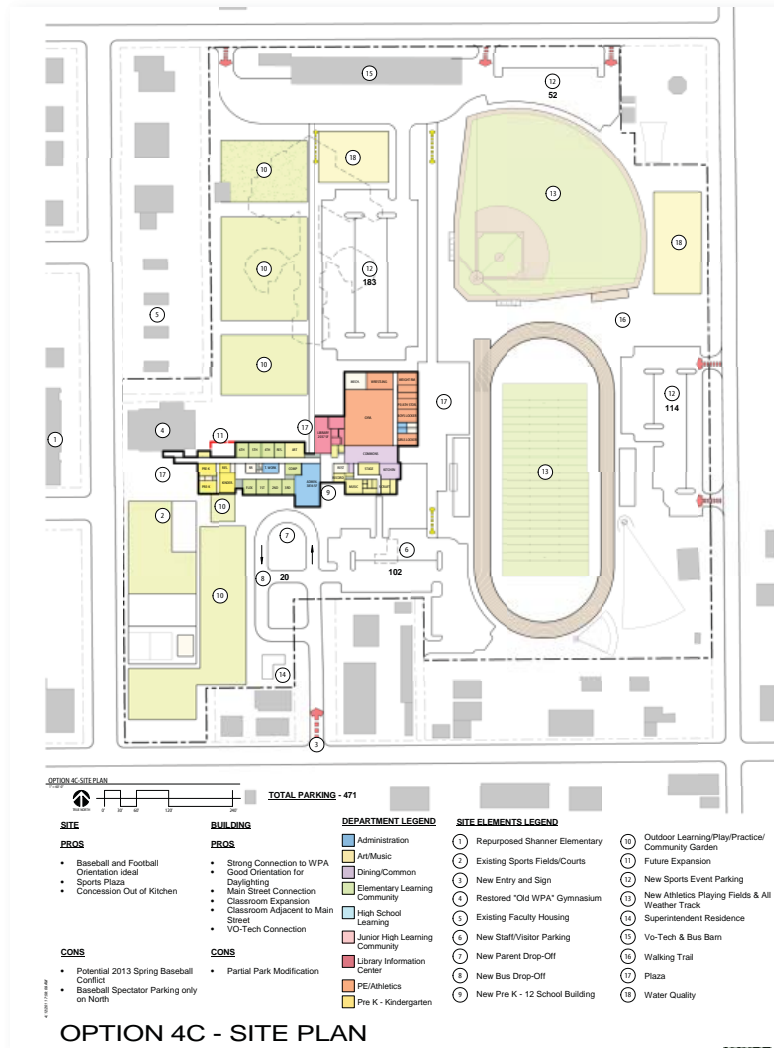
Size | New Construction Area: 74,948 sf | Gross Area: 93,348 sf

Budget | \$25,000,000 (BEST); \$3,400,000 (Bond) | Total Budget: \$28,400,000
Construction Cost: \$22,724,547

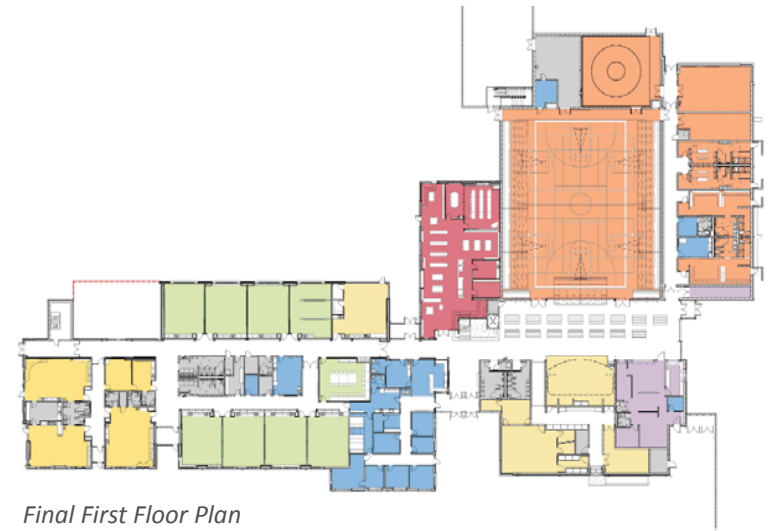
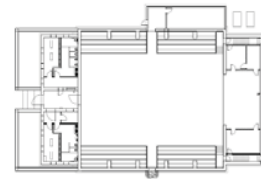
Occupancy Date | August 2013



Site Analysis – Regional

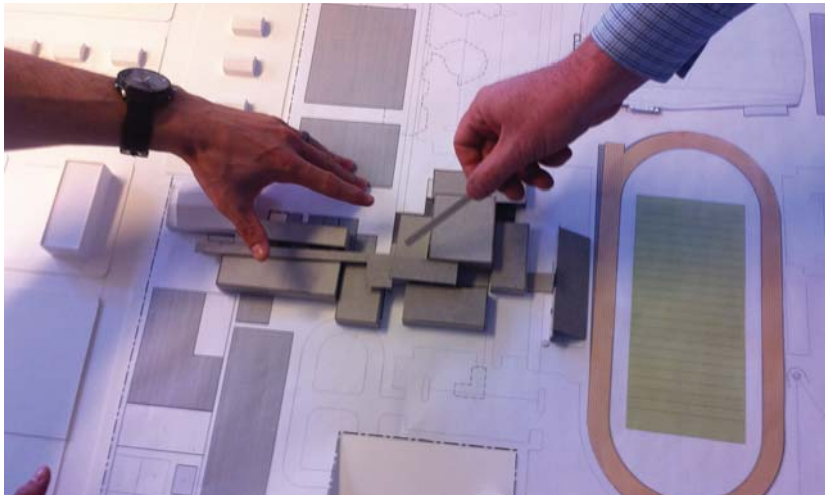


Site - Final Option



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS





An Interactive Process

In order to capture the district's goals for the new school, nine design advisory team meetings were held along with three community meetings. Through a highly interactive process the district priorities were identified and guided the final design solution from the beginning of the process to the end.

Design advisory team members included school board members, neighbors, parents, students, teachers, principals, and the mayor of Holly. The design advisory team meetings were open and interactive discussions between the members of the committee. Meetings included presentations by students, teachers, and community members.

Design Meets District Goals

- "21st Century" educational environments support academic excellence and achievement through design elements in the facility.
- District-wide student safety, security, and health are ensured through a secure entry and age-specific learning communities.
- State of the art, regulation athletic fields and sports facilities enhance athletic performance and reinforce community ties.
- Proven, high-performing sustainable design principles are integrated through passive design strategies incorporated in the design of the new school.
- Values of stewardship, propriety and operational efficiency are honored by the building design being used as a teaching tool through exposed systems needed to operate the building.
- "Life long learning" is offered through community access, local partnerships, and global networks supported through a distance learning lab.
- A sense of community and regionalism by fitting the modern architecture of the new school building to the land, the people, their activities and the "place" of Holly. It is further promoted through use of regional and demolished site materials and display of historical photographs and awards.
- Local commerce, development, and exchange is supported and encouraged through accessibility of the facilities for various community use purposes.



Through the Lens

As a mutually beneficial part of the initial design process, the architect's visionary intern developed and taught a photography class to a group of Holly students. In turn, student photographs of the community influenced the architectural design of the school.



“Holly School IS our community. The deep involvement from our citizens during the planning process ensured that. The architects held weekly meetings with the District Advisory Group made up of school and community members in the committee planning process. We met with a number of organizations to determine what their needs would be, and we gained a lot of support from that process.”

—Superintendent Yokum



EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT





Student-Centered Environment

The curriculum implemented across all grade levels in Holly promotes achievement by each individual student with adequate support from teachers, parents, and community.

The school is arranged in age-specific “learning communities” that utilize shared facilities to promote and separate age appropriate “academic neighborhoods”, grade transitions, and internal zoning especially critical in a PK-12 model.

Ample storage facilities in all educational, athletic, and staff areas promote uncluttered classrooms, work, and athletic areas; and support educational program flexibility and high level, facility-wide organization and material access.

The design advisory team also requested that the final design acknowledge, address, and design for the broader opportunities of continuing education with the new school’s ability to function as a planned community-wide educational and civic resource. The design advisory team also set a goal to create strategic community partnerships built upon clearly defined goals and objectives that enable the new facility to serve the students and adults of the Holly School District in an effective and regionally purposeful manner.

“New, first class technology supports a 21st century curriculum. Students are learning to use Google docs and using fewer textbooks and less paper. Holly’s teachers are working hard to rewrite the curriculum to 21st century standards. The design of the new school enhances everything we do. We even have a distance-learning studio and are offering Spanish to area schools, from here in Holly.”

–Superintendent Yokum

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT





The exposed mechanical and electrical systems throughout the building are used as a teaching opportunity.



Reclaimed lumber and decking from the demolished Anna Bryce School in multiple locations express the heritage of the community and demonstrate the ability of new buildings to reuse existing materials.

Safety First

The old schools were not safe places for kids. “We had too many doors, which made them impossible to monitor properly. The planning process was exemplary. The architects met with staff members individually four times, to learn what teachers needed in the classrooms. They worked closely with school administration, the school board, and school staff in the planning stages,” explains Yokum.

Today’s Holly School is a safe place. Access is controlled at the main entry so school staff know who is in the building at all times. The entire locker room area was designed to FEMA standards to serve as a tornado shelter should stormy skies bring destruction again. Superintendent Yokum adds, “There is a sense of security that we all feel here, which serves our need as a community recovering from multiple traumas.”

The age-specific “learning communities” within the school were designed around the detailed requirements of the students, parents, and teachers in each learning community. Student amenities were designed based on students’ academic development with appropriate breakout spaces, adjacency to outdoor spaces, access to technology, and art and science labs. Final classroom locations were based on student ages and allow for comfortable parent access while remaining secure.

The school is the center of the Holly community, and special attention was paid to allow for community access to the building. The board room, library, distance learning classroom, and commons are easily accessible through the secure entry of the building and serve to support community functions before and after school. The new outdoor track around Holly’s football field is often used by the public when teams are not practicing there, and an elevated walking track around the gym serves citizens’ fitness needs, regardless of the weather.

The final design of the school reflects the straightforward and pragmatic nature of the community. Creative solutions that satisfy the requirements of the project while expressing the systems needed to operate the building, enables students to gain an understanding of the systems and sequential process required to build a 21st century school honoring the values of stewardship, propriety, and operational efficiency.



Past awards and photographs are on display in the commons.

The design team integrated a variety of technology options into the building including interactive smart boards in every classroom, a common distance learning classroom, student breakout spaces for each age based learning community, high performance daylighting, and acoustics in every classroom.

The furniture in the classroom is designed to support diverse learners. For example, classrooms are equipped with chairs designed to be sat upon comfortably forward or backward without distracting from the lesson; “Hoki” stools with slightly rounded bottoms that move with the students allow younger kids to wiggle just a little, which research shows helps them to focus and pay attention better. “Students who have trouble sitting still really benefit from these innovative chairs because they are not stuck at a desk,” explained Principal Heather Flint.



Exposed tubular daylighting devices transmit daylight to the interior levels of the building.

RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT





The library's flexible learning environment

The Pride of the Prairie

The people, environment, and educational aspirations of each school and district can inform the design of every new school. The architecture of the new school for Holly promotes 21st Century education, acknowledges the vernacular context of Holly and accommodates local events and social gatherings within the community. The design team identified the important educational objectives, regional materials, landforms, weather patterns, facility and site development strategies and incorporated this understanding into the design of a modern, progressive school facility; thereby connecting the architecture of the new school to the people, place and region of Holly, Colorado.

The commons in the Holly PK-12 building is located and designed to specifically address community interaction. The commons is designed as a flexible space that can expand, contract, and connect to the exterior through a large operable wall between the gym and commons and a large overhead commercial glass garage door directly tied to the exterior. This space is specifically designed to adapt to a wide range of community activities through the adjacency of support spaces and flexible design features of the space.

“Our school is a warm and inviting place. People are excited to come here,” Yokum adds, “whether they are from Holly or elsewhere. It’s truly our shining star. I call Holly School ‘The Pride of the Prairie’ We have actually gained some out-of-district students through open enrollment.”

Holly School is the cornerstone of this small community. In addition to the library, distance learning lab, board room, and computer labs, the gymnasium serves as a central community space for the town of Holly in response to community comments requesting an elevated walking track for community use in the winter time.





“Words can’t even describe the value of the process, and the entire project, to the Holly community at large. The new Holly School is an amazing source of pride for our community!”

–Bradley Simon, Mayor

