THE AWTY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENT CENTER

HOUSTON, TX | 131,500 SF





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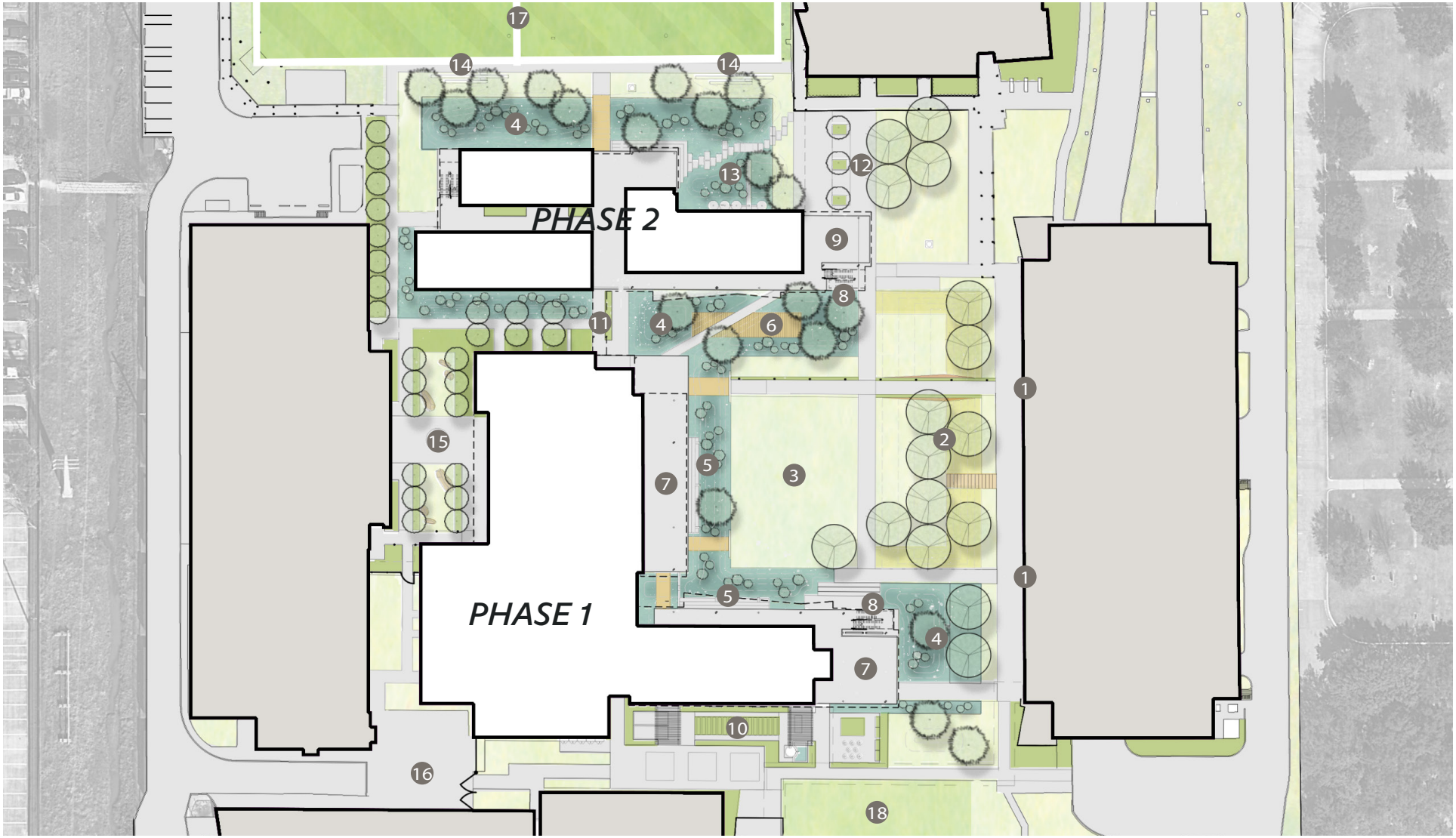
The Student Center at Awty International School in Houston, Texas is a transformational project that redefines the heart of campus and sets the direction for the school's future growth. The stacked three-story building replaces several outdated one-story structures that once congested the campus core, limiting community connections and constraining the expansion of Awty's rigorous IB and French IB curricula.

The new Student Center celebrates Awty's multicultural community while catalyzing innovative STEM programming, supporting evolving pedagogical practices, and creating healthy outdoor space within the compact urban campus. Biophilic design strategies informed the project, shaping a building that maintains a constant visual and physical connection to the new Awty Green. This central landscape enhances well-being through daylight, fresh air, and views to nature while managing stormwater through integrated rain gardens and landscape features.

Students arrive at the Student Center along a sequence of rain gardens that lead to a generous outdoor dining porch overlooking the courtyard. Inside, dining spaces offer a variety of seating arrangements alongside an open kitchen with diverse menu offerings. A light-filled library on Level 2 overlooks the dining area and includes quiet study rooms for focused work. The multipurpose lecture and recital hall supports a wide range of events and opens to the Event Balcony on Level 3 with sweeping views of campus. Flanking these central community spaces are the Science Wing, with 14 state-of-the-art laboratories and collaboration areas, and the Academic Wing, with 29 classrooms and a Maker/Robotics Lab. Exterior walkways, patios, landscapes, and outdoor learning spaces weave the building into the campus fabric, providing students with opportunities for movement, social connection, and moments of reflection in nature.

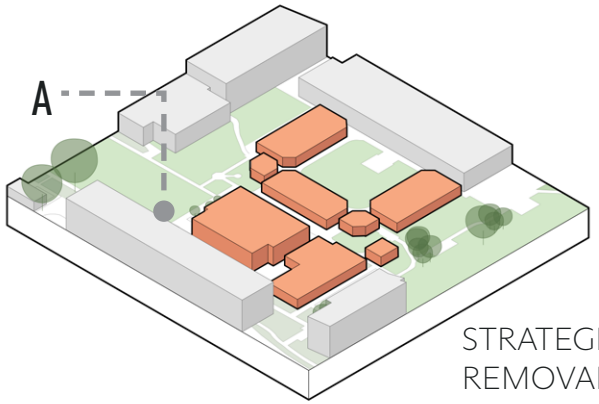


Serving as the campus hub for children from over 50 countries among its 1,800 students, the Awty International School Student Center transforms multiple scattered and aged structures into the campus heart, with a high-performance building and climate-wise landscapes that reinforce the school's community and global identity.

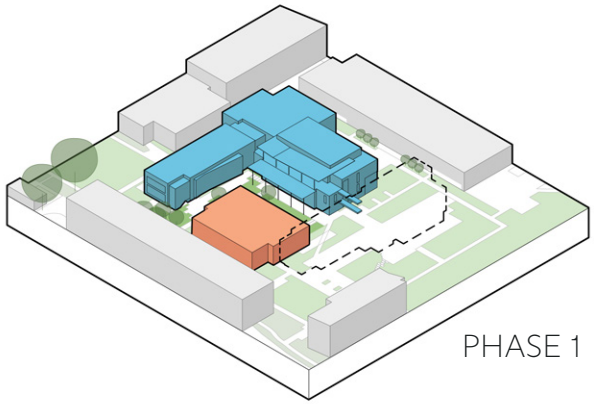


1 Existing Drop-off
2 Sculpted Landform
3 Awty Green
4 Rain Gardens
5 Steps into Rain Gardens
6 Social Deck
7 Covered Outdoor Dining
8 Exterior Stairways
9 Outdoor Maker Patio
10 Science Gardens
11 Connecting Bridge
12 Social Plaza
13 Interactive Rainwater Feature
14 Athletic Field Seating
15 Tranquility Plaza
16 Service + Loading
17 Athletic Field
18 Play Field

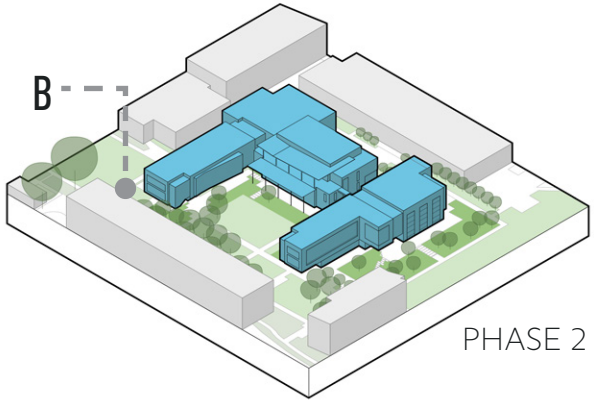
A NEW CAMPUS CENTER: The design team removed eight aging buildings—seven of them one-story—and consolidated their programs into a dynamic three-story Student Center. This freed up space for a larger, protected courtyard featuring native plantings that support pollinators, buffer noise, and create a vibrant outdoor setting.



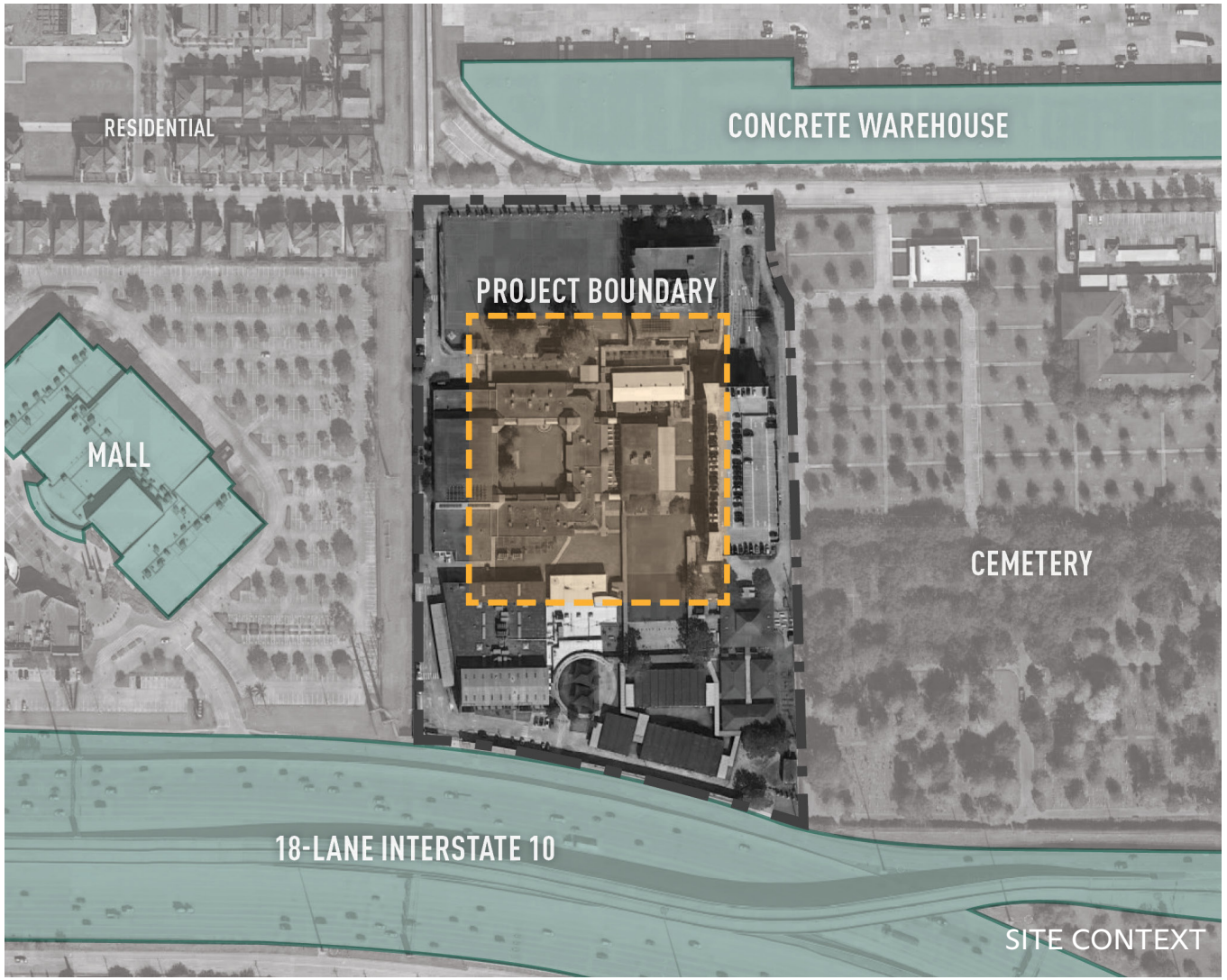
STRATEGIC REMOVAL



PHASE 1



PHASE 2



SITE CONTEXT



BEFORE



AFTER

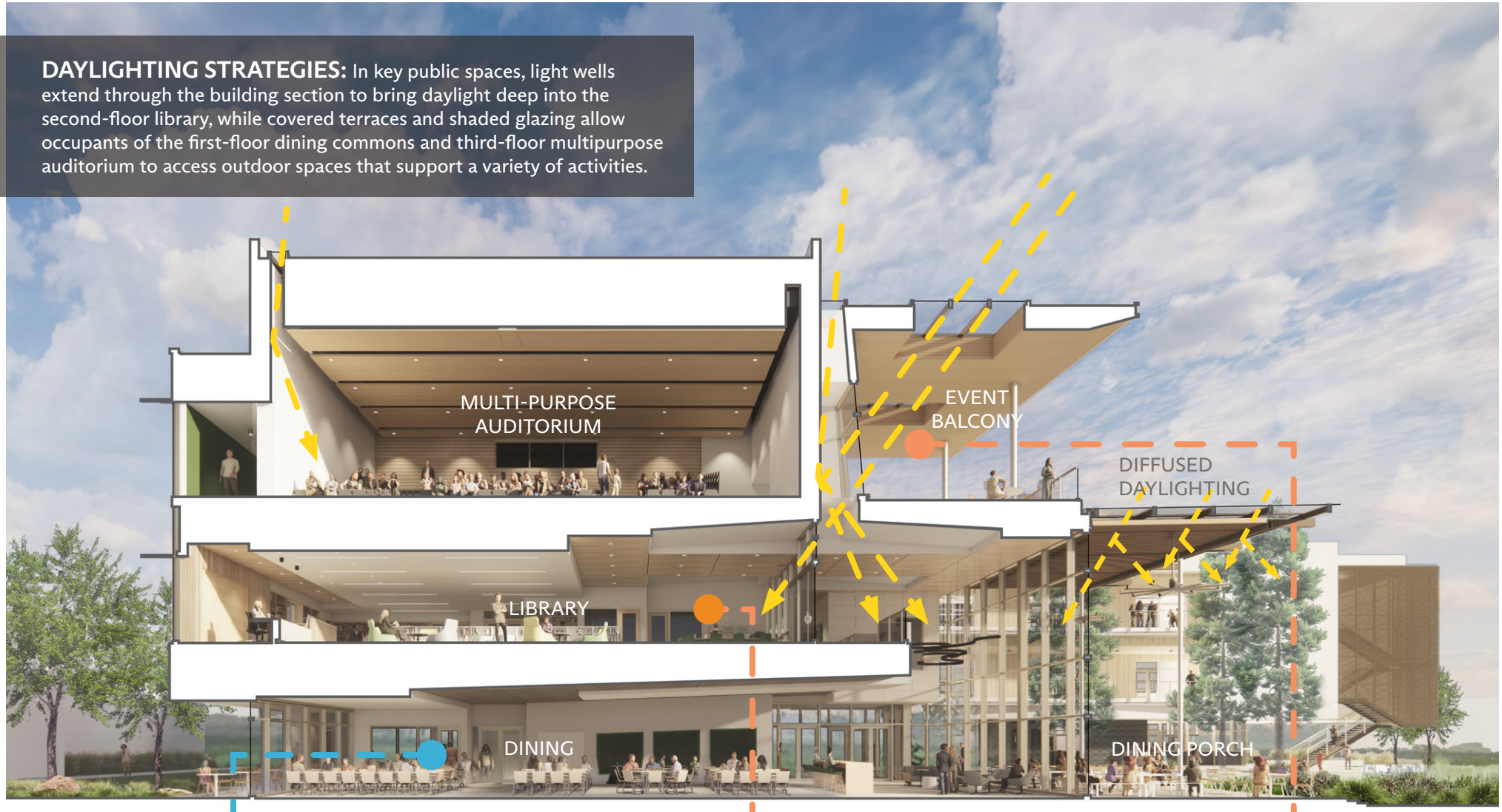

SOCIAL PORCH

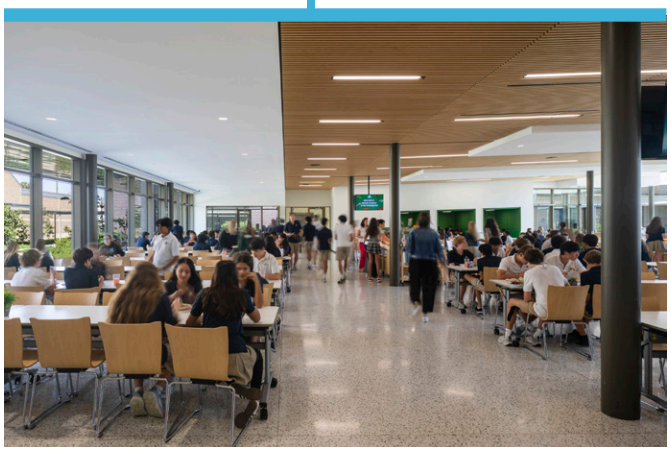


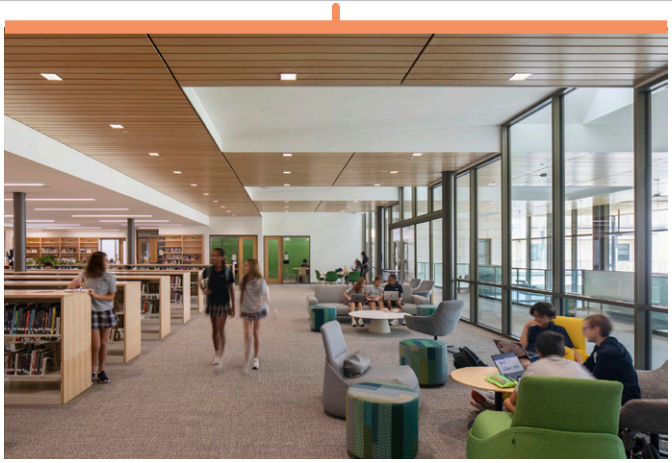


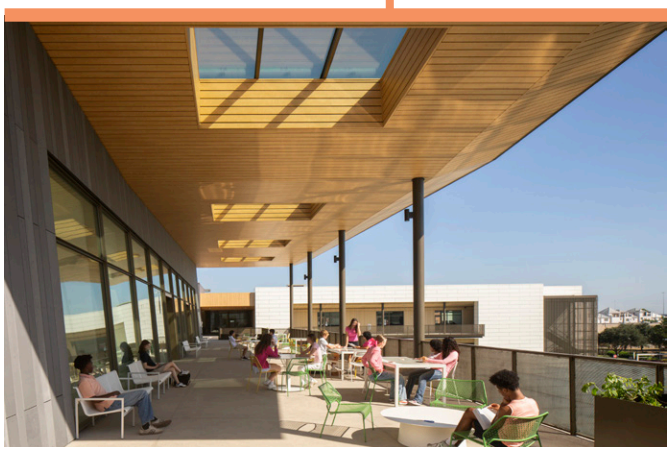
OUTDOOR CONNECTIONS: Exterior circulation and social spaces are woven through lush rain gardens, bioswales, and underground detention systems, immersing students in a water-wise landscape that reflects Houston's climate and reinforces the campus's commitment to sustainable design.

DAYLIGHTING STRATEGIES: In key public spaces, light wells extend through the building section to bring daylight deep into the second-floor library, while covered terraces and shaded glazing allow occupants of the first-floor dining commons and third-floor multipurpose auditorium to access outdoor spaces that support a variety of activities.

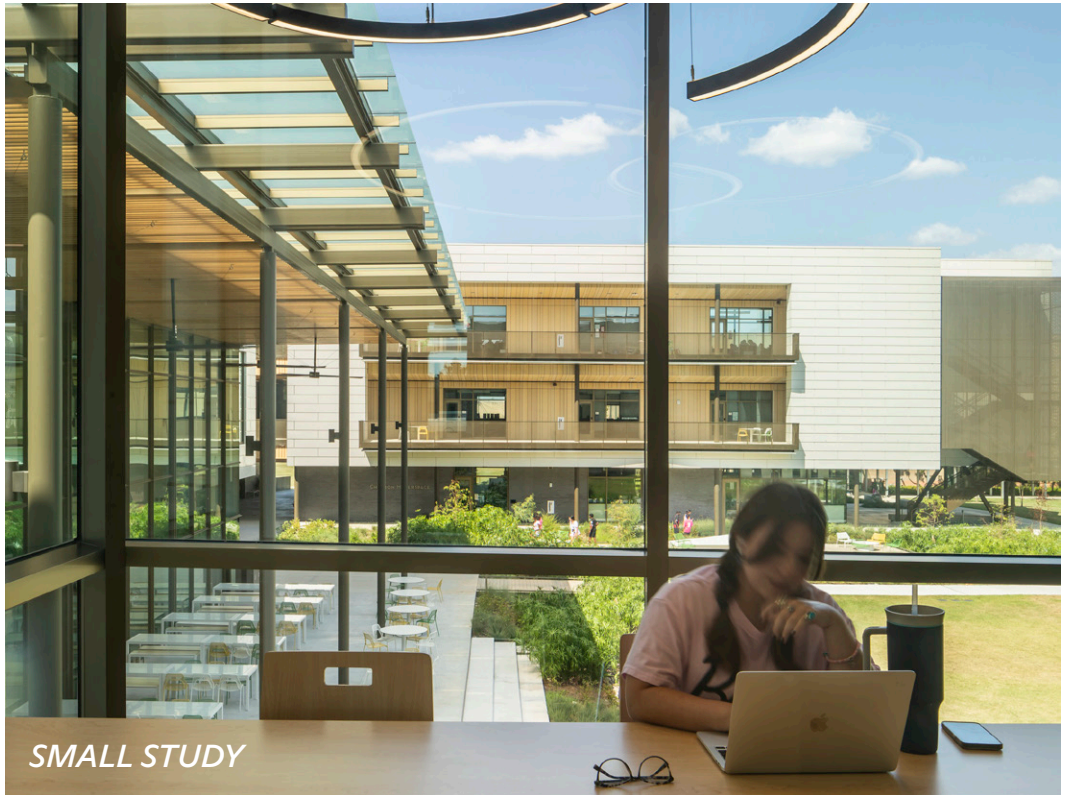









BIOPHILIC DESIGN



SMALL STUDY



OPEN COLLABORATION



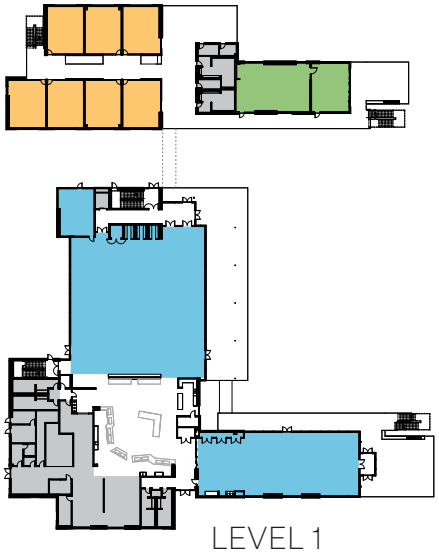
SOCIAL STAIR

COLLABORATION: A range of collaboration spaces, varying in type and scale, foster creativity, connection, and choice while supporting the neurodiverse needs of Awty's 1,800 students.

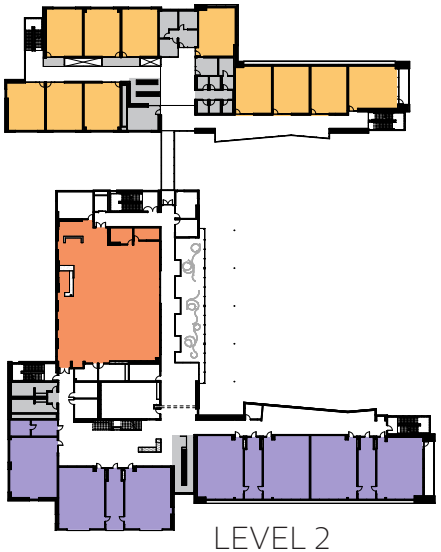




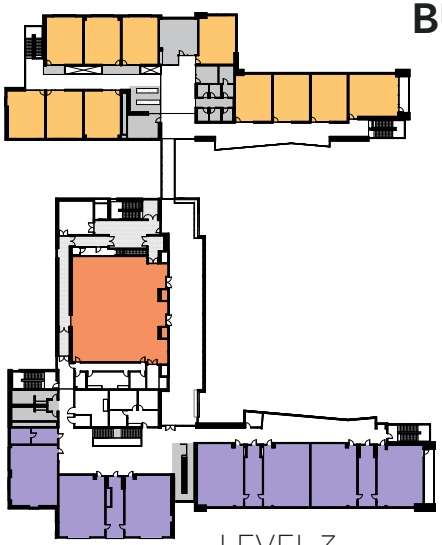
BUILDING PROGRAM



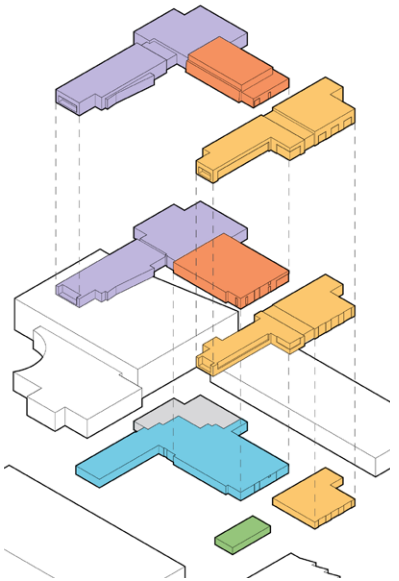
LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3



STEM | Dining | Service/ Support | Academics | Community | Maker/ Robotics

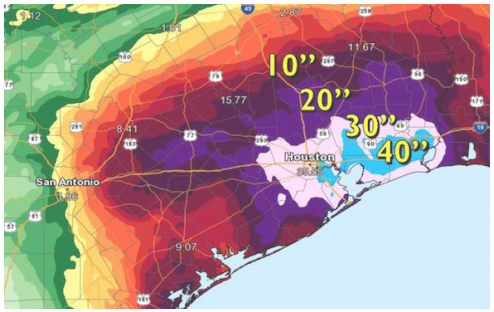


MAKER/ROBOTICS LAB



SCIENCE LAB

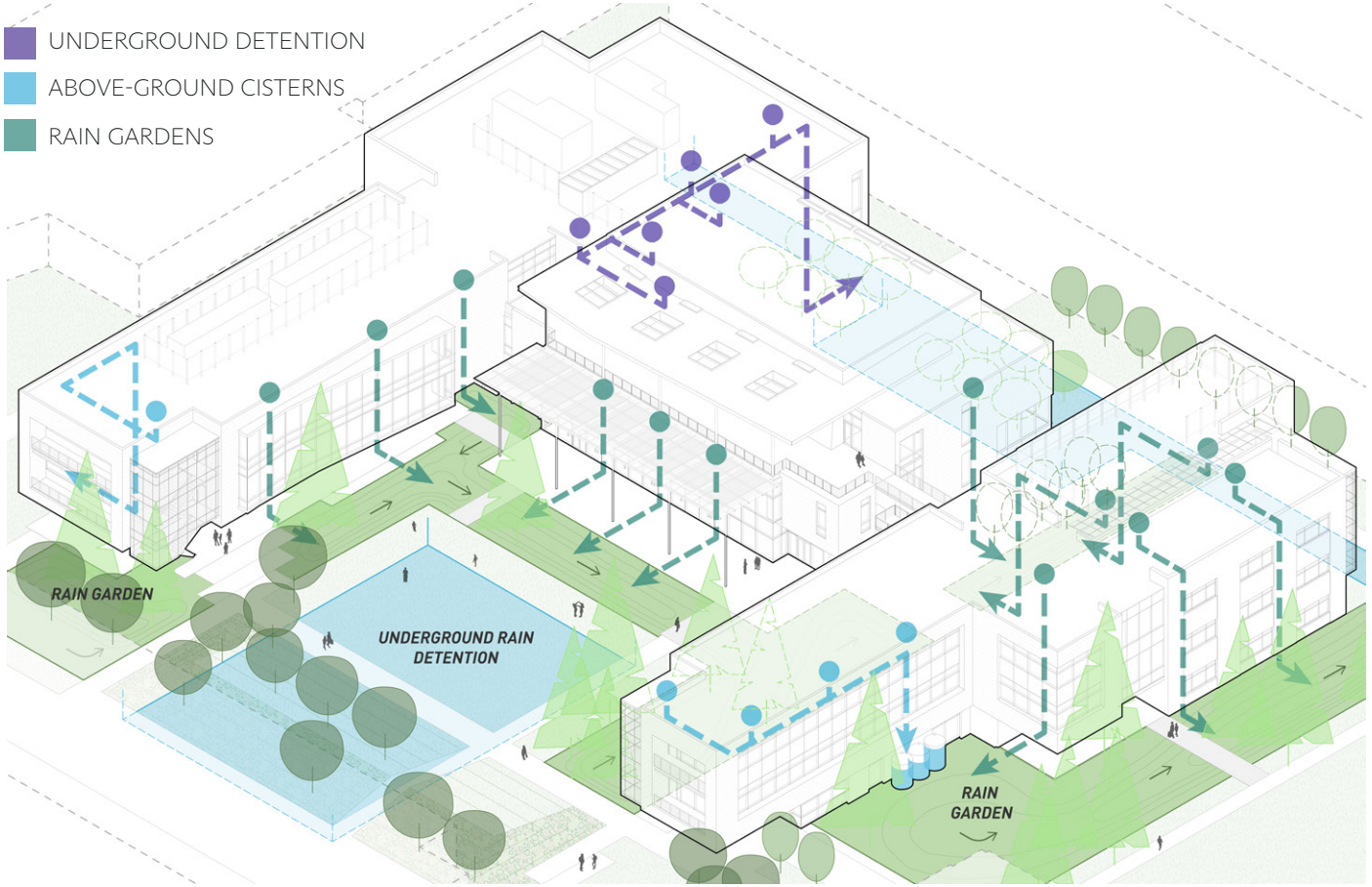
STEM: The project is home to 14 Science Labs and a dedicated Maker/Robotics Lab. Despite the heavy demand these spaces place on building services, the project has an EUI of 35 kbtu/sf/yr, 68% below ZeroTool's project baseline for Houston of 109 kbtus/sf/yr. The project is pursuing, and expects to be certified, LEED Gold.



STORMWATER RESILIENCE:

Houston was impacted by Hurricane Harvey in 2017, receiving over 30” of rainfall in under three days. Even though the project reduced impervious cover by building vertically, stormwater detention requirements in Houston more than doubled during the project’s design timeline in response to the historic storm.

Rain gardens, bioswales, cisterns, and underground detention systems capture nearly an acre-foot (42,500 cubic feet) of stormwater. Visible throughout the campus landscape, these systems transform resilience infrastructure into teaching tools for students.







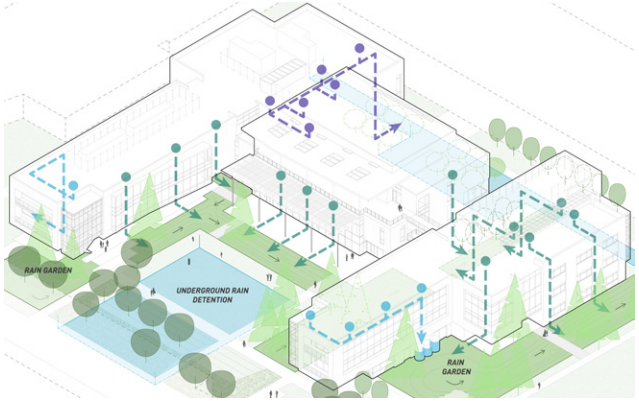




OUTDOOR DINING



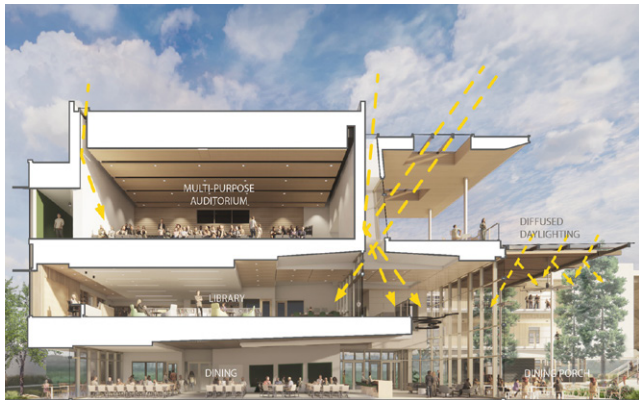
THE AWTY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENT CENTER: COMMON APP HIGHLIGHTED



Design for Water

Awty's campus design addresses Houston's evolving stormwater challenges, intensified by Hurricane Harvey. By replacing several one-story buildings with a three-story Student Center, the project reduces impervious cover and frees space for a resilient landscape system of rain gardens, bioswales, cisterns, and underground detention areas, which together manage nearly an acre-foot of stormwater. Condensate from mechanical systems is captured for reuse, while low-flow fixtures and high-efficiency appliances reduce potable water demand. Together, these strategies meet Houston's detention requirements while creating a visible learning landscape that reinforces sustainability and environmental stewardship for students and the broader community.





Design for Well-being

The project enhances community and well-being by maximizing daylight throughout campus spaces. The slim geometry of the academic and STEM wings allows balanced daylight distribution, while the broader public areas use light wells and open volumes to bring daylight deep into the building. Light wells extend through the section to illuminate the second-floor library, while covered terraces and shaded glazing connect the first-floor dining commons and third-floor multipurpose auditorium to outdoor spaces. More than 90% of occupied areas have direct views to the campus landscape.



Design for Change

Awty's Student Center embodies the school's forward-thinking vision by prioritizing adaptability and durability. An open, long-span structural system with generous floor-to-floor heights reduces structural and mechanical constraints, creating a flexible framework that can accommodate evolving programs, technological advancements, and future growth.

The building also responds to Houston's demanding climate of high heat, humidity, and strong winds through a resilient envelope, structural system, and high-performance mechanical systems. Landscape and stormwater infrastructure address extreme rainfall and flooding, helping the campus adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change while supporting a healthy and durable environment.