Project Description:

For this design, the placement of the new school building that city officials had in mind was used. The curving form of the building in the design was utilized to ensure a secluded playground space in the back and to limit view sheds from the road in front of the site. The design’s program was to create play spaces that seamlessly weave together design, safety, and sustainability in ways that promote creative learning opportunities for children of all abilities. These spaces will also target all senses through use of art and local flora and fauna as educational opportunities. Since the school includes the following grades: The design splits each part of the building into Pre K-K, grades 1-2, and grades 3-4 to allow for their own play spaces to better accommodate those children. The Pre-K-K playground focuses more on natural play elements such as sand boxes, drums, and stepping stones at ground level. A patio space with vegetable gardens are included to encourage learning about plant growth cycles. The grades 3-4 playground increases the most in height and variation with higher monkey bars, a petal climbing structure, and half circle green walls which can offer children a sense of seclusion, but with visibility in mind. Vehicular circulation is concentrated in the front with a loop for school buses only, and lanes for employee and parent circulation. The parking lot is heavily vegetated with bioswales and islands to capture stormwater runoff. With the use of stone wall buffers and bioswales lining the front entrance way, view sheds are limited from the outside looking in to ensure safety and protection.
Site Boundary

These images represent the outlined site boundaries in red on a 60 foot and 300 foot scale. The purple lines represent parcels. These maps were generated on ArcGIS.
Context Inventory

These maps represent adjacent open natural spaces, waterbodies in the form of ponds, lakes, dams, and rivers. Adjacent uses describe the contextual amenities surrounding the site. Hydrology directions in combination with directions inform the design by showing where water is traveling during periods of rain and where it is pooling.
Site Inventory

As we zoom in closer to the site itself, important buildings and roads are outlined. The main road and nearby neighborhoods were important in informing the design in terms of safety and ensuring sufficient buffers. Existing tree cover informed about the site’s ability to hold structures.
Analyses
With all the information taken on the different aspects of the site, Lynchian, outdoor exploration, safety, and environmental analyses were produced to figure out suitability of the site in those respective terms.
Summary analysis for context and site

Combining all research, major opportunities include the new school placement that city officials already had in mind. Another opportunity were the very open entrances that could be designed to limit view sheds to ensure safety. Major constraints include the busy public road adjacent to the site, the adjacent neighborhood.
Project Inspiration

The design inspiration for the school’s play spaces were seedlings and theme of growing. Since the school includes multiple grade levels, the play spaces could show this theme of growth through changes in structure versatility and design, to accommodate the children as they get older.
Master Plan

The master plan design keeps the existing fields but clearly limits view sheds in the front with stone walls and bio wales to create an impermeable buffer. Vehicular circulation was completely transformed to accommodate parent/service entry and bus entry while giving buses their own lane to travel in.
**Enlargements at 1 inch=30 feet for Pre-K playground and grades 1-2 Playground**

The Pre-K-K playground focuses more on natural play elements. A patio space with vegetable gardens are included to encourage learning about plant growth cycles. The 1-2 playground includes structures that increase in height to accommodate older children. These include colorful mounds and monkey bars. An educational creek is also included to promote learning about water ecosystems.
Enlargements at 1 inch = 30 feet

These enlargements illustrate the grades 3-4 playground (top right) and the parking lot loop. The grades 3-4 playground increases the most in height and variation with higher monkey bars, a petal climbing structure, and half circle green walls which can offer children a sense of seclusion, but with visibility in mind.
Sections for grades 1-2 Playground

These sections illustrate the increase in higher vertical elements as the children grow and move from Pre K-K. A shallow creek and outdoor classrooms are illustrated in the top picture. The bottom picture displays monkey bars, colorful mounds to climb on, and native meadow plantings all throughout.
These perspective images showcase the abstract plant forms in the Pre K-K playground and children playing in the Transitional wooded tunnel which is meant to be a symbolic transition. The shallow educational creek provides a hands on learning experience about aquatic ecosystems.