

Update on Historic Alameda High School Restoration Project

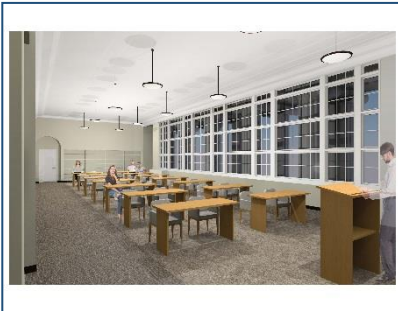


From the outside, it's hard to know exactly what's going on at Historic Alameda High School (HAHS) right now. Parts of the building are boarded up with plywood. Other parts are currently missing windows. On any given day, there are trucks, bulldozers, loaders, excavators - even giant cranes - parked at the site. And there is, of course, the brown fence encircling the whole complex.

What with the noise, the piles of dirt, and the holes in the historic building's façade, it can be easy to forget what's happening on the inside. But incredible things are indeed happening. Here's our behind-the-scenes look at the transformation taking place.

Overview

The 100,000-square-foot historic high school building, which was constructed in 1924, is a registered Historical Landmark that is being retrofitted and restored with funds from the 2014 Measure I Facilities Bond. Quattrocchi Kwok Architects did the design work; Lathrop Construction is the contractor.



When completed, the renovated building will include: historic interior and exterior restoration; 45 state-of-the-art classrooms and 10 new science labs; new instructional technology; seismic retrofitting; updated structural, mechanical, and electrical systems; new landscaping and seating areas along Central Avenue; an outdoor learning space; and, yes, removal of the brown seismic perimeter fence.

AUSD's Board of Education approved the [plans](#) for HAHS on March 28, 2016. The groundbreaking ceremony took place on April 10, 2017. An inspector with the Division of the State Architect (DSA) has said that this project is the biggest and most complicated rehabilitation project the division has overseen in its 50-year history.

Seismic Retrofit

The District Office moved out of HAHS in 2013, due to reports by seismic experts that showed a significant risk of collapse in the event of an earthquake. The risk is due to two factors: sandy soils that can liquefy during an earthquake and structural issues with the HAHS buildings.

To stabilize (or “densify”) the soil, engineers injected grout into it at 6000 different spots on the site. They also drilled helical piles, which look like corkscrews, 30 feet into the ground to anchor the buildings to more stable soil.



To shore up the buildings, workers took off the roof and used a crane to place enormous steel braces along the walls on all three floors. These are creating a “building within a building” that will be able to withstand a strong earthquake. Steel piers are also now supplementing many of the original concrete columns in the building. Those columns were built to withstand 1000 pounds per square inch of force; the current standard is 3000 pounds per square inch. Many columns had begun to crumble from age.

To date, more than 700 tons of degraded concrete have been removed from the foundations and floors, to be replaced with concrete that is up to modern-day codes and meets DSA requirements for school construction.

“Expansion joists” will be placed between the buildings so that they can move with the force of an earthquake but not crash into each other. In order to insert these, the concrete between the buildings had to be removed. This required a 52-inch circular saw that was so heavy it had to be put on a vertical track bolted to the building to move up and down.

Once the masonry finish was removed from the exterior buildings, workers also discovered about twice as many cracks in the exterior as expected. These, too, need to be repaired so the walls don’t crumble in the event of an earthquake.



Classrooms

One blackboard still has Spanish verbs on it. One wall is still decorated with sky and navy blue stars. But HAHS classrooms are mostly unrecognizable at this point. The floors and walls have all been removed in order to build newer, bigger classrooms. At the same time, workers are installing new electrical and fire sprinkler systems, as well as the infrastructure needed for more modern instructional technology.



Many of the facility's 250 historic windows are currently being repaired; in fact, one whole room has been designated as a window workshop. As per an agreement with the Alameda Historical



Society, the windows need to retain their wooden sills and sashes. But the concrete around the windows also has to be restored due to degradation from wind, rain, and sunlight over the years.

The project is scheduled to be completed in December 2019 and is currently on track. Once it is complete, the brown seismic fence that surrounds the building will also be removed.

"For decades, Alameda citizens have looked upon Historic Alameda High School and wondered how it could be restored to its former glory and returned to student use," says Superintendent Sean McPhetridge. "Soon the citizens of Alameda and their children will be able to enjoy the building again, and AUSD will be able to offer 21st-century learning environments within that beautiful neoclassical building."

"This is a dynamic and exciting time in Alameda," he continues, "and AUSD is grateful to Alamedans for passing the bond and investing in the future generations who will benefit."

