

John Mack Elementary School

Los Angeles, California



Located on a flat, 2.5-acre site in a distressed neighborhood near downtown Los Angeles, this 85,000 square foot public elementary school serves 1,000 children from kindergarten through third grade.

The two-story school contains 32 classrooms, a library, a multi-purpose room, administration offices, underground parking and a food service facility with an outdoor dining terrace, in addition to outdoor playgrounds.

The primary goal of the project was to create a compact, highly efficient and cost-effective elementary school with a strong civic presence to serve as a source of restored pride for the neighborhood. In meeting this goal, the school was one of three selected from among 85 others as one of top designs in juried exhibit at the Getty Center.

The L-shaped building is placed tight to the street edges to optimize the amount of outdoor play space it encloses and to reinforce the urban fabric of the blighted neighborhood. The classrooms are contained in linear volumes of white stucco, punctuated by the large-scale grouping of the classroom windows within frames of bright orange and black tile. The library and administration functions are grouped together in a dramatically-sculpted blue volume positioned at the corner of the "L". A large, urban window in this volume provides the students expansive views of their neighborhood and to downtown beyond. A bright green volume at the end of the "L" contains the multi-purpose room. Designed under the direction of Christopher Coe while Managing Director and Director of Design of Arquitectonica Los Angeles.

