

1.1 Executive Summary

Objectives of the Study

The Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) engaged the MCG Explore Design (MCG) team to facilitate discussions and develop recommendations on how to best house five existing school programs:

- Soldotna Elementary School
- Redoubt Elementary School
- Soldotna Montessori Charter School
- River City Academy
- Connections Home School

KPB had previously determined that the Soldotna Elementary building was near the end of its useful life and would not be cost effective to renovate. The objectives of this feasibility study were to determine whether it is possible to locate the five programs within two existing buildings, Redoubt Elementary and Soldotna Prep. The study also investigated the potential effects of re-assigning sixth-grade students to Skyview Middle School.

Services requested for the Feasibility Study included facilitating a collaborative planning process, developing educational specifications, and generating conceptual facility plans along with a preliminary statement of probable construction costs with adequate detail to show the feasibility of the meeting the stated objectives.

This feasibility study establishes an overall direction for housing the 5 programs and is the starting point for the future design and construction process.

Planning Process

The multistep process began with reviewing prior studies and information on the existing buildings and educational programs followed by in-person meetings and interviews with key stakeholders including school, Borough, District and community members. Five workshops anchored the process exploring:

- Educational Vision & Goals
- Space Needs
- Learning Organization
- Conceptual Options
- Concept Evaluation

In addition, MCG performed technical assessments of the Redoubt & Soldotna Prep buildings, to identify needed building system and code upgrades including:

- Architecture & Interiors
- Hazardous Materials
- Site / Civil
- Structural
- Mechanical
- Electrical

Recommendations

The process explored 5 distinctly different solutions and through collaboration with key committees identified the option that best meets the diverse goals of the School District and community. Key features of the recommended option include:

- The Soldotna Prep Building will be renovated to house students from both Redoubt and Soldotna Elementary Schools with currently available funding
- The Redoubt Building, within its existing capacity, will accommodate River City Academy & Soldotna Montessori Charter School
- Connections will be housed in an offsite location to be determined
- 6th grade students can be housed either at Skyview Middle School or the Soldotna Prep Building.

Based on the concept drawings and building assessments the preliminary estimated probable construction cost for the Soldotna Prep Building is \$35 million. Preliminary analysis suggests that could be reduced by approximately \$2 million through strategic value engineering during design. Upgrading the Redoubt Building is expected to cost approximately \$9.7 million. The cost for Connections relocation will be determined after a suitable off-site location has been established.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We believe that instruction should drive construction, and any plans to adjust, renovate, or build a school building or campus should undoubtedly result in a facility that meets individual school, districtwide, and community goals for teaching and learning, now and into the future. This document is intended to define strategies for planning physical facilities to accommodate multiple schools in Soldotna, Alaska.

Educational facility planning is inherently a conversation that integrates education and architecture. The planning and design teams collaborate with each other and with school and borough leadership to explore how the educational mission and goals can be supported by physical facilities. Specifically for the effort illustrated herein, the collaborative process included integrated insights from the architectural firm of MCG Explore Design and BrainSpaces as the educational facility planning consultant. Together with school, district and borough leadership, staff, and faculty, the team facilitated, explored, synthesized and developed the spatial parameters for the school programs included in this assignment:

- Soldotna Elementary School (SES)
- Redoubt Elementary School (RES)
- Soldotna Montessori Charter School (SMCS)
- River City Academy (RCA)
- Connections Home School (Connections)

Project Description & Rationale

In combination, shifting demographics, aging facilities, evolving educational needs, available funding, and ever-increasing operational expenses drive the need to define space needs for these five school programs and their projected student enrollments.

Once space needs were defined, strategies for accommodating these needs were explored. Each of the current facilities housing these schools represent moderate to significant physical and spatial challenges. Thus, options for relocating schools to more appropriate facilities were explored.

Two existing facilities were identified as potentially appropriate locations of the five school programs:

- Redoubt Elementary School building
- Soldotna Prep School building (currently unoccupied by students)

These two buildings are located on adjacent properties, offering potential campus-like benefits such as shared parking and/or bus loops.

The **Feasibility Study** (feasibility of converting these two existing buildings into effective environments for the five targeted programs) was **explored in parallel with the development of the Educational Specifications** (aka Ed Specs).

The Assignment

As noted, the assignment included the exploration and documentation of space needs for five individual educational programs in the Soldotna area of the Kenai Peninsula Borough and School District for the purposes of developing a Feasibility Study to accommodate all programs into two existing adjacent buildings.

During the process, it was determined that space for the Connections Home School program would be more appropriately located separately from the other four schools. While space needs for Connections Home School were developed (and are included in the Ed Specs), this program is not included in the Feasibility Study for which this Ed Spec document is an appendix.

The assignment also included an exploration of whether facilities could support a relocation of 6th grade students from both Redoubt and Soldotna Elementary Schools into Skyview Middle School, which currently houses grades 7 and 8 only. For the purposes of the Ed Specs, projected enrollments for **6th graders remain in the elementary schools** and do fit (can be accommodated) in the designated existing buildings as illustrated in the Feasibility Study.

Note that IF the decision is made to relocate 6th grade students to Skyview, they can be reasonably accommodated due to the removal of River City Academy from its current location in Skyview.

Locations of School Programs & Enrollments

While it is unusual for an Ed Spec to indicate the site locations of various programs across a school district, the uniqueness of the assignment along with the parallel Feasibility Study process dictated several “what-if” scenarios to be explored.

The Study illustrates various scenarios explored during the process. It is notable that space requirements also varied among the scenarios considered. For example, an option to locate Redoubt Elementary and Soldotna Elementary students in two separate facilities required square-footage for two libraries vs one combined library. Space requirements included in these Ed Specs are for the selected/documented Feasibility Study solution only.

The Feasibility Study proposes to locate SMCS and RCA in the existing (renovated) Redoubt building, and to combine enrollments from RES and SES into the existing renovated Soldotna Prep Building. The location of space for Connections Home School is to be determined.

Thus the following project parameters group PK-6 enrollments for SES & RES into one line item, referred to as simply “Elementary”.

Project Parameters

Projected Enrollments⁽¹⁾

- Elementary (PK-6): 560 to 580 students
- SMCS (K - 6): 164 students
- RCA (7 - 12): 80-90 students
- Connections: +/- 100 students on-site

Class Sizes⁽²⁾

- PreK Classrooms: 15 students
- Kinder Classrooms: 20 students
- Grades 1-6 Classrooms: 24 students
- SpEd Classrooms: 10 students
- RCA Classrooms: 15 students

Net Building Areas⁽³⁾

- Elementary (PK-6): 63,000 net square feet
- SMCS (K - 6): 18,000 net square feet
- RCA (7 - 12): 15,000 net square feet
- Connections: 15,000 net square feet

(1) Elementary includes students from both Redoubt and Soldotna ES

(2) Average number of students per classrooms for planning purposes.

(3) Refer to the Facilities Master Plan for projected Gross Building Areas.



Ed Spec Document Structure & Use

This document describes how the missions and goals of the subject schools can be supported by physical facilities. Detailed information included herein is intended to document user needs and to assist the design team in accommodating these needs during building design phases.

Ed Specs should be used in conjunction with current District and Borough standards and guidelines such as those for technology, design, and building performance, and with all applicable codes and regulations, including ADA, and are not intended to supersede any such requirements. Where guidelines noted herein are in conflict with these requirements, the applicable guidelines, codes and regulations shall govern. Where guidelines noted herein cannot be or are not planned to be incorporated into a building design, the design team should inform the project representative to discuss and/or determine acceptable alternatives.

The content of this document is intended to align with the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (AKDEED) requirements outlined in the Guide for Developing Educational Specifications. To avoid redundancy with the Feasibility Study however, some of this information may be found within the body of the Feasibility Study report to which these Ed Specs are attached. This includes items such as diagrammatic adjacencies, technical/MEP requirements, cost and funding information, and the like.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For this project, space planning, programming and project visioning all occurred in concert with the facilities feasibility and master planning efforts. The multi-faceted team collaborated to discover and then translate the stakeholders' visions into facilities ideas and solutions. Thus, the development of this Educational Specification document represents a collaboration among several individuals, teams and firms.

Diverse perspectives of both the client's leadership and stakeholder teams and the planning and design teams contribute to the actionability of the ed specs and the facilities master plan.

Planning & Design Team



MCG Explore Design

- Cara Rude, Project Manager
- Michael Carlson, Architect
- Evelyn Rousso, Architect

BrainSpaces

- Amy Yurko, Educational Facilities Planner

Steering Committee

- Ben Hanson, KPB IT Employee / IT Director
- C.O Rudstrom, Community Member
- Kelli DeRaeve, Community Member
- Kevin Lyon, KPBSD Planning and Operations Director
- Kelli Creglow, KPBSD Employee
- Krista Aurthur, Retired School District Employee / Teacher
- John Hedges, KPB Purchasing & Contracting Director

Kenai Peninsula Borough

- Tim Sher, Project Manager

School Representatives

- John DeVolld, Soldotna Montessori Charter School
- Doug Hayman, Connections Home School Program
- Shea Nash, River City Academy
- Austin Stevenson, Soldotna Elementary School
- Shonia Werner, Skyview Middle School
- Jason Williams, Redoubt Elementary School



Steering Committee Worksession



Student artwork at Soldotna Montessori

Additional Participation & Insights

During the process, all current schools included in this assignment were toured and evaluated. In most cases, two open-invitation staff meetings were conducted at each school to gather ideas and insights from teachers and staff, including topics that ranged from space and operational needs, to school culture and identity, to traffic challenges during drop-off and pick-up times. The planning and design team wishes to thank these and all participants for your passion for your schools and for your willingness to offer ideas to enhance educational environments for your school communities.

Actionable Results

The parallel efforts of Feasibility Study and Ed Spec development allowed the project leadership committee and planning/design team to explore and create coordinated and actionable tools, which the school district and borough can use to move the project(s) forward.

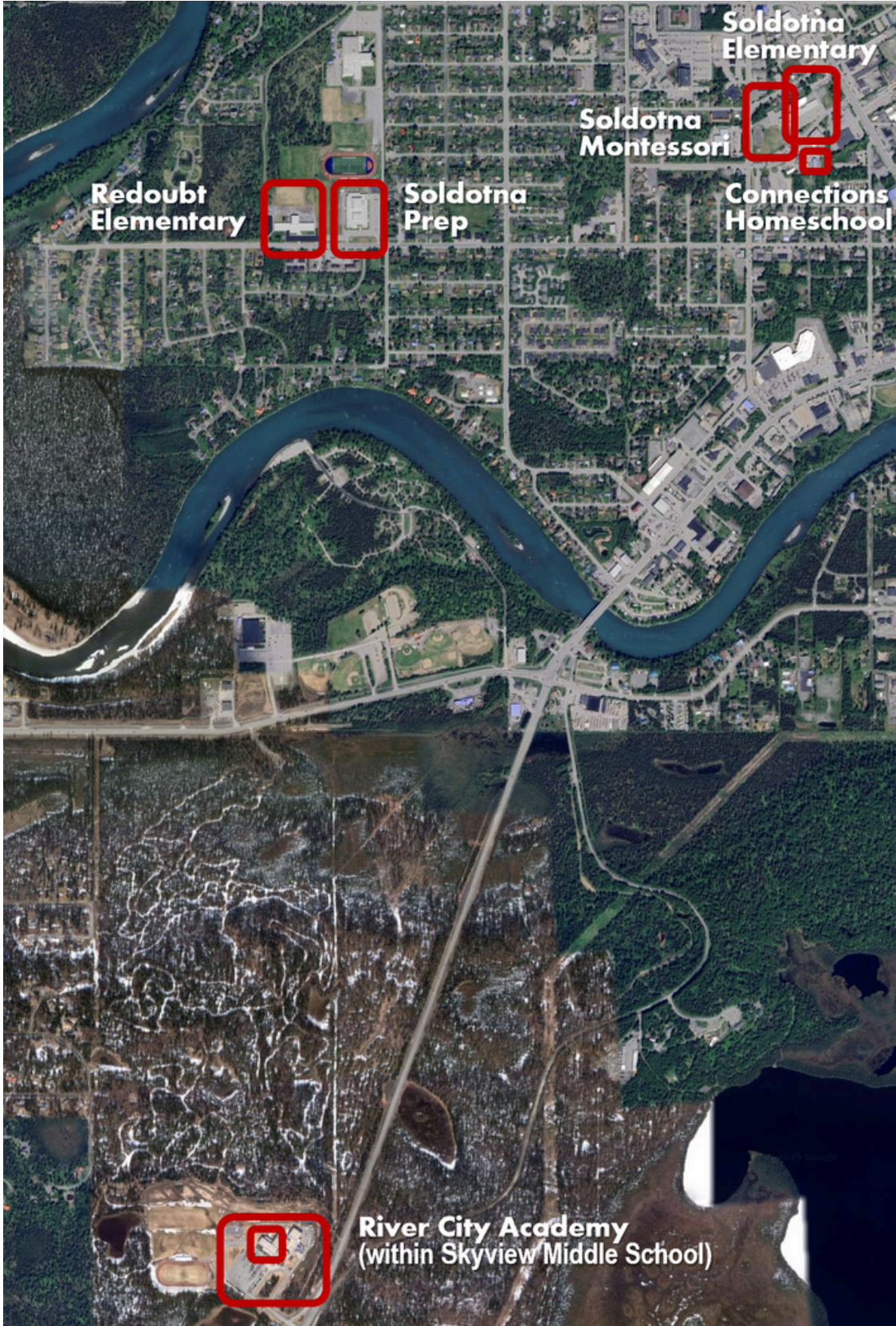
PHYSICAL & EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

The **Kenai Peninsula Borough School District** is located in Southcentral Alaska and serves over 8,500 students from 17 unique communities. Of the 42 schools within the District, the five schools included in this assignment are among those located in the Central Peninsula area.

- Redoubt Elementary School (RES)
- Soldotna Elementary School (SES)
- Soldotna Montessori Charter School (SMCS)
- River City Academy (RCA)
- Connections Home School (Connections)



Above: District Map locating schools addressed in this document



Above: Local Map of schools addressed in this document