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A Place in the Sun

Nordic PCL builds the new Sidney and Minnie Kosasa Community at Punahou School

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

After successfully delivering a project to client Punahou School in 2016, Nordic PCL Construction Inc. did not pop the champagne. Instead, "the team asked to meet with Punahou School and the design team to analyze all aspects of the completed phase," says Eric Ballew, Nordic PCL project manager. "Excellence in project management is always possible when one can expect and deliver more than what others think is possible."

Kosasa Community Phase 1B by Nordic PCL is part of Punahou School's long-term master plan for the entire campus. PHOTO COURTESY PUNAHOU SCHOOL





Phase 1B by Nordic PCL includes a library, two commons buildings, three classroom buildings and many other facilities.
PHOTO COURTESY PUNAHOU SCHOOL

The Sidney and Minnie Kosasa Community for Grades 2-5, he says, was planned in two phases—Phase 1A, completed by Nordic PCL in 2016,



Eric Ballew

and the upcoming Phase 1B.

Both projects, Ballew says, are “part of Punahou’s long-term strategic master plan to upgrade their entire campus to meet the growing needs of their staff and students.” Phase 1B would consist of five new buildings—three two-story classrooms and two two-story commons buildings. Each classroom building had two classrooms on each level. The two



The Polynesian compass mosaic on the floor of the hale
PHOTO COURTESY DESIGN PARTNERS INC.

commons buildings included specialty classrooms, offices, a library, a kiln, a lounge, a student kitchen and production rooms. There were also two play structures, two custom slides, a six-hoop basketball court, open green space, a large water feature and a hale.

“The meeting resulted in a list of items that could be modified or improved upon in Phase 1B,” says Ballew. Nordic and Kendall Ellingwood III, Design Partners Inc. senior principal and project architect, drew up a value engineering list and presented it to Punahou “with the intention to



A pond, stream and waterfalls by Pacific Aquascapes are unique features of Punahou School’s Kosasa Community.
PHOTO COURTESY PUNAHOU SCHOOL



Kalo, u’ala and ulu are grown and harvested on the Community’s ahupua’a terraces.
PHOTO COURTESY DESIGN PARTNERS INC.

bring more value to the school based on these lessons learned.

“Areas of improvement included, but were not limited to, the hale design, the trench drains and the CRM walls,” Ballew says. “Nordic PCL implemented lean construction tools, including the Last Planner System, which optimized the project schedule and assisted in maintaining budget.”

Nordic then broke ground on Phase 1B in August 2016. During demolition of existing buildings, Ballew says, “chlordane, a termite treatment banned by the EPA in the 1980s, was found at levels exceeding state allowable levels.”

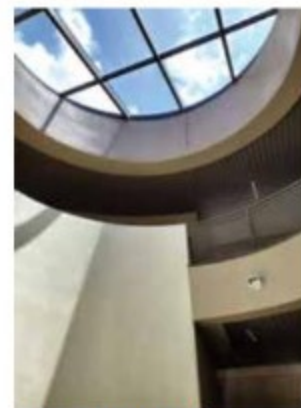
Working with the site work contractor and civil engineer, Nordic located multiple areas within the project perimeter that could contain the contaminated soil and comply with Department of Health requirements.

“The soil was successfully re-entombed into a designated approved ‘pit’ location(s) on the site,” Ballew says. “These pits were identified with a layer

of Mirafi geotextile fabric and orange fencing below two feet of clean soil cover. Because the team was able to work closely with the Department of Health, the project overcame the unforeseen condition in the safest and most cost-effective way possible.”

Next, Nordic and Design Partners brought Punahou’s vision for the project into focus.

“Kosasa Community is inspired by the latest research in learning and childhood development, underscoring how physical environments affect a child’s ability to learn and grow,” Ballew says. “The indoor and outdoor spaces allow for collaboration among students of different age groups, and for teachers to implement a variety of instructional techniques. The outdoor landscapes are



The “oculus” skylight in the Commons’ breezeway
PHOTO COURTESY DESIGN PARTNERS INC.



The first floor in one of the Learning Commons
PHOTO COURTESY PUNAHOU SCHOOL



A design lab in one of the Learning Commons
PHOTO COURTESY PUNAHOU SCHOOL

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An interior bridge between building sections
PHOTO COURTESY DESIGN PARTNERS INC.



Phase 1B by Nordic PCL builds on Nordic's earlier Phase 1A.
PHOTO COURTESY PUNAHOU SCHOOL

inspired by Hawaiian *ahupua'a* to support a curriculum grounded in our unique Island culture and history.”

Conducting large-scale projects on an active school campus, Ballew says, is “always a delicate process,” and the Nordic PCL project team reviewed the safety of each student, faculty member and visitor from every angle. Nordic also had to work around and protect the native trees, nesting birds and turtles on campus.

During vertical and interior construction, Nordic PCL self-performed the concrete work—form/strip, pour and finishing the concrete (including the sack and patch/dry finish of the concrete)—and also self-performed select cabinetry, door, door-frame, hardware and countertops.

When the project wrapped in August 2019, incoming Fall students discovered an intimate cluster of state-of-the-art classrooms that created a “neighborhood between the grades,” Ballew says.

“Eco-friendly materials were incorporated in the design, which strived for both LEED Platinum certification and HI-CHPS (standards),” he says. “Learning areas are flexible and can be expanded as use requires. ... walls are tackable or for writing, each adhering to a system of varied uses. Some areas are open to outdoor spaces and *lanais*, tying interior education with outdoor experiences.”

The lily pond, stream and *hale* designed by Pacific Aquascapes are unique outdoor features. Water flows through agricultural terraces planted

with *kalo*, *u'ala* and *ulu*, Ellingwood says, which allow students “to understand and experience how ancient Hawaiians would harvest food within their *ahupua'a*.”

“Above the agricultural terraces is a Hawaiian *hale* with large *obia* posts that hold up the roof and a wayfinding compass mosaic located in the center,” he says. The mosaic shows students “how Polynesian navigators keep track of direction by the canoe’s relationship to the rising stars.”

When the Community opened, “the project was very well-received and has gotten a lot of praise for its aesthetics,” Ballew says. “The Kosasa Community has been hailed by Punahou and the Punahou families and alumni as a wonderful addition to the campus. Punahou has received many compliments on the completed project, and

Phase 1A received a NAIOP Award for the Best Sustainable Project in 2018.”

Ballew says subcontractors that stand out are A-1 A-lectricians Inc. and Creative Partition Systems.

“Their team foresaw issues and brought them up early in the project,” he says. “Their ability to masterfully use CAD to help expedite their work not only insured for proper coordination with our other trades, but also made them extremely self-sufficient in designing and solving any on-site issues.”

“The entire team—Nordic PCL, Punahou School, Design Partners Inc. and their consultants—deserves recognition for this beautiful project. It was the collaboration and team approach that successfully delivered the new Kosasa Community.

“It hits every checkmark they were striving for.” 🏡

Value Engineering

The value engineering list presented to Punahou School by Eric Ballew, Nordic PCL Construction Inc. project manager, and Kendell Ellingwood III, Design Partners Inc. senior principal and project architect, included:

- Utilizing a KIM mix to prevent water infiltration for a storage room under the exterior stairs.
- Changing the perforated gutters to non-perforated to reduce the amount of water splashing on the adjacent exterior stairs.
- Adding numerous trench drains to keep water off the stairs (safety item for students).
- Changing light fixtures that resulted in additional savings to the owner of about \$88,000.
- Changing the grit for the traffic coating to reduce potential slips.
 - Implementing the Last Planner System.

Isle Contractors, Hawaii Foodbank Partner in Food Relief

Hawaii's construction, development and other industries came together in July to help feed Hawaii's hungry through a private sector partnership with the Hawaii Foodbank.

One-day food distributions were held at Windward Community College, Waianae Mall and the Polynesian Cultural Center, with the goal of serving 3,250 area households.

Participating funding and building industry partners include Commercial Plumbing Inc., Bowers + Kubota, Kobayashi Group, Black Sand Capital, Albert C. Kobayashi Inc., J. Kadowaki Inc., Moss Construction-Hawaii, JL

Capital, Ferguson Enterprises-Hawaii, Great Aloha Run, Design Partners Inc., RMY Construction Inc., Nagamine Okawa Engineers Inc., Okahara and Associates Inc., Brookfield Properties and the Hawaii Executive Collaborative.

Food items were provided by the Hawaii Farm Bureau, Hawaii Foodservice Alliance, H&W Foodservice and Sysco Hawaii. Hawaii's building sector and other industries provided more than \$250,000 in funding as well as food distribution volunteers.

"The demand for food assistance

remains extremely high," says Hawaii Foodbank President and CEO Ron Mizutani. "We're grateful for this private sector partnership between the construction, development and other industries that will help feed Hawaii's families during this unprecedented time."

The July distributions are in addition to Hawaii Foodbank's existing food distributions through its 200 partner agencies on Oahu. For more information, go to hawaiiifoodbank.org/member-agencies.



Ron Mizutani