

CARLETON COLLEGE

**Physical Education,
Athletics and Recreation (PEAR)**

**Comprehensive Facilities
Planning + Pre-Design Report**

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

In September 2025, Carleton College engaged with Sasaki to help develop a comprehensive plan for all PEAR (Physical Education, Athletics, and Recreation) facilities, current and future. The recently completed 2025 Campus Facilities Plan (CFP) built upon Carleton's strategic direction approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2023, and provided a prioritized set of recommendations.

As the CFP notes: "The reimagining of the Physical Education, Athletics, and Recreation facilities is based on extensive feedback from the campus community, including students, faculty, staff, and alumni. PEAR was ranked as the number one priority by students, third by faculty, and third by staff, highlighting its importance across different groups. Survey results and workshop discussions indicated a clear preference for centralization of athletic facilities, with multiple comments suggesting construction of a new athletic facility adjacent to the Rec Center."

The vision for this plan is to consolidate recreation and athletics programming into a campus destination for physical education, wellness, competitive play, and community. The PEAR facilities outlined in this plan are connected or proximate to the existing Rec Center, enabling centralized facilities away from the Cannon River. By consolidating recreation and athletic facilities into a new district, Carleton will be able to provide a wider range of PEAR programming options while increasing efficiency and centralization of operations. Finally, this plan is designed to enable the flexible phasing of projects while maintaining continuity and minimizing disruption to existing programs.





Carleton Knights Identity

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Owner:

Carleton PEAR Planning Committee
Heidi Jaynes, Athletic Director /
Department Chair
Aaron Chaput, Sport Clubs Director/Asst.
Director of Campus Recreation
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Treasurer
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President of Facilities and Capital
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Carleton Community Representatives:

Nancy Braker, Puzak Family Director of
the Cowling Arboretum
Sarah Fortner, Director of Sustainability
Carleton Student Farm
Head Coaches
Athletic Trainers
Athletic Performance
Student representatives
SAAC & Rec Center Team Leaders
Campus Recreation & Wellness
Representatives
Varsity student athletes, club team, and
intramural team leaders

Owner’s Representative:

Pegasus Group
Eric Kruse

Planning & Pre-Design:

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Emily Parris, Principal in Charge
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Architect
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Gidiony Alves, Project Designer
Ian Scherling, Landscape Architect
Chris Myers, Landscape Architect

Aquatics Consultant:

Counsilman-Hunsaker
Carl Nylander

MEP Consultant:

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Martha Larson, Director of Sustainability
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Top: Rec Center, designed by Hastings + Chivetta (2000)
 Middle: Cowling Gymnasium, designed by Minoru Yamasaki (1965)
 Bottom: West Gymnasium, designed by Minoru Yamasaki (1958-1966)

STATEMENT OF NEED

PEAR facilities at Carleton play a critical role in supporting student wellbeing, engagement, and success. However, increasing participation, evolving program demands, aging infrastructure, facility capacity, and access limitations have created significant operational and scheduling challenges.

Carleton has robust and demanding sports programming, including 20 Division III varsity sports, 20 sport clubs (including two Division I Ultimate Frisbee teams), 16 intramural sport programs, a physical education requirement, and campus recreation activities. Unlike many institutions of similar size, 100% of Carleton students utilize athletic and recreation facilities as part of the PE graduation requirement, while 76% of those students choose to recreate and be active in addition to PE program offerings.

The reimagining of the PEAR facilities was first noted in the 2014 Facilities Master Plan and supported and expanded in the 2025 Campus Facilities Plan (CFP). Athletic and wellness facilities also play a crucial role in *Carleton 2033*, the College's strategic direction. This plan centers “community, curiosity, and impact” as a way for the College to advance and stay true to its mission.

The CFP, which investigates projects across a series of priority classes (in-progress, immediate, high, medium, and long-term), has identified PEAR projects within each of these categories. While the CFP identifies the Natatorium as the highest-priority PEAR need, its development depends on several enabling projects. Specifically, the construction and renovation of outdoor competition, practice, and recreation fields must be completed first to enable the Natatorium project to move forward. The initial investment in the outdoor fields impacts a large number of students and enables the creation of the space needed to expand the Rec Center and add new facilities.

One of the primary challenges and opportunities for future improvements is the potential for phasing each program's needs in a thoughtful, integrated, and flexible way. Strategic phasing will help to incorporate the PEAR program and infrastructure with Carleton's broader campus vision, while providing efficient, cost-effective solutions for the PEAR complex at large. Additionally, the construction of the facilities will follow sustainable building practices, along with considerations for future resilience.



HISTORY, BACKGROUND, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Given the aforementioned needs, Carleton initiated a comprehensive planning effort to establish a long-term vision for its PEAR facilities. In September 2025, the College engaged Sasaki to evaluate existing facilities, identify current and future program needs, and develop a strategic roadmap aligned with the institution’s 2025 Campus Facilities Plan and broader strategic priorities.

A driver for the timing of this planning effort is the need to divest from West Gym and the adjacent outdoor fields due to persistent flooding of the Cannon River. West Gym hosts two of Carleton’s indoor athletic facilities (Gymnasium and Thorpe Pool).

The planning process included stakeholder engagement, peer benchmarking, existing facility assessments, program analysis, and site evaluations.

The analysis found that Carleton benefits from a strong culture of participation, nationally competitive athletic and sport club programs, exceptional outdoor resources, and one of the premier cross-country venues in the country.

At the same time, many indoor facilities are operating at or beyond capacity, critical spaces are outdated or inaccessible, building systems are beyond their life expectancy, and several programs lack facilities comparable to peer benchmark institutions. Space limitations regularly affect varsity athletics, sport clubs, physical education classes, intramurals, and recreational users. The College also incurs ongoing costs to transport students to off-campus facilities to accommodate unmet space needs.

The vision for the PEAR plan focuses on modernizing facilities to create a flexible, accessible, sustainable, and community-centered future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The PEAR Comprehensive Facilities Plan is guided by several overarching principles:

- Promote student health, wellness, inclusion, and lifelong participation in physical activity through increased offerings and modernized sustainable facilities.
- Support the educational mission of Carleton by integrating athletics, recreation, and wellness in a centralized location.
- Be aspirational in programming for top-of-class facilities that serve varsity athletics, sport clubs, recreation, physical education, and the broader campus community equitably.
- Maximize utilization of existing campus assets while identifying opportunities for strategic expansion and modernization.
- Develop flexible, sustainable facilities capable of adapting to future program growth and changing student needs.
- Create an agile and integrated plan to allow for phasing options and sequential flexibility based on campus priorities, resources, and funding.
- Support the student experience and the unique interests and traditions that capture the spirit of what it is like to attend Carleton.
- Preserve the character of the campus while improving functionality, accessibility, and operational efficiency.





PROGRAM NEEDS

PEAR programs face many challenges, including limited aquatic facilities, insufficient auxiliary court space, a shortage of practice and recreation fields, inadequate tennis facilities, constrained fitness and wellness space, decentralized support services, and a lack of indoor turf capacity for year-round programming. While Carleton continues to achieve athletic success despite these constraints, maintaining competitiveness and supporting the broader campus community will require significant modernization and expansion. The proposed plan accommodates expanded programmatic needs supporting both new initiatives and facility replacements. This includes:

- Renovation of and addition to the Rec Center including student support spaces, wellness programming and renovations to the indoor 200-meter track
- New 50-meter Natatorium
- New Indoor Turf Facility
- New Basketball/Volleyball Arena with two Multipurpose Auxiliary Courts
- New Tennis Center (indoor and outdoor)

The proposed program areas use more than 48 acres of campus land and 450,000 gross square feet of building space with over 300,000 net usable square feet for PEAR programs.



- New and renovated outdoor competition, practice, and recreation fields
 - » Relocated Bill Huyck Cross Country Course
 - » New Ultimate Frisbee Fields
 - » New Rugby Field
 - » New Lacrosse Field
 - » New Multipurpose Synthetic Turf Field with sports lighting
 - » Upgraded Mel Taube Baseball Field
 - » Upgraded Ele Hansen Softball Field
 - » Site work to allow for fluid and efficient access to all programs

PRE-DESIGN SOLUTION

Rather than addressing individual facility deficiencies through isolated renovations, the plan recommends a comprehensive approach that adds new facilities, and strategically renovates and expands existing facilities, while improving the overall organization of athletics, recreation, wellness, and physical education spaces.

The priority for PEAR remains a new Natatorium as was identified in the 2025 CFP. Additionally, this study has identified the need for two enabling projects to successfully build and operate a new Natatorium:

- New and renovated outdoor competition, practice, and recreation fields.
- A renovation and addition to the Rec Center to include wellness space, locker rooms, meeting rooms, and other student support spaces will provide the operational foundation and support facilities for future additions.

Additional key enabling investments include:

- Campus utility infrastructure improvements necessary to ensure appropriate electrical, heating/cooling, water, sewer, and information technology services are available to the expanded PEAR building footprint.
- The site work for a new PEAR district can be completed at any time during this sequence of projects but must be in place when the Natatorium opens. Ideally this would be coordinated with the campus utility infrastructure improvements.



Bird's-eye view of PEAR district from the northwest

50-meter Natatorium



PRE-DESIGN SOLUTION

Presuming completion of the Natatorium, the adjacent facilities (an Indoor Turf Facility and a Basketball/Volleyball Arena with Multipurpose Auxiliary Courts) can be constructed in any order. The Tennis Center can be added at any time, as the site is independent of the other facilities. Similarly, improvements to the Baseball and Softball Fields can be completed at any time as funding is available.

The preferred plan uses the existing grade to the extent possible to separate access and function throughout the complex. The existing southwest Rec Center entry will be enhanced as the campus entry for students, faculty, and staff. This will provide easy access to the locker rooms, fitness areas, recreation areas, wellness programming, and classrooms.

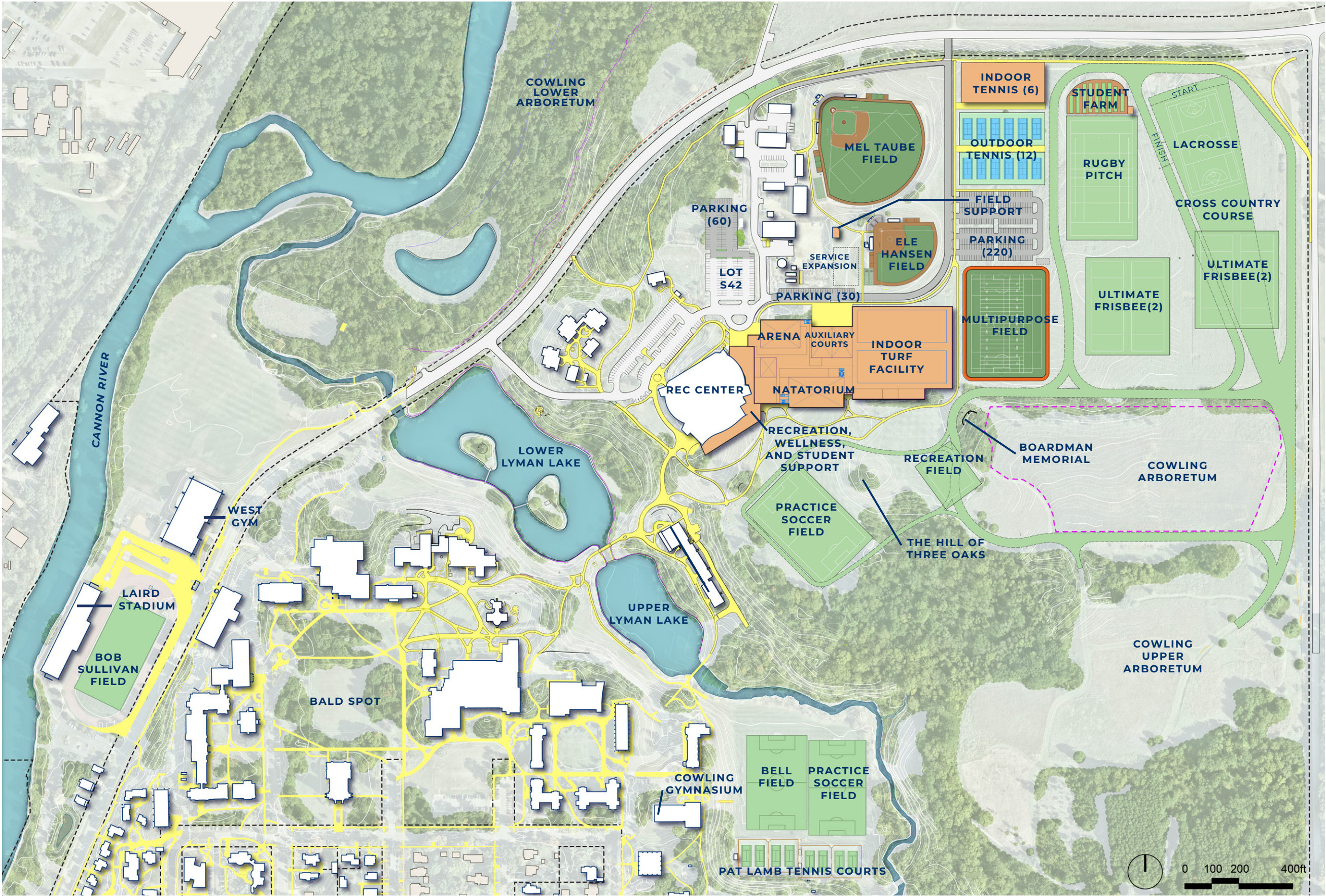
Visiting teams and public entry for guests attending events or for other scheduled uses of the facilities will be primarily from the north where parking will remain available. This allows guests attending events at the Arena and Natatorium to arrive at “concourse level,” overlooking the venues, allowing for top-fed seating and an ideal spectator experience. It also allows for common guest amenities such as restrooms and a concession stand to be positioned so they are adjacent and convenient to each venue. The Indoor Turf Facility is sited between levels one and two to minimize excavation and the need for retaining walls.



View of the Rec Center approaching from the south, showing the Recreation and Wellness additions



Interior view of the Turf Facility



The preferred design approach (shown below) aligns the upper concourse with the Rec Center’s upper level and the new north and south venue entries. This top-fed layout optimizes circulation, ensures universal

accessibility, and cleanly separates spectator amenities from lower-level student-athlete and coaches’ support spaces, such as locker rooms and equipment storage.

By allowing visitors to observe activity spaces from above, top-fed venues offer an inviting arrival experience and open the plan visually for intuitive wayfinding. Achieving this layout requires setting the Natatorium and Arena deeper into the site, necessitating bedrock excavation.

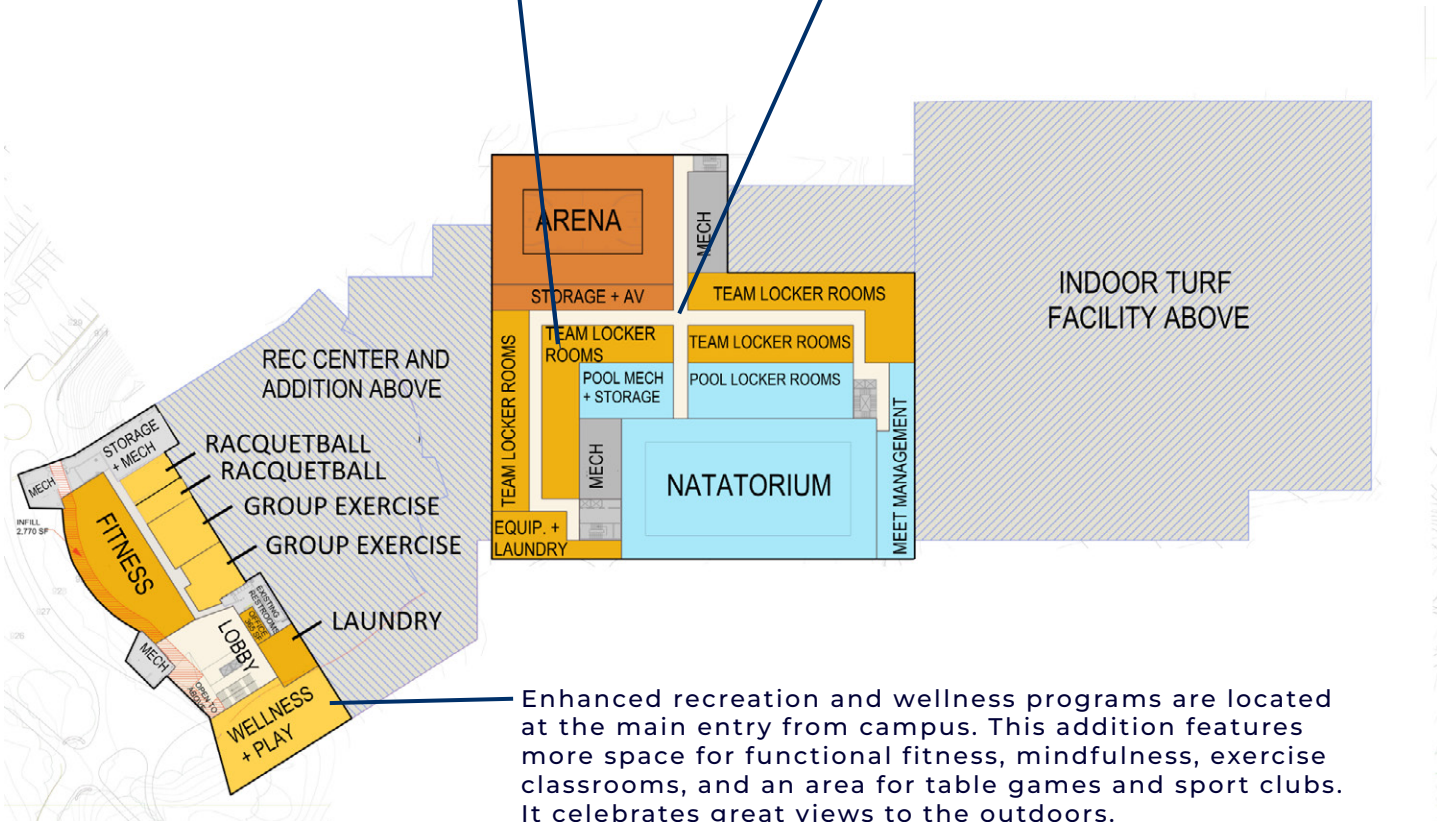
To establish a cost-conscious benchmark, an alternate design raises venue elevations to significantly reduce bedrock excavation expenses. While this option preserves the full spatial program, it compromises the seamless spectator flow and visual openness of the preferred top-fed scheme.

The lower level features consolidated student support spaces including team locker rooms, equipment room, and laundry, prioritizing efficiency in day-to-day operations.

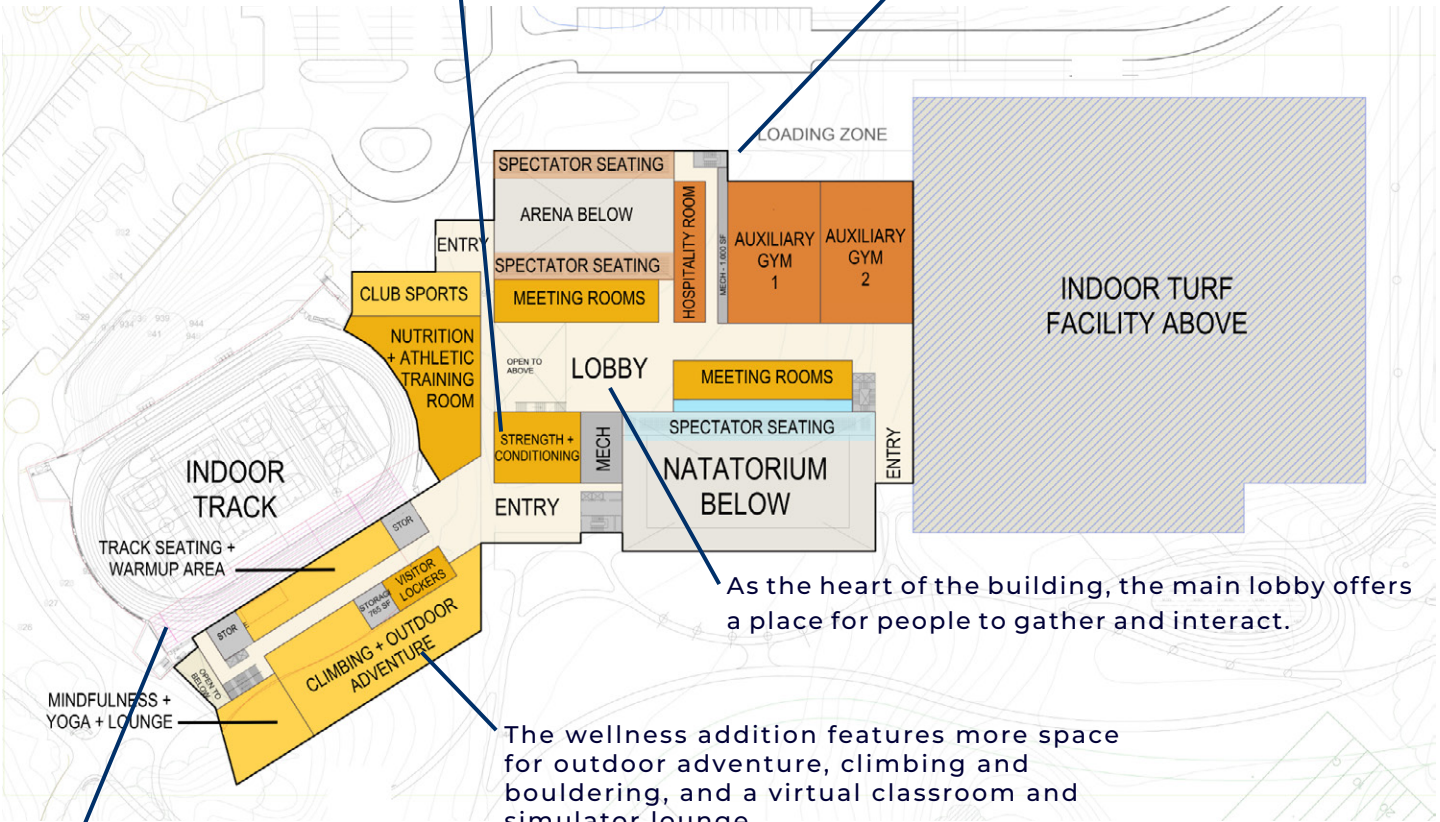
The Arena competition court and the Natatorium deck are located adjacent to team locker rooms and venue storage, for ease of circulation and facility operations.

Consolidated athletic training and the lower level of strength and conditioning are adjacent to each other, designed to support holistic injury prevention and recovery.

Loading and a freight elevator are adjacent to the Auxiliary Gyms on the north side. This location allows for clear access to the facility from Highway 19.



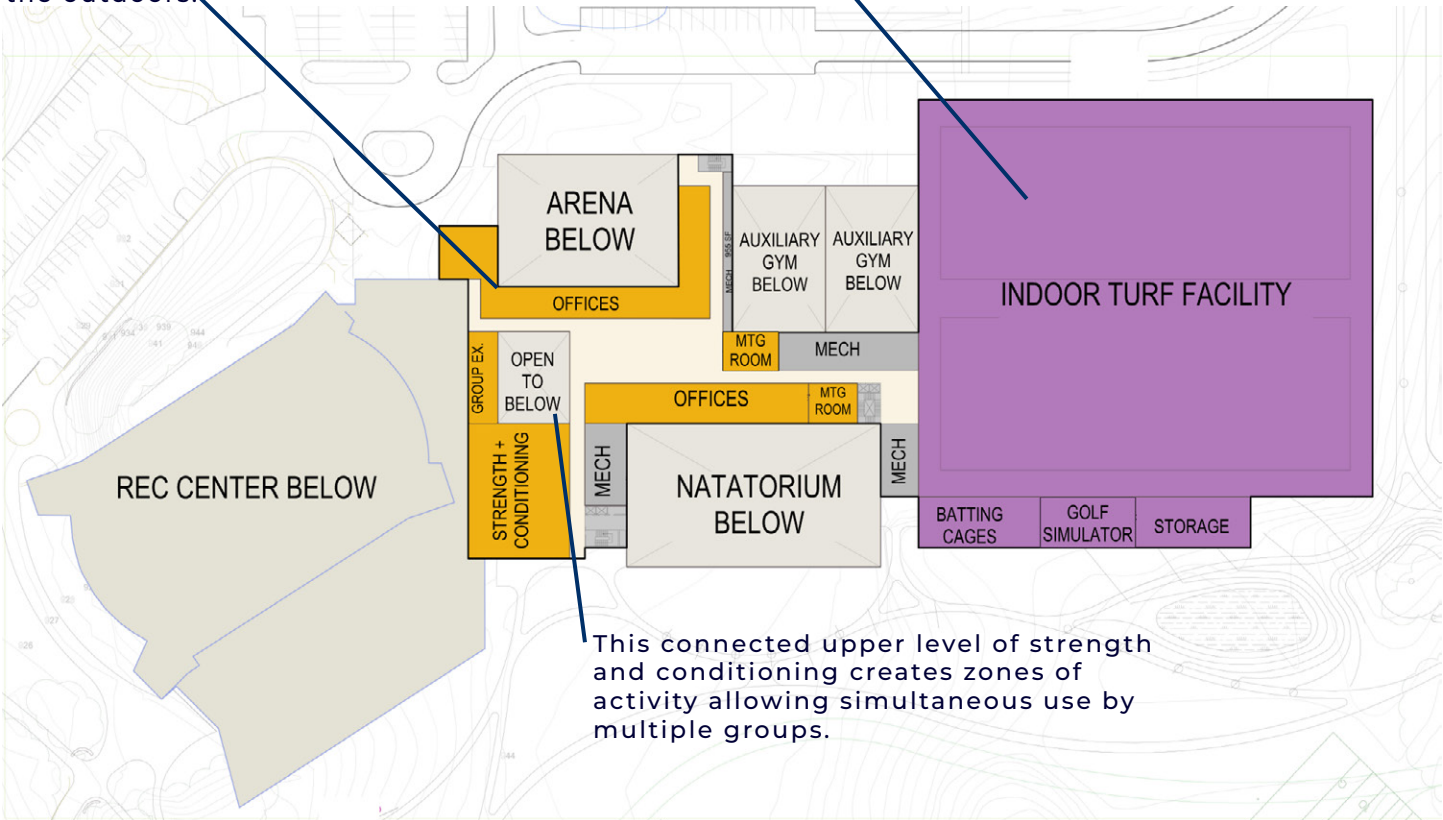
Level 1



Level 2

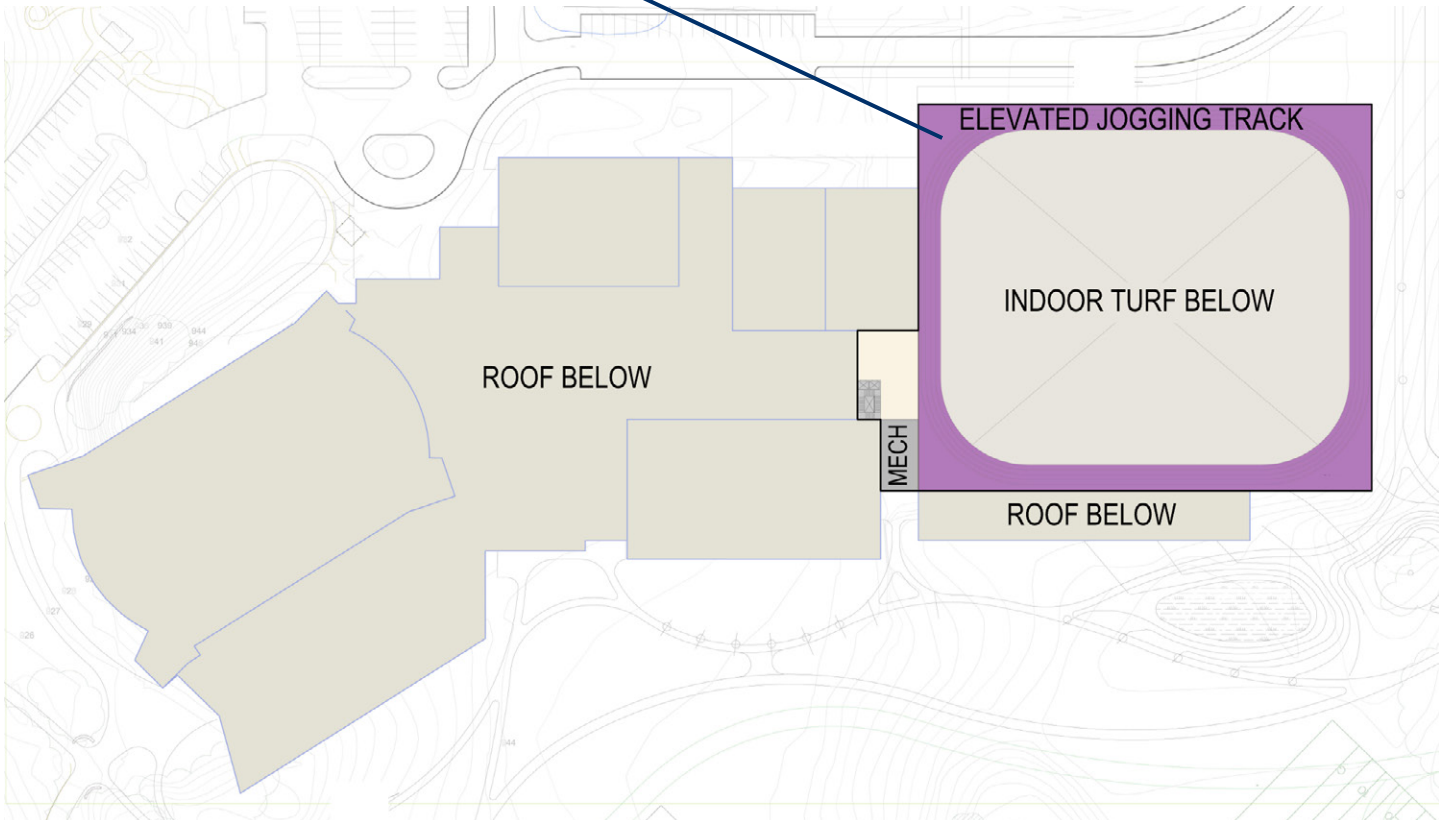
Offices and meeting rooms are consolidated on the third floor to create a single destination for faculty and staff teaching and collaboration. This upper level features views into the venues and to the outdoors.

The Indoor Turf Facility is raised above the third level to minimize retaining walls and align with the adjacent outdoor field elevations. Adjacent stairs and elevators allow for a seamless transition into the facility.



Level 3

A suspended jogging track on the upper level takes advantage of the volume of the Indoor Turf Facility and offers an opportunity for additional indoor wellness and warm-up space.



Level 4