

## THA Architecture: Portland Community College buildings

by Inka Bajandas

Published: August 6th, 2013



(THA Architecture)

Between brick and glass on the exterior of two buildings being constructed on **Portland Community College's** Cascade campus, a wood-like material pays homage to surrounding houses.

"We wanted something that was a little softer and (could) relate to the neighborhood," said Nick Hodges, an associate with **THA Architecture**.

The firm settled on panels made from corn husks that look like wood, but are much more durable, to invoke the feel of single-family homes near the campus near North Killingsworth Street, he said.

**Hoffman Construction** is the contractor for the \$36.5 million project to create a 45,000-square-foot academic building and a 35,000-square-foot student center.

Contrasting brick facades are intended to help the buildings blend in with the rest of campus, Hodges said. The design team received feedback from PCC staffers and students, but also neighborhood residents.

"There was a little bit of PCC wanting to reach out ... (and express that the college's) place in the neighborhood was really important," he said.

Portland voters in 2008 approved a \$378 million bond measure that included \$60 million for Cascade campus redevelopment. When neighbors advocated against construction of a raised parking structure on campus, THA designed the two buildings and a plaza to sit over an underground parking garage, Hodges said. PCC also encouraged students to use alternative transportation to reduce the number of parking spots needed, he said.

"It was a big win-win from a community point of view," he said. "It was a big success. It took some time, but it was really worth it."

The project uses land PCC already owns, preserving existing small businesses on Killingsworth Street, Hodges said.

"There was no additional property acquisition," he said. "It's great because all these business owners can invest in their property."

The academic building, student center, underground parking and plaza will be built on an existing campus parking lot, he said. The two buildings will look similar and face each other, with a plaza between them, Hodges said.

"They're made from the same palette of materials," he said. "They absolutely work together."

The new, three-story student center will replace an existing, 25,000-square-foot one that will be torn down, Hodges said. The center will house a dining area on the first floor, a student lounge on the second floor and instructional education, a women's resource center and a multicultural center on the third floor, he said.

Student organizations will have much more visibility with spaces in the second-floor student lounge, Hodges said.

"It's a big deal because right now they're currently in the basement," he said. "No one knows they're there."

The new student center will have high ceilings and large windows. Occupants will be able to look up or down onto other floors, Hodges said.

"I think what we gave (the student organizations) is much better," he said. "They're going to have much better access to daylight and really strong visual connections to everyone."

The three-story academic building will house classroom, study and faculty space for the college's teaching program as well as a child development center, Hodges said.

He said he's proud of how both buildings came together to meet different needs, including the community's.

"A lot of it is essentially composition," Hodges said. "You're pulling all these different demands of the building and composing it."

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