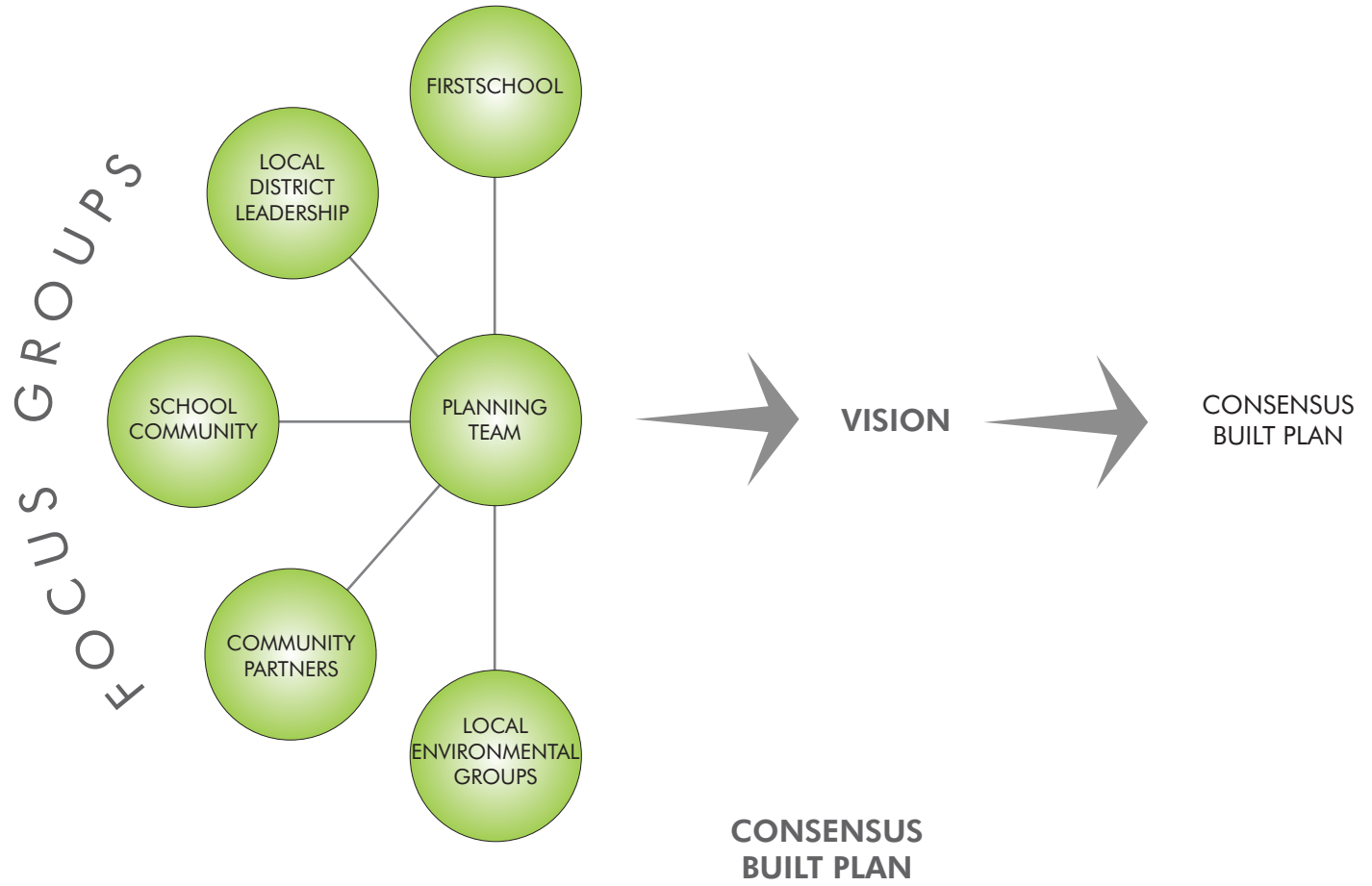


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## 1.0 FirstSchool Planning Process

In this chapter we provide the background and context for this document and briefly describe the planning process and resulting recommendations.







## FIRSTSCHOOL PLANNING PROCESS

FirstSchool is led by the FPG Child Development Institute in partnership with the School of Education and other departments at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as well as with local elementary schools, and the broader community. Our work on facilities design began with the FirstSchool Facilities Committee, a one-year collaborative effort to think about what we believed possible for optimal indoor and outdoor educational environments for young children. We benefited from members with specialized knowledge and expertise in early childhood education, special education, child development, school design, outdoor learning environments, community development, technology, environmental impact, universal design, and cultural competency. We worked to envision indoor and outdoor environments that met the FirstSchool goals of 1) supporting relationships and partnerships throughout the school community; 2) enhancing all aspects of child development and learning; and 3) providing for the health and safety of all.

Based on the work of the Facilities Committee, a request for proposals from prospective design teams was drafted. Twenty-one teams submitted proposals and six were interviewed. Design team members included architects, engineers, landscape architects, and variety of consultants specializing in lighting, outdoor environments, and child development. The Perkins Eastman team was chosen based on their early childhood/elementary experience, focus on environmental sustainability, and a positive track record with the university and local school districts. Their philosophy centers on a commitment to strong leadership throughout the entire design process, and is founded on a consensus-based approach that emphasizes collaboration, interactive workshops, stakeholder buy-in, and the clear understanding of project goals and issues from the beginning of every project. The design team led an interactive process that brought together the FirstSchool Facilities Committee with members of a local school community. The result of this collaborative project is this document, designed to provide a full description of the conceptual underpinnings and organization of a state-of-the-art school for children ages 3-8 and the school staff and families who share it.

The purpose of this document is to assist others in collaborative work. We encourage communities to forge partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, and we invite you to use this document to begin your inquiry into optimal physical environments for children from kindergarten through third grade.