



**{WE ARE}** Eisenhower High School  
Decatur Public School District #61

{RE}INVENTION



## OVERALL GOALS AND OUTCOMES - {RE}INVENTION

*The story of Eisenhower High School, one of two public high schools in Decatur, Illinois, is not unlike the story of many urban schools across America.....*

Rising poverty, declining enrollment, flight to the suburbs, community disinvestment emotionally, dismissed by neighboring and peer school districts alike, all conspire to create a self-image of failure. Local realtors, as barometers of unspoken prejudice, reluctantly advise potential homeowners to look outside the city, fueling a downward spiral of decay and discontent...in many respects, Eisenhower High School epitomized one of the most pervasive educational challenges of the day in America: a societal “natural” disaster of disinvestment, decline and decay of urban schools.

a place for  
“those kids,”

Perfectly framing this vision was the existing Eisenhower High School facility, a modern ruin in most respects, a physical structure more visually appropriate for incarceration than education.

The condition of the high school aptly communicated the disinvestment that existed in the community... a place for “those kids,” not “our kids.”

NO PARKING  
OR TRESPASSING  
9:00PM TO 6:00AM  
VIOLATORS SUBJECT  
TO ARREST

not “our kids.”







## {WE ARE} Eisenhower High School

### {RE}INVENTION

A new Superintendent and a Board of Education with vision refused to accept the status quo.

They set a path to **REINVENT** Eisenhower High school:

- **RENOUNCING** old paradigms by **REDEFINING** what is possible in Decatur,
- **RECONNECTING** the school with the community,
- **RESHAPING** expectations for students, staff and community, and
- **RECLAIMING** student and staff dignity.

This project would come to symbolize the **REDEMPTION** that is possible when a community works to build on their collective aspirations, and takes responsibility for delivering their future.

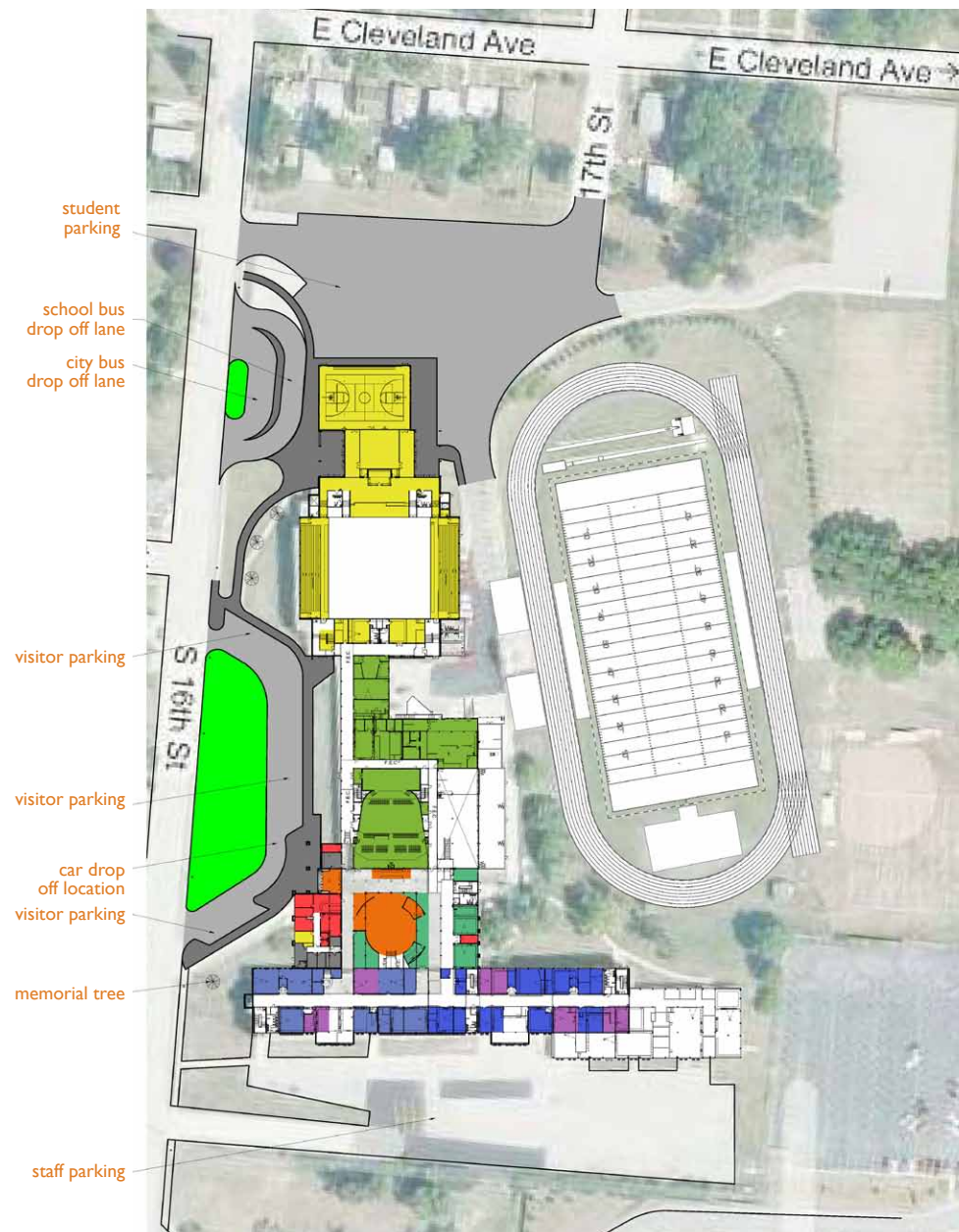
## SCOPE: COMPLETE {RE}INVENTION

Eisenhower High School (EHS) has been transformed into a **21st Century Educational Facility** as part of a broader program of systemic change, including a new high school organizational model (Small Learning Communities), and student uniforms.

Eisenhower High School is located at 1200 South 16th Street in Decatur, Illinois and was originally constructed in 1956. Since that time, the purpose of the building remained the same, but the building and its systems no longer met the needs of the students and educators.

**The project is a comprehensive modernization of the building**, designed to extend its functional life and provide a safe and effective learning environment for the students. The building needed be improved to meet current codes and standards for the current and foreseeable future requirements of the users, while updating the appearance of the structure to have curb appeal and foster a sense of neighborhood ownership.

The original building consisted of approximately 240,600 s.f. and was constructed of a steel structure, modified built-up roof and an exterior metal panel/skin system. 24,479 s.f. of additions were added to the building to meet the program requirements.



Site Plan



## SCOPE: {RE}STORE

The scope of work included upgrades to the offices, gymnasiums, auditorium, classrooms, restrooms, and mechanical (heating and cooling) and electrical system on all floors to meet the current standards and programmatic requirements. This renovation was an opportunity to increase energy efficiency and improve indoor air quality. The existing metal panel skin system was a substandard envelope by current standards and the learning environment in the building was well below a desirable level for students and educators.

The lower level now houses digital arts, science labs, food service, student commons, family consumer science, a large gym with lockers, and a small stage with performance support spaces. The first floor consists of classrooms, a commons area, reception and administration offices, music and chorus departments, an auditorium, a practice gym and athletic spaces. Electrical and information technology rooms are at each level and mechanical space is allocated through heat pumps in rooms and above ceilings.

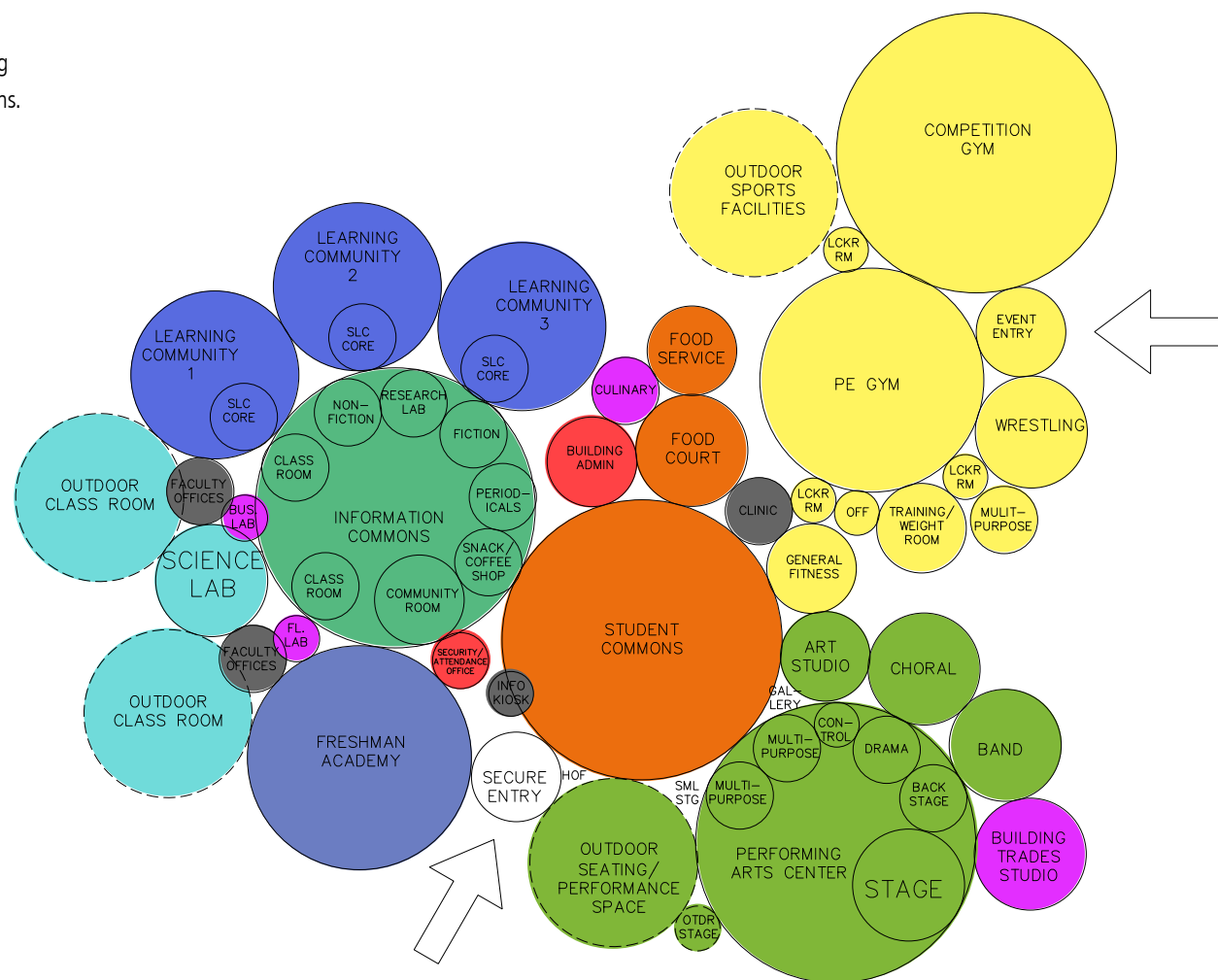
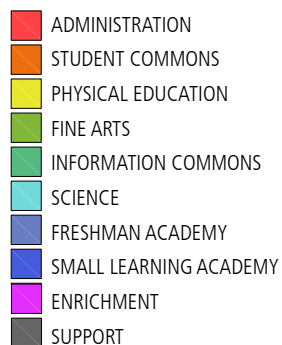
WE ARE  
*equal*

All vestiges of the existing building likeness, including 100% of the building exterior were replaced with a new aesthetic to inspire students and community alike, and **restore dignity for students, parents, and staff.**



## SCOPE: PROGRAMMING

The programming process produced an educational specification for a 21st Century high school for 1,250 students that was "mapped" over the existing facility, identifying areas for remodeling and additions. 100% of the existing building was remodeled, and approximately 10% of additional program space was added to complete the transformation of EHS from yesterday's industrial preparedness model, to tomorrow's skills sets incubator.



## PROJECT BUDGET

The total cost of the project was \$44 million including furniture, technology infrastructure and soft costs.







## CHALLENGE: obtaining public permission

Only a comprehensive community engagement program was likely to build the social capital needed to bridge the divide within the community, and obtain the public permission needed to move forward.



## STAKEHOLDERS *"Put your board member hat on..."*

That was the charge given to the 150+ members of the High School Task Force, the group responsible for the development of the plan for the future of the Eisenhower High School. This group included students, educators, administrators, board members, business owners, civic and religious leaders, city government representatives, interested community members, and created a wonderful and representative cross section of the community. It became clear through the extremely well attended meetings (many of which were over the summer) that this issue was of utmost importance to all segments of the community.

## CHALLENGES

It had been over 40 years since the passage of the last building bond referendum in Decatur. Two attempts a decade ago both fell short. The community's perception was that the schools were failing, and they were not going to endorse a district-led effort. Many felt that less than a decade following a manufacturing plant closure and the loss of 2000 high-paying manufacturing jobs was not the time to attempt the largest construction program in school history.

## AVAILABLE ASSETS

The DPS #61 Board of Education was resolved to address challenges at the high school level and brought in a new Superintendant with a proven reputation as an effective change agent. Combined with a Director of Buildings and Grounds with impeccable integrity and an energized school district leadership team, the school district had the necessary leadership in place to meet the challenge.

The school district brought on an educational facility planning and design firm that had worked with the school district since 1929. Specializing in Community Engagement Planning processes, the firm in-turn brought on a public opinion research and communications firm to support the engagement effort.

put your board member hat on...

## ASSETS

The school district also enlisted the efforts of three extraordinary community members to lead the High School Task Force: a president of a local bank who is held in great regard throughout the business community; a community volunteer and district parent with a passion for supporting the school district, and a graduate of the school district and employee at a local manufacturer, providing a complimentary perspective to task force leadership. This group of citizen leaders could effectively communicate to all segments of Decatur.

Finally, a dedicated Task Force of 150 enthusiastic and purpose-driven community volunteers representing all segments of the community provided the army of volunteers needed to engage the broader community. In total, these groups of individuals provided all the assets necessary to convey the potential for reinvention, and inspire the community to take action.

### extraordinary community members

1

**DAVE WEBBER**  
{local bank president}

2

**PATTI SWINFORD**  
{community volunteer}

3

**BRIAN BRIGGS**  
{local employee & alumnus}

4

**TASK FORCE**  
{150 community members}





before: entry

## {RE}INVENTION

The value of the process and project to the community at large cannot be overstated. First, it has helped to redefine what is possible in the community. Combined with other improvement initiatives (downtown renovations, hospital makeovers, lake enhancement project) it has helped fuel a community spirit renaissance.

It has reconnected the school district with the community by restoring the pride community members feel about their school. It has enhanced community pride knowing that Eisenhower High School has no equal among its peers.

## VALUE OF PROCESS & PROJECT

In the 1990's, an article in US News and World Report identified the Decatur Public School District as one of the ten fastest declining enrollment public school districts in the Nation.

In 1999, a riot broke out in the bleachers during a football game at Eisenhower High School, prompting national debate over race and rules, including a visit by the Reverend Jesse Jackson, in response to the school district's decision to expel the students involved. In 2001, the Firestone plant in Decatur was closed due to problems associated with Ford Explorer roll overs, removing 2,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs from the local economy. A recent article in the Wall Street Journal identified Decatur, Illinois as the second fastest shrinking economy in the nation.

Decatur, Illinois, with its manufacturing-based economy, has experienced loss and decline, and the constant parade of bad news absolutely tempers attitudes about what is possible. Contrasted with the relative success of nearby communities with professional and service based economies, Decatur's self-image could have been described as poor. Decatur's two aging and deteriorating high schools contributed to this negative self-image, as students returning from competitions at peer schools wondered aloud why they didn't deserve facilities like the ones just visited.



after: entry



Dwight D. Eisenhower

**“EVERY human being**  
*is capable of* **GREATNESS.”**



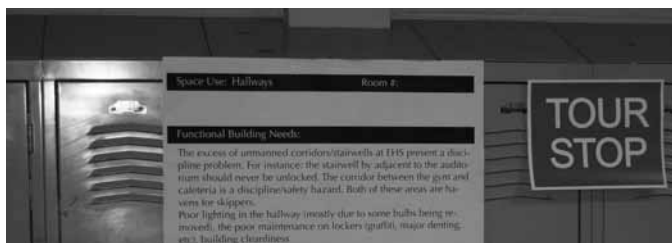
## community engagement PROCESS

Through a process that integrated public engagement, public opinion research, and communications, community members navigated the issues faced by the board of education, and developed a bold plan for the future. Their journey followed a unique **process of invention**.

- 1 DISCOVERY
- 2 VISIONING
- 3 BRAINSTORMING
- 3 SCENARIO MODELING

### 1 DISCOVERY

Touring the existing facility and recording their observations on a “graffiti map” allowed participants to discover the physical and functional needs of the facility for themselves, which was far more powerful than listening to the school district or architect read a list of needs. Sharing observations at the end of the tour, participants developed a common understanding of the needs to be addressed, and the resolve to address them.



Following the shared observations, participants went on a “shopping spree” using “Panther bucks,” spending their dollars to address the most urgent physical and functional needs at EHS.

## 1 DISCOVERY

## 2 VISIONING

## 3 BRAINSTORMING

## 4 SCENARIO MODELING



## 2 VISIONING

Participants completed a learning styles quiz to identify their individual learning style, and to begin to understand that educational programs are changing in fundamental ways because people learn in different ways. Community members were then taken on a “virtual tour” of high school exemplars, illustrating how schools are evolving to meet the needs of 21st century curriculum and instruction. At the completion of the evening, community members crafted the **Planning Principles** that would guide the engagement process.

## 3 BRAINSTORMING

Using a charrette planning process (complete with a modern day charrette) community members teamed with school architects to imagine the myriad of possibilities to be vetted. Should the existing school be renovated, combined with the other high school and relocated to another facility, or replaced with a new high school? An **Educational Standard** was developed to allow comparison of the different scenarios.



Community members looked at the possibilities for renovation first, and after an evening's worth of work, presented their recommendations to the entire group. The next charrette process focused on the development of the possibilities for new construction or additions and renovations to a former high school, using a kit of parts representing the educational standard.



- 1 DISCOVERY
- 2 VISIONING
- 3 BRAINSTORMING
- 4 SCENARIO MODELING

## 4 SCENARIO MODELING

Four different scenarios emerged:

1. Maintain the status quo
2. Renovate the existing high school
3. Combine both high schools into one new high school
4. Combine both high schools into a former high school building owned by the district

All scenarios were modeled to understand life cycle costs and educational adequacy. At the completion of the process, the **Renovation Scenario** (reinventing the existing high schools) was selected by the Task Force.







## {RE}INVENTION

The aspirations for the project were discovered and synthesized during a collaborative process for the development of the educational specification. Through multiple programming work sessions with various stakeholder groups, a vision of the successful environment emerged.

## PROJECT ASPIRATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATION

The reimagined Eisenhower High School would:

- **Be organized in small learning communities. Each small learning community (SLC) would include:**
  - Core curricular areas
  - An administrative suite at the SLC entrance for the Assistant Principal, Counselor, and Administrative Staff member
  - Faculty collaboration and office areas
  - Conference room
  - Restrooms
- **Support student centered, 21st Century curriculum and instruction**
  - Layered with a variety of activity settings
    - Small group collaboration areas
    - Spaces for peer to peer work
    - Areas for project work
    - "Maker" spaces
    - Active learning zones
    - Multipurpose Spaces
    - Spaces for teacher collaboration and planning
  - Provide ubiquitous access to Technology
- **Be designed to engage students, staff, parents, and the community**
  - Transform perceptions of Eisenhower High School
  - Restore "school pride"
  - Reconnect with the community
- **Create "convertible environments"**
  - Flexibility to accommodate the range of educational deliveries from directed instruction to self paced project based learning
- **Create a sustainable environment**
  - Reduced carbon footprint
  - Harvest daylight
  - Connected to nature
  - Fostering environmental stewardship

**"OUR FUTURE** *is in our own hands.*"

EDUCATIONAL  
*e*nvironment



## ORGANIZED BY SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:

At the heart of each small learning community (SLC) are the **administrative suite, the teacher collaboration and planning areas, and the community commons**. Core subject areas are distributed throughout the remaining areas.

Each SLC has its own entry, its own stair tower exit, and its own **access to the information commons**, the primary active learning and resource space.

The **administrative suite** at the entry to each SLC provide passive surveillance to the entry as well as the community commons collaboration space.

Located at the heart of each SLC, the **community commons** spaces act as the living room for each community, creating a home base, allowing students to feel comfortable and to shape the learning environment to meet their learning needs.

Adjacent to the community commons, the **teacher collaboration and planning** spaces are centrally located and provide passive surveillance in the heart of each SLC.



The core academic areas of the building are organized into **small learning communities** (Freshman Academy, Small Learning Community #1, #2, and #3), as opposed to a departmental organization. Each Small Learning Community is themed, creating a unique sense of place for students in that community.

environment supports  
**CURRICULUM**





small learning  
COMMUNITY COMMONS



## information COMMONS

The Information Commons connects all of the Small Learning Communities, becoming the collaborative heart of the building. This adjacency allows the learning environments of the SLC to spill out into the active learning zones of the Information Commons. The upper level of the Info Commons allows small group work, peer to peer work, and individual work. The lower level is either a project work space, or can become an assembly or performance space. Both upper and lower areas have adjacent breakout spaces with glass acoustical partitions, allowing extension of the main space, or acoustical isolation, as needed.



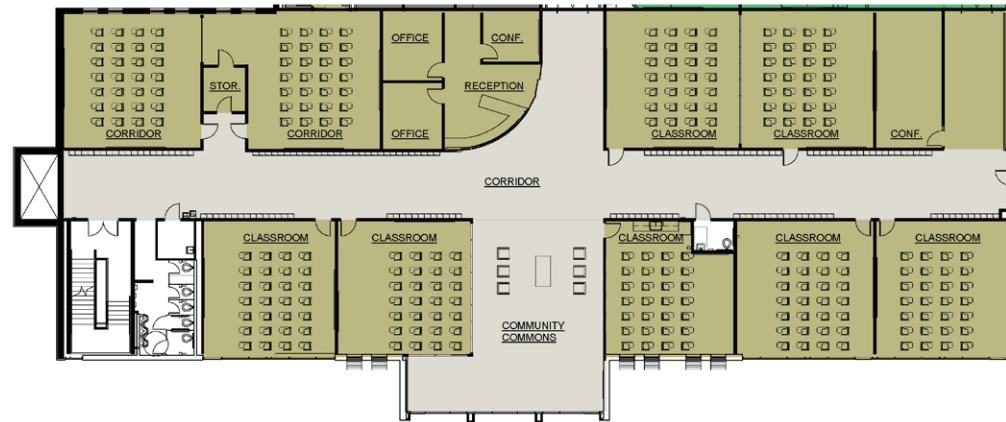
lower level

**{RE}IMAGINED**

The journey along the continuum from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction is navigated at different rates and different levels of effectiveness by different school districts and different teachers. No one can say for sure what educational programs will look like, and the school district was concerned about how to design for an unknown future?

**CONVERTIBLE ENVIRONMENTS**

The solution was for this design to be convertible; that is, to accommodate that continuum of instructional delivery, from teacher centered directed instruction, to student centered, self paced, and or project based learning.

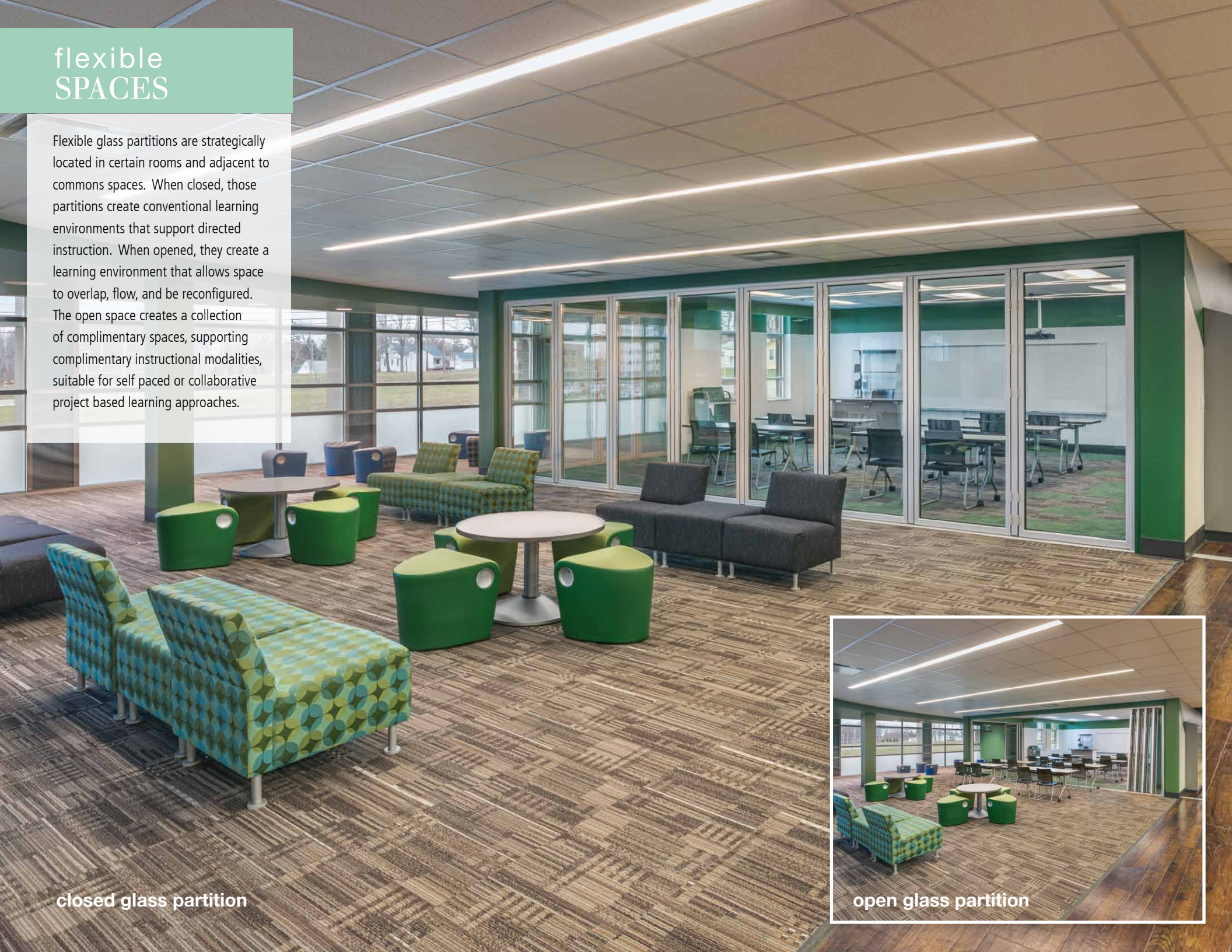
**directed instruction  
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT****21<sup>st</sup> century  
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

**“OUR FUTURE** *is in our own hands.*”

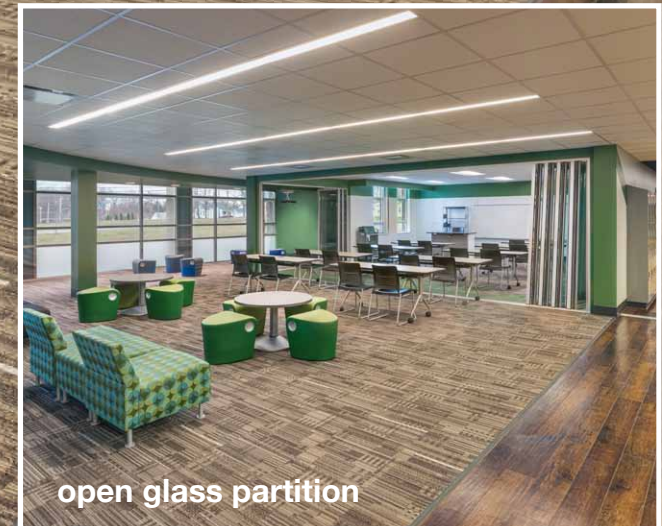


## flexible SPACES

Flexible glass partitions are strategically located in certain rooms and adjacent to commons spaces. When closed, those partitions create conventional learning environments that support directed instruction. When opened, they create a learning environment that allows space to overlap, flow, and be reconfigured. The open space creates a collection of complimentary spaces, supporting complimentary instructional modalities, suitable for self paced or collaborative project based learning approaches.



closed glass partition



open glass partition





## 21st CENTURY CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

A variety of learning environments is layered throughout the facility, providing a full complement of learning settings, allowing the educational delivery to transform from teacher-centered, to student-centered. There are spaces provided to support students as they work:



- peer to peer
- in small groups
- in traditional directed instruction
- in large groups
- through active learning activities
- using a project based learning approach
- using critical thinking and problem solving skills
- to develop their creativity skills

Additionally, the district has installed a wireless network and plans to go to a one-to-one technology initiative in the 2014 – 2015 school year.

## 21<sup>st</sup> century LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Knowing that learning is designed to happen anywhere and everywhere, flexible furnishings have been included to allow students to shape the learning environment to meet their needs, and according to their learning style.







## physical attributes of the ENVIRONMENT

The Eisenhower High School environment has been completely reinvented, communicating in complimentary and compelling ways that students are important, community is important, and that **this is a place that can change your life.**



### IT IS ENGAGING

Flexible furnishings, ideally suited to students of all shapes and sizes, allow students to shape the environment to meet their learning needs.

A community room is provided adjacent to the main student commons to create a home for community members wishing to get involved and volunteer in the school.

New program spaces such as a recording studio, media bars, fitness and wellness areas, which naturally engage students, have been added.

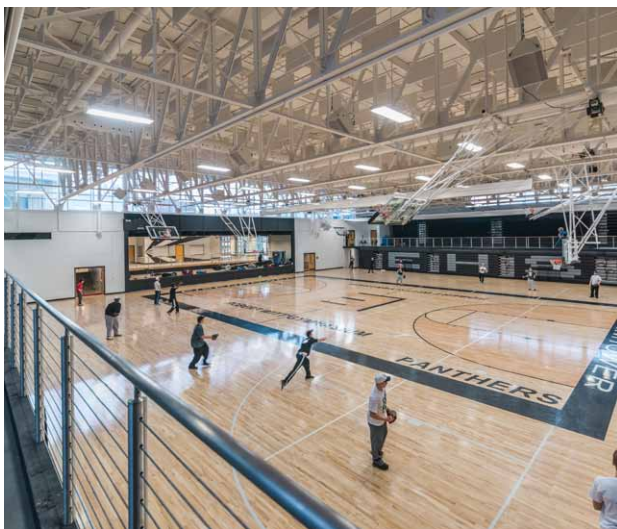






## engaging ENVIRONMENT

New spaces, like a Student Commons, Student Store, Information Commons, Community Commons, and Food Court have been included to engage students through learning settings that are less institutional, more real world.



## {RE}USE

The entire building was reused demonstrating in a very real way that building re-use is not only possible, but that it can create a wonderful alternative to throwing buildings away every 50 years. Building re-use is an incredibly important approach to conserving our natural resources.

## IT IS SUSTAINABLE

The entire heating system has been replaced with a one-pipe ground source **geothermal heating and cooling system** that adds air conditioning, while **reducing energy consumption and lowering the carbon footprint**.

Daylight sensors combined with light shelves, full height window walls, and high efficiency glazing will allow the school district to harvest daylight (when sufficient daylight exists) to eliminate the need for artificial light, again, reducing energy consumption and lowering the carbon footprint.

## HOW THE FACILITY FITS WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNITY

Currently the community is undergoing a series of unrelated, yet complimentary improvements. A renovation of the downtown streetscapes; ongoing improvements to one hospital and a major renovation of the other hospital immediately adjacent to EHS; ongoing improvements to the local community college, and a master planned development of park district properties including lake front development, are all concurrently underway.

The renovation of the city's two high schools is the most visible and prominent of all the planned improvements, and the project that has the greatest reach into the community. Most of the community's residents have or will go through one of the school district's high school facilities. As one of the vehicles for community development and progress, the reinvention of EHS could not be more timely. **For community members, the reinvented building is a tangible symbol of the hope they can have for the future of their community.**

**"OUR FUTURE** *is in our own hands.*"



WE ARE  
*equal*  
EQUAL

{WE ARE} Eisenhower High School

## INSPIRATION & MOTIVATION

Environmental graphics enliven the space, inspiring and challenging students to achieve.

Furnishings are designed to fit the students, not the other way around.

Specialty lighting and signage at the main entry and at the information commons creates a feeling of wonder, value and pride. The "Eisenhower" letters at the building entrance are big and loud, proudly announcing who lives there.

Daylight infuses the interior and is further transmitted through interior glass partitions, creating a pleasant feeling of openness and transparency. Natural views are visible deep within the facility, connecting students with nature, and creating an environment that feels like a combination of both inside and outside.

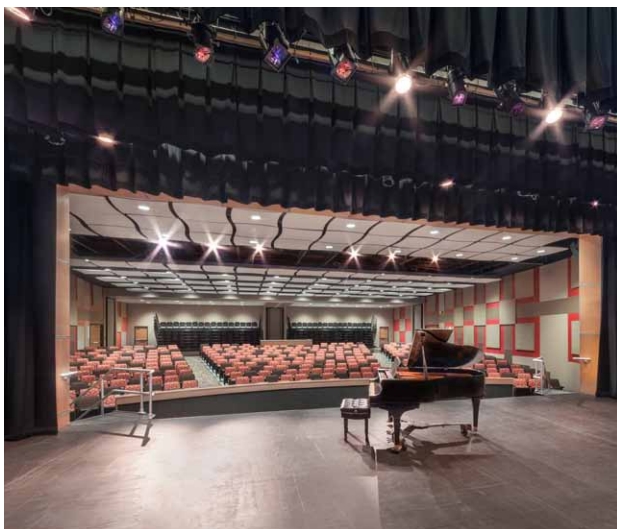


{WE ARE} Eisenhower High School

The interior décor is engaging, comfortable, and flexible. The building is modern and friendly; a welcoming environment full of life, where the serpentine walls of the gallery pay tribute to the spirit of previous EHS graduates, and reserve space for the accomplishments of future grads. The school district has noticed that students don't want to leave.

challenging students  
to **ACHIEVE**





## {RE}INVENTION

### A new story is being told about Eisenhower High School...

Educators are encouraging students in the elementary grades (who will be attending Eisenhower) to do well in school by promising to hold their annual event, concert or performance at Eisenhower High School.

This project has created a desire to be connected to Eisenhower High School, where none previously existed.

## THE PROJECT ACHIEVES EDUCATIONAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The project creates the nurturing, supportive environment allowing educators and students to work and learn in a small community setting. This design allows the district to implement and follow data-driven approaches and best practices. The flexible environment, which allows for change over time, can accommodate a variety of educational deliveries without requiring further renovation or new construction. Ubiquitous access to technology allows the school district to implement technology based instruction wherever and whenever.

## THE PROJECT ACHIEVES SCHOOL DISTRICT GOALS

The School District desired to communicate to students in a real and literal way that they are somebody, they are important, they can achieve, and that their future is up to them; the district sought to develop a design that let students know that they are as deserving as students anywhere, and inspired them to set their sights high. The district wanted a home for EHS students that made students feel proud, and could help them reinvent their self image.

## THE PROJECT ACHIEVES COMMUNITY GOALS

There is no more authentic expression of what a community values than by looking at where it decides to invest its resources. The investment made at the Eisenhower High School confirms that there are few things more important to the citizens of Decatur than public education, and the preparation of its students to be productive members of society.

This project has touched all segments of the Eisenhower High School community...giving neighbors, graduates, parents, students, and staff a place they can all be proud of.

**“OUR FUTURE** *is in our own hands.*”



## {RE}INVENTION

The new Eisenhower High School is a literal reminder or example of the potential that is within all of us...

A reminder of how, working together, **we can reinvent ourselves** to become something more than any of us could have imaged individually...

A reminder that in spite of what others see on the outside, there's an amazing student, school district, community on the inside just waiting to be discovered.



{WE ARE} Eisenhower High School