



KEITH VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

**SCHRADERGROUP**  
AN HCM STUDIO  
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**Keith Valley Middle School**  
Hatboro, Pennsylvania



## Scope of Work & Budget

OWNER | Hatboro-Horsham School District

SITE AREA | 37.5 acres

BUILDING AREA | 285,000 sf, 3-stories,  
new construction

GRADES SERVED | 6-8

STUDENT CAPACITY | 1,300 students

SF PER STUDENT | 207 sf

CONSTRUCTION COST | \$89 million

CONSTRUCTION COST PER SF | \$312.28

OCCUPANCY DATE | August 2025



## Executive Summary

The Keith Valley Middle School (KVMS) project delivers a transformative replacement of an aging facility on its existing site, consolidating middle school education and district administrative functions into a single, purpose-built campus. Long-standing concerns regarding building condition, lack of air conditioning, and limited accessibility were addressed through the development of a new, fully accessible facility designed to support evolving instructional models and long-term district needs.

At the core of the design is a commitment to next-generation learning. The school is organized into three floors of small learning communities for grades 6–8, each supporting flexible, adaptable environments that accommodate STEAM programming, project-based learning, and a range of instructional approaches. These learning communities are anchored by shared, flexible core spaces that foster collaboration, interdisciplinary engagement, and student gathering, while maintaining clear connections to central learning resource and public areas.

The design process was informed by a comprehensive programming and visioning effort, including stakeholder engagement and educational benchmarking, which established a clear framework for flexibility, connectivity, choice, and movement throughout the building. The resulting facility reflects a student-centered vision that emphasizes hands-on, multi-modal learning and strengthens the overall educational experience.

Strategic site planning enabled construction of the new school while the existing facility remained fully operational, minimizing disruption to instruction. Upon completion, the former middle school and district administration building were demolished, allowing the site to be restored with new athletic fields. The completed campus delivers a unified, future-ready learning environment that enhances accessibility, supports innovative teaching and learning, and reinforces the district's long-term educational mission.



Key Educational & Community Anchor for  
Hatboro Borough and Horsham Township



# School & Community Research & Engagement

The Hatboro-Horsham School District is a suburban public school system located in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, serving the Borough of Hatboro and Horsham Township outside of Philadelphia. The district is embedded within a stable, residential community with strong civic engagement and a long-standing commitment to public education. Within this context, Keith Valley Middle School serves as a key educational and community anchor, supporting students, families, educators, and district leadership in a shared effort to redefine the middle school experience for the future.

A comprehensive visioning and engagement process shaped the project, bringing together district administrators, educators, and support staff in collaboration with educational facilitators, and importantly incorporating input from students and the broader community. This collective effort helped define what a Keith Valley Middle School learner represents, grounded in shared aspirations for students who are curious, connected, empathetic, resilient, and confident risk-takers. The process emphasized the “lived experience” of learning, reinforcing that school should be a place where students feel a strong sense of belonging, safety, and inspiration while being challenged to grow academically and personally. The resulting vision positioned the school as a “home of opportunity,” where learning is experiential, contextual, and meaningfully connected to both individual identity and community values.

Key challenges identified through this engagement included the limitations of the existing facility, evolving expectations for equitable and inclusive learning environments, and the need to better support student social-emotional wellbeing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community and stakeholder feedback consistently reinforced the importance of rethinking traditional school structures to better support flexibility, collaboration, and student agency. There was a shared recognition that schools must function as safe, supportive ecosystems that extend beyond academics to foster resilience, empathy, and authentic human connection.

At the same time, the district’s strengths provided a strong foundation for transformation, including a highly engaged community, dedicated educators, and a strong culture of collaboration and innovation. Engagement efforts highlighted opportunities to build on these assets through flexible learning environments, interdisciplinary teaching, and student-influenced approaches that promote choice, exploration, and ownership of learning. The resulting framework positions the school as a dynamic, student-centered ecosystem that empowers learners while strengthening the connection between school, community, and the broader world.

Simmons  
Elementary School

Hatboro-Horsham  
High School

Hallowell  
Elementary School

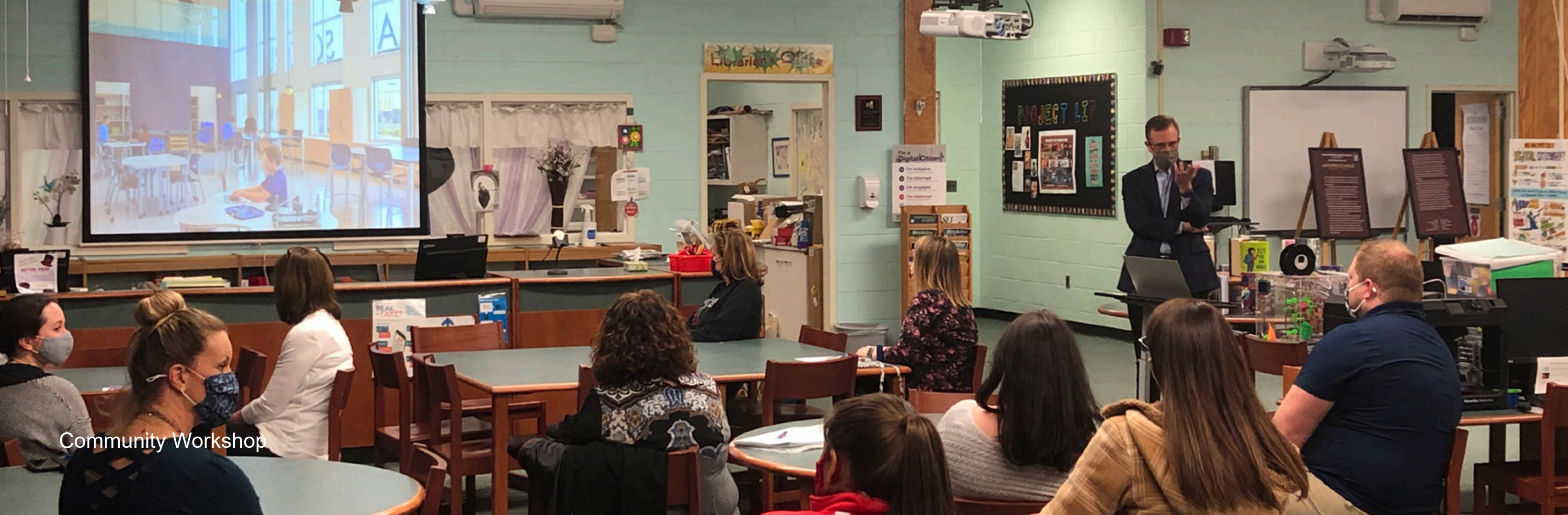
Keith Valley Middle School  
& District Administration Office

Blair Mill  
Elementary School

Crooked Billet  
Elementary School

HHSD is located right outside of Philadelphia in an area  
of Pennsylvania, rich in the country’s revolutionary history





Community Workshop

## Defining a Keith Valley Learner

The School District and community described their vision of what a KVMS Learner is to encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion in their new school. The process started with analyzing their current programming and evaluating how middle school students learn best. What are the things most important for middle school learners to flourish? What are the best features of the current Keith Valley Middle School? What potential can our students achieve in a new school if designed around their needs?

From there the goal was to prioritize and envision FIRST - creating the vision for the KVMS educational program - and THEN designing the building around the new educational program.

### Keith Valley Project Focus



Hatboro-Horsham School District created Design Imperatives through this workshop process that served as the foundation for the program and the building design.

### New KVMS Design Imperatives

- Flexible, adaptable spaces that are accessible by all students
- Design programmatic re-think of teams through potential vertical alignments
- Choice, movement, and comfort in learning spaces
- Hands-on and multimodal learning
- Connectivity within the school and with the community
- Safe, yet supportive of risk taking
- Playful and inspiring

“A place where every kid fits everywhere” was the driving quote that was created through the educators’ workshops and was at the root of every design & planning decision. Every child learns differently and deserves a space that supports their unique needs.

### Portrait of a KV Learner

- Intrinsically motivated by an authentic passion for learning
- Physically active & lives a healthy lifestyle
- Empathetic, kind, & understanding about others
- Learning risk taker
- Empowered sense of individual agency & voice
- Appreciative of each other’s differences
- Critical thinker
- Driven to serve community & humanity



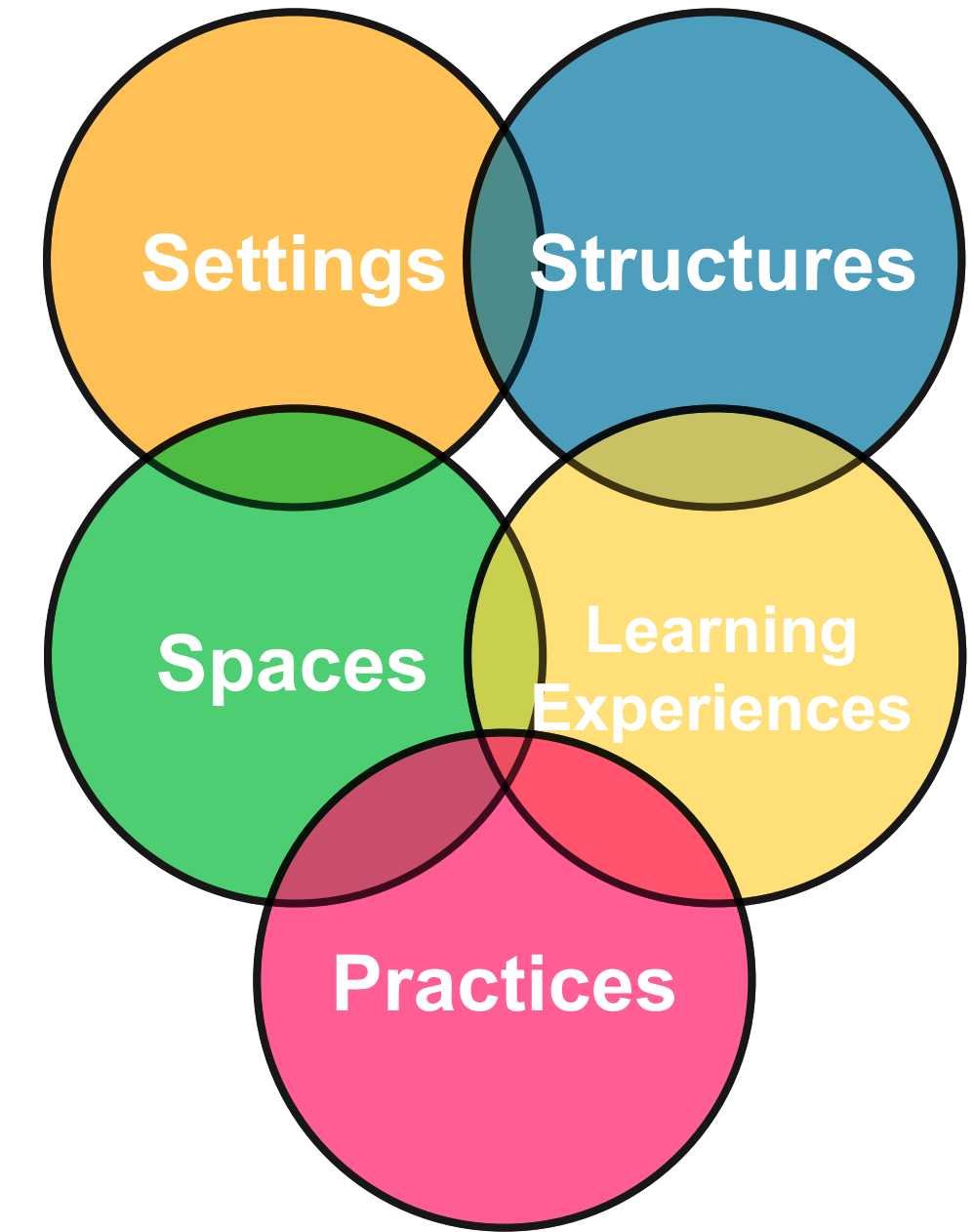
District and School branded wall graphics depicting the District’s idealogy of being a lighthouse combined with the portrait of a KV Learner.



## Design Imperatives

During the visioning process for KVMS, the design team facilitated a planning and design workshop with Hatboro-Horsham administration, faculty/staff, local officials, parents, and community members. The process led to the creation of the following design imperatives that were followed throughout the design phase:

- Flexible Spaces without Specific Uses
- Open transitions between Indoors and Outdoors
- Breaking down the barriers of Student Age
- Choice, Movement, and Comfort in all learning spaces
- Inclusive and Diverse
- Safe yet Risk Supporting
- Playful and Inspiring
- Truly supporting Compatibility and Authenticity
- Connectivity within the school, within the community, and with the world
- Open and Transparent
- Encouraging Mobility and Flexibility
- Enabling the deep learning of Stewardship and Sustainability, Resiliency and Well-being
- Enabling Choice and Relevance in learning
- Supporting Hands-On and Multimodal Learning

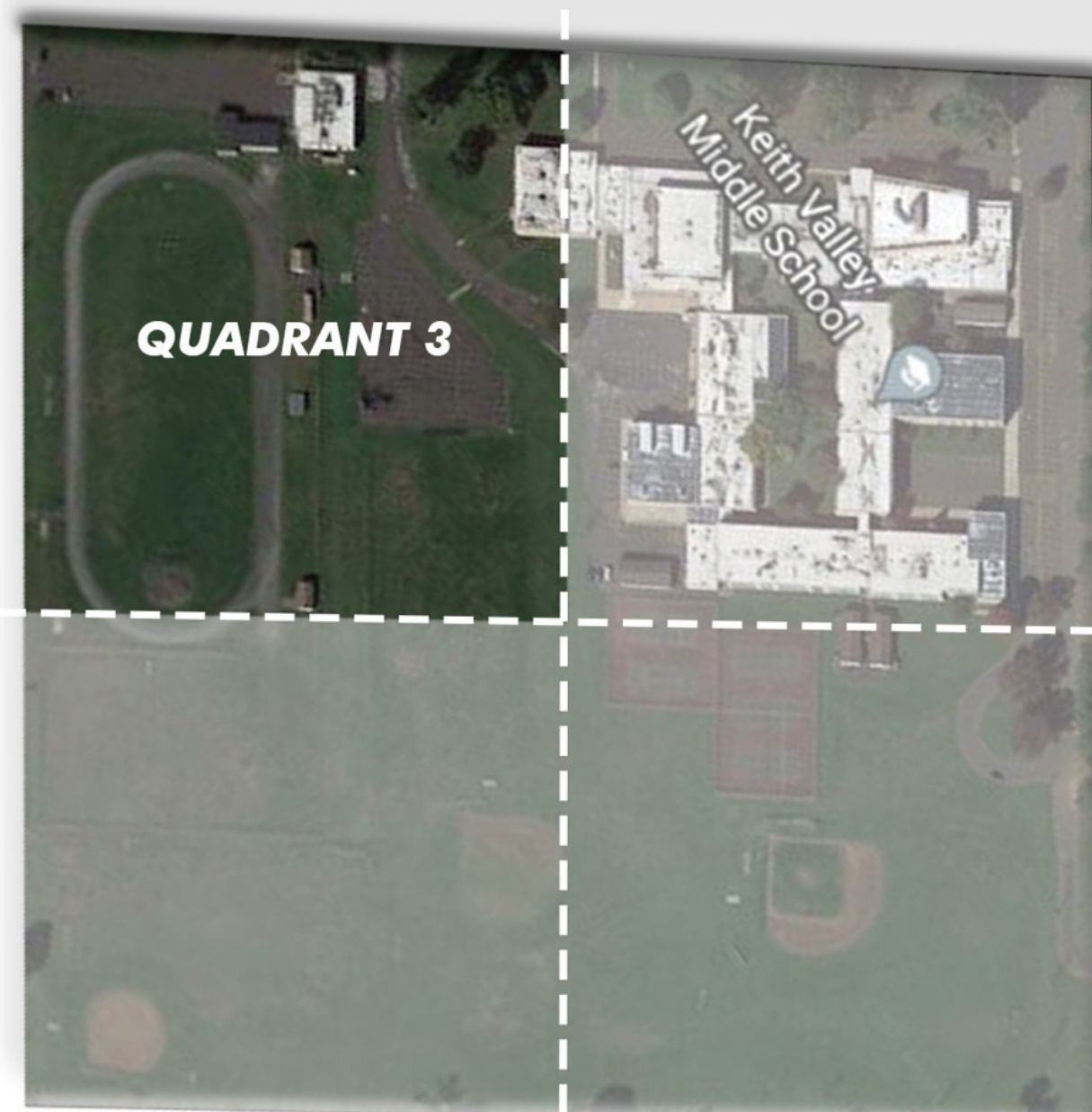
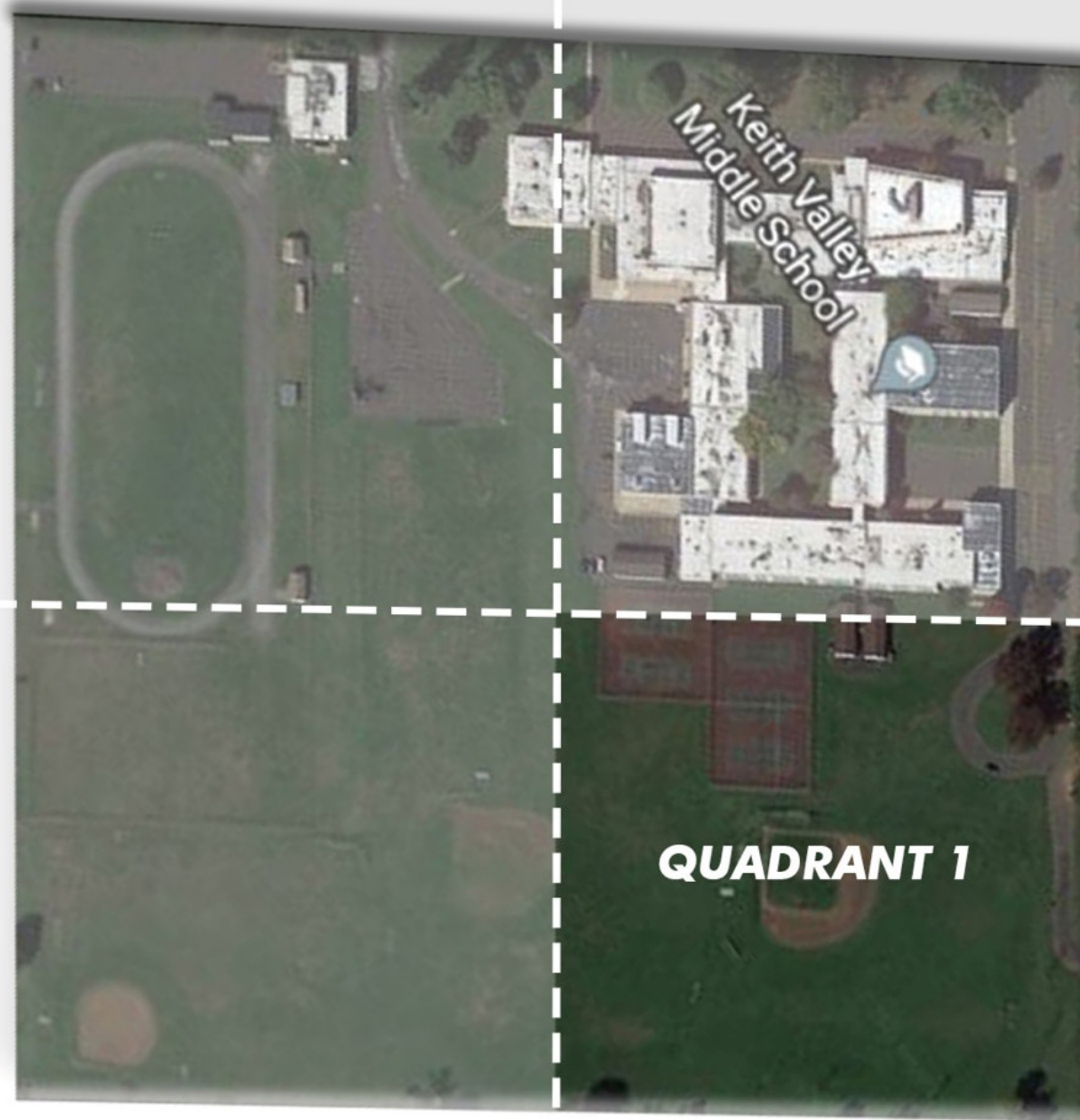


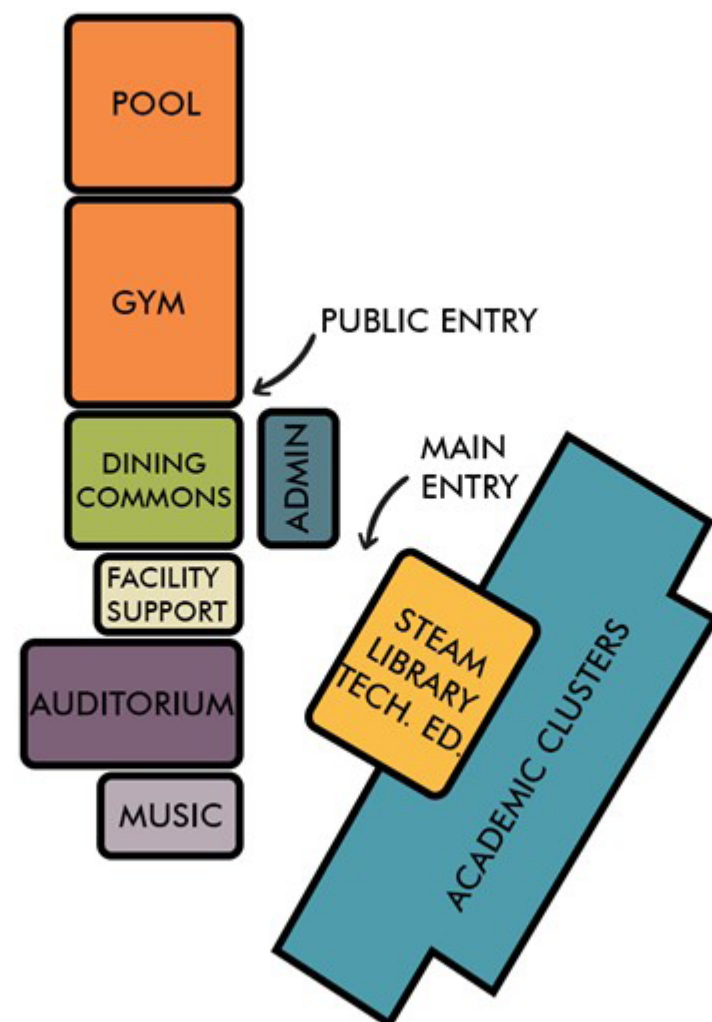
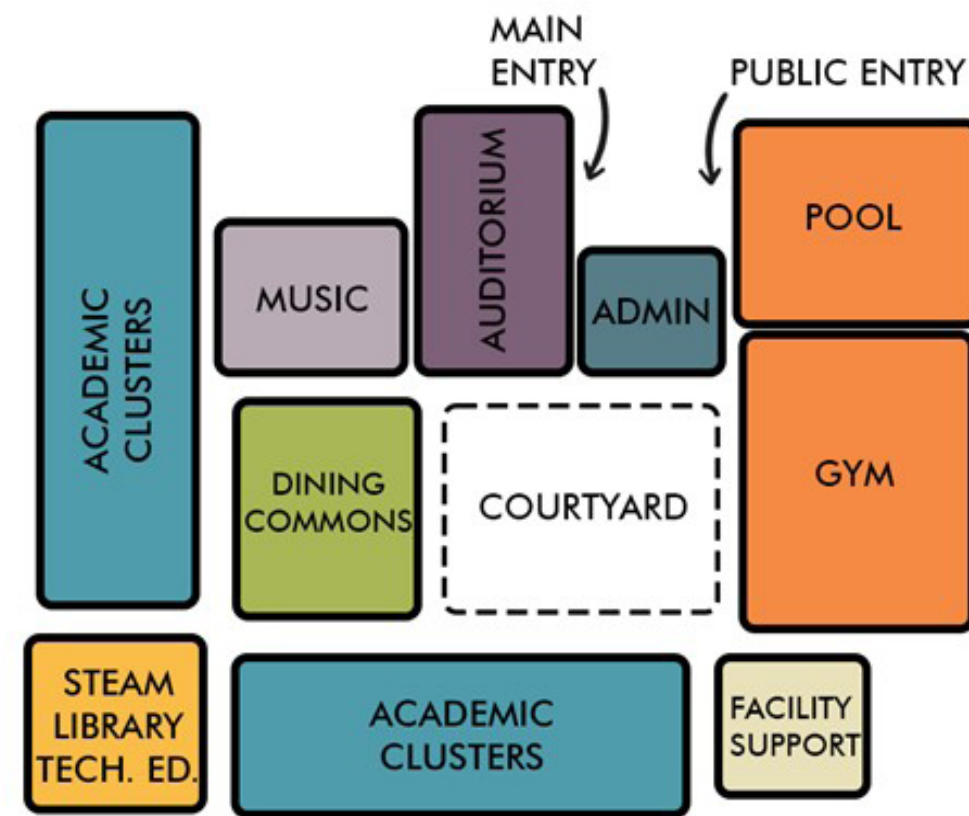
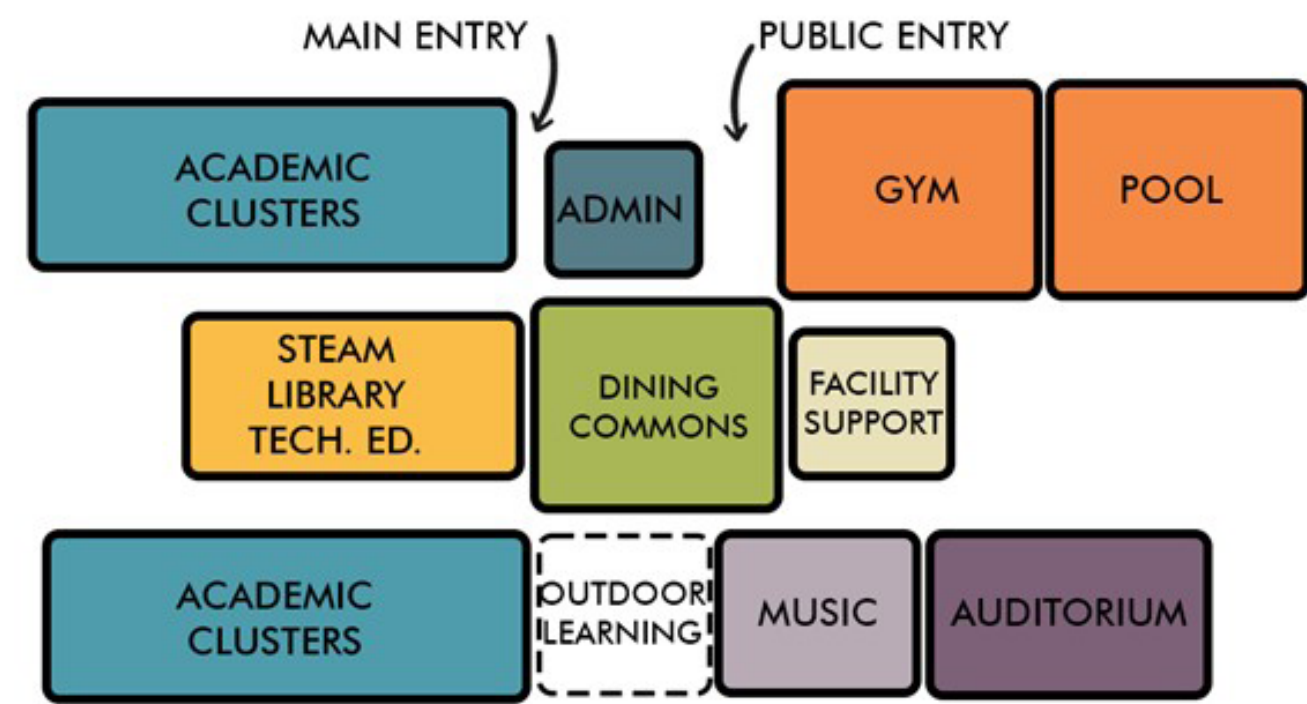
*“The way we do things tomorrow can be completely different from the way we did things yesterday.”*

## Quadrant Site Planning

During the initial concept planning phase, it became apparent that the site is divided into four clear quadrants. The existing school takes a full quadrant and cannot be developed due to the need to keep the school in operation until the new school can be constructed. Quadrant 1 is tucked in the back of the site behind the existing school, on the upper level of the site and furthest away from the two main access roads - Meetinghouse Road to the north and Upland Avenue to the west. Quadrant 2 fronts Upland Avenue and is located on a lower elevation, and Quadrant 3 occupied the existing football field and track, as well as the District Administration Building and had frontages on both major access roads.

Ultimately through the workshop process, the District and Community agreed that the best area for development of the new Keith Valley Middle School was shared between Quadrants 1 and 2, placed deeper in the site but facing Meetinghouse Road.



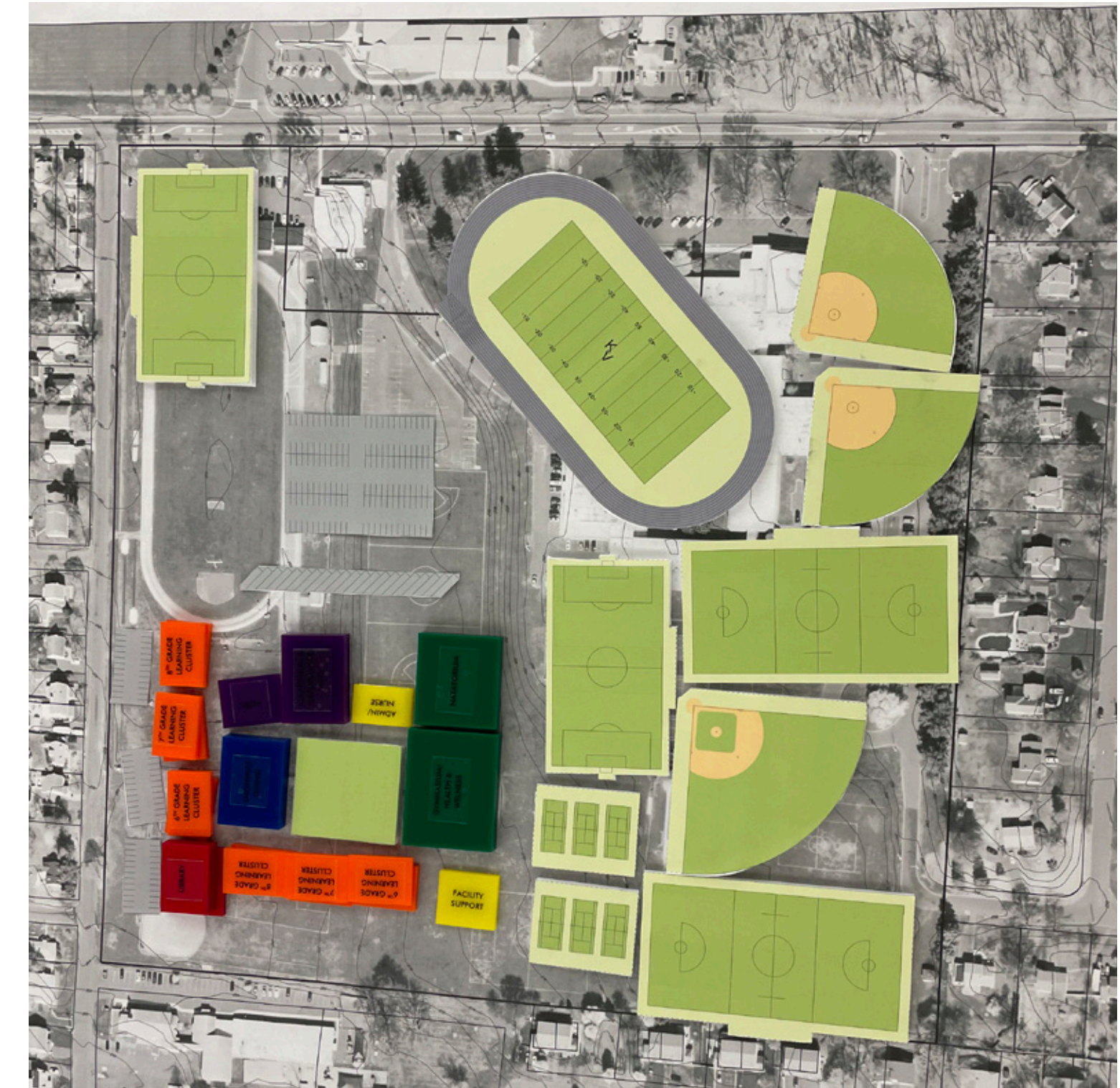


## Concepts Investigated During Workshops

The planning workshop brought together participants in a collaborative planning and design session focused on creating high-level site and building concepts. Attendees were divided into five groups, with each team tasked with creating a unique concept design for the new school.

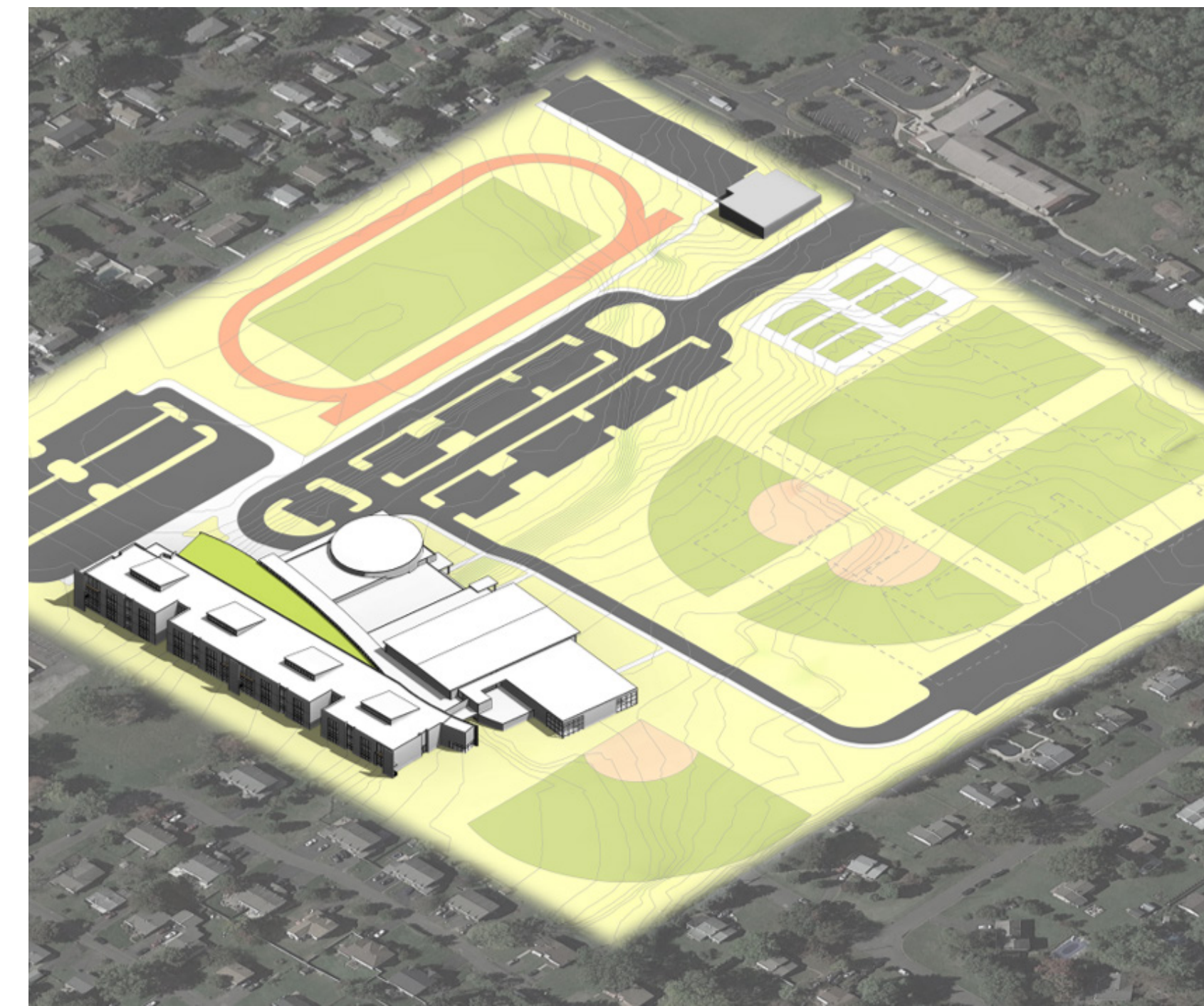
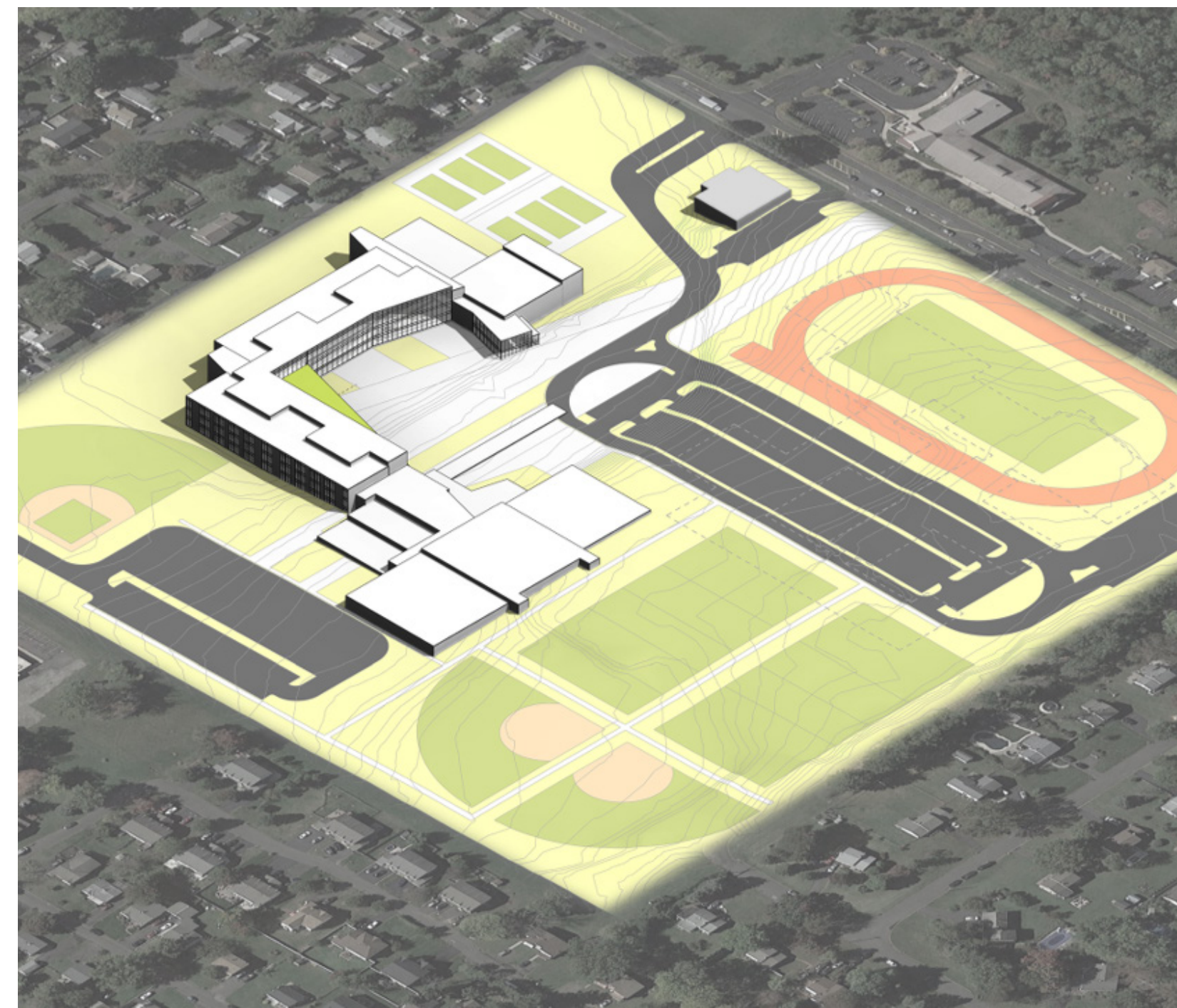
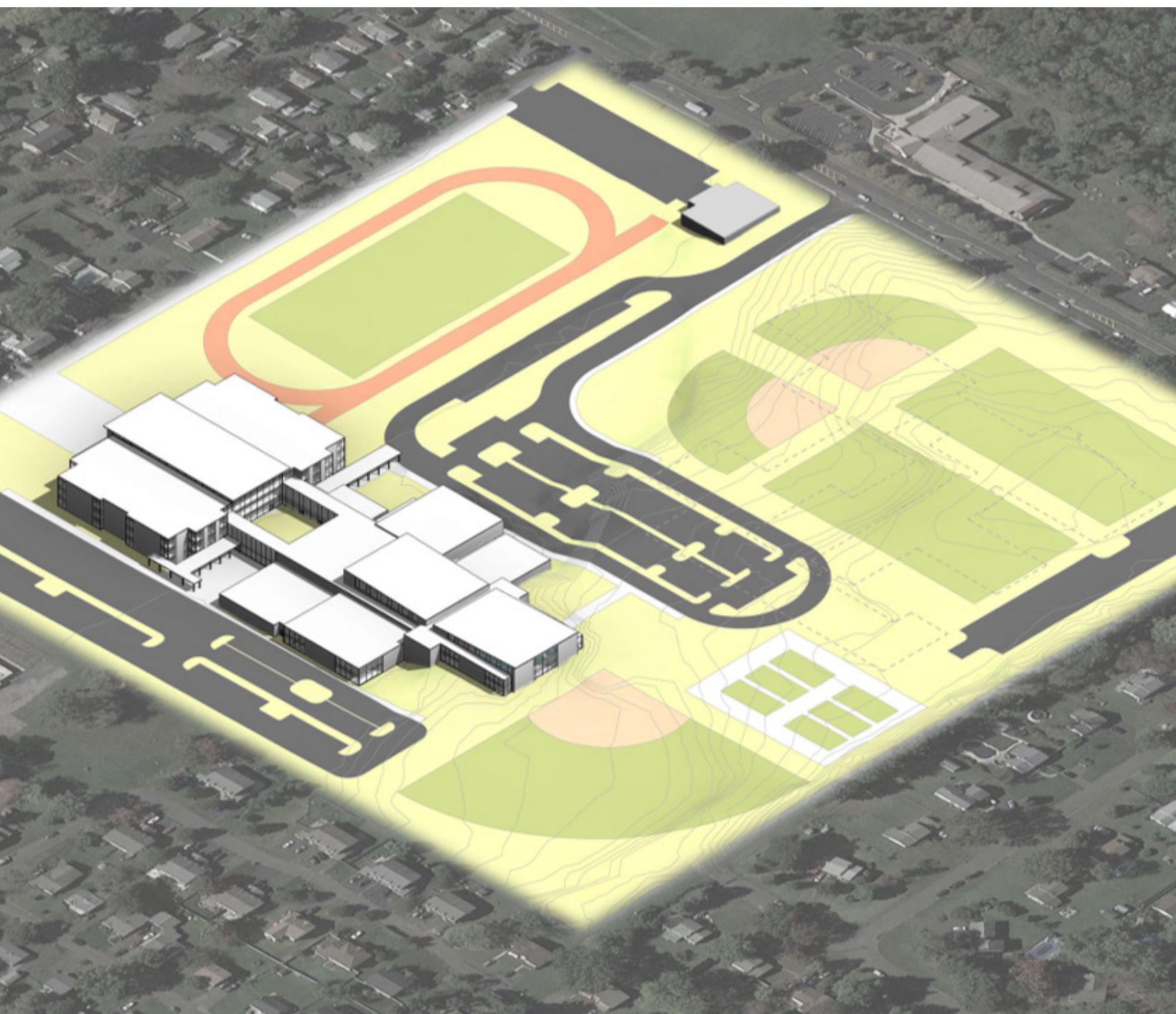
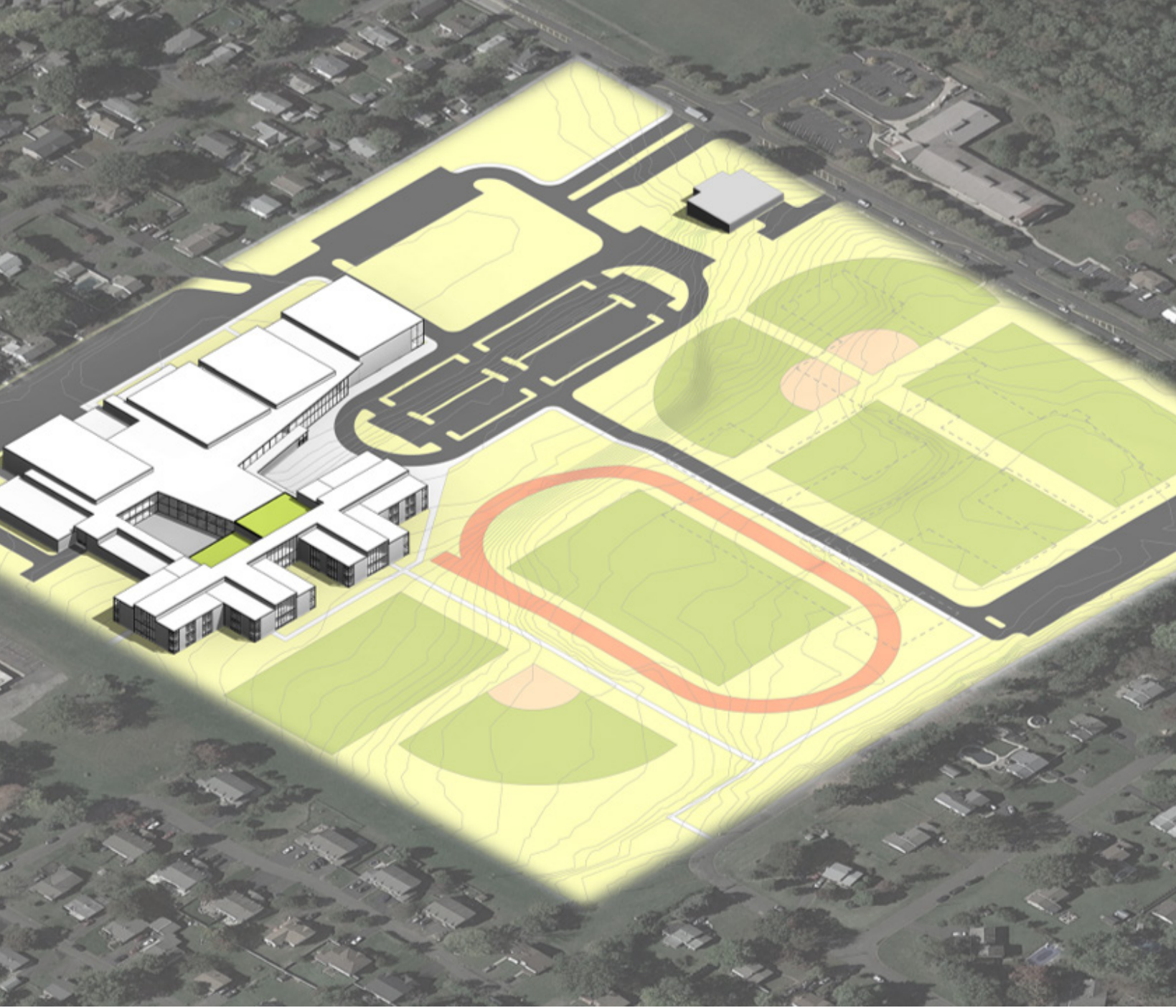
Each group explored key design considerations including site circulation, classroom organization, student collaboration spaces, safety and security, outdoor learning opportunities, sustainability, and community integration. Each team was given a site plan, 3D site elements (playing fields), and 3D massing, colored to represent the various program areas (classrooms, athletics, performing arts, etc.). Through brainstorming sessions, sketching exercises, and group discussions, participants developed distinct visions that reflected different approaches to educational design and campus organization.

The workshop encouraged creativity, teamwork, and open dialogue among stakeholders, allowing participants to share ideas and identify priorities for the future school. At the conclusion of the session, each group presented its concept design, highlighting major features, planning strategies, and design inspirations. Common themes that emerged across the presentations included organizing the classrooms into teaming structures, providing ample flexible learning spaces, an emphasis on student wellness, and strong connections to the outdoors. Overall, the workshop provided valuable insight into the community's aspirations for the new middle school and established a strong foundation for the continued design and planning process.



## Concepts Developed From the Workshops

Five unique design concepts emerged from the Planning Workshop and were further developed by the design team to evaluate the strengths and opportunities of each approach. Ultimately, consensus was reached to advance Option 5 — a more compact building design strategically positioned deeper within the site, featuring a clear and welcoming entry sequence from Meetinghouse Road. The building organization was carefully planned with the surrounding community in mind, placing the quieter classroom wings toward the rear of the site adjacent to neighboring residences, while locating the more active public and community-oriented spaces at the front of the building.





## Taste Test Concepts

Stakeholders—including educators, administrators, district leaders and local officials — participate in a guided “virtual tour” of innovative, next-generation middle schools. A smaller group of District representatives were able to visit key facilities in person, but in order to include the larger group, participants engage with a curated collection of high-quality images that showcase a wide range of educational environments. These images represent current trends, best practices, and key planning principles in school design aligned to the needs of the Future Ready Learner.

The visual case studies highlight diverse learning settings, such as flexible classrooms, collaborative commons, seminar spaces, project-based studios, maker environments, and wellness-integrated features. Each space is intentionally selected to illustrate how the built environment can foster student agency, collaboration, critical thinking, inclusion, and well-being.

During the exercise, participants work both independently and collaboratively to review the images and reflect on their impact. Using the **Keith Valley Middle School Portrait of a Learner** as a guiding framework, stakeholders evaluate each environment based on how effectively it supports qualities such as intrinsic motivation, empathy, risk-taking, critical thinking, and a commitment to community.

Through structured discussion protocols, participants identify which spaces resonate most strongly and why. They consider questions such as:

- How does this environment support student agency and voice?
- In what ways does it encourage collaboration, empathy, and inclusion?
- Does the space promote active, healthy lifestyles and well-being?
- How might this setting inspire risk-taking, creativity, and deep thinking?

Stakeholders then prioritize the design elements and spatial qualities that best align with Keith Valley’s vision for teaching and learning. This collaborative process surfaces shared values, builds consensus, and creates a clear connection between the Portrait of a Learner and the future physical environment of the school.

Ultimately, the exercise ensures that design decisions are not based solely on aesthetics or trends, but are grounded in a collective understanding of how space can intentionally support the growth and development of every Keith Valley learner.





# Physical Environment

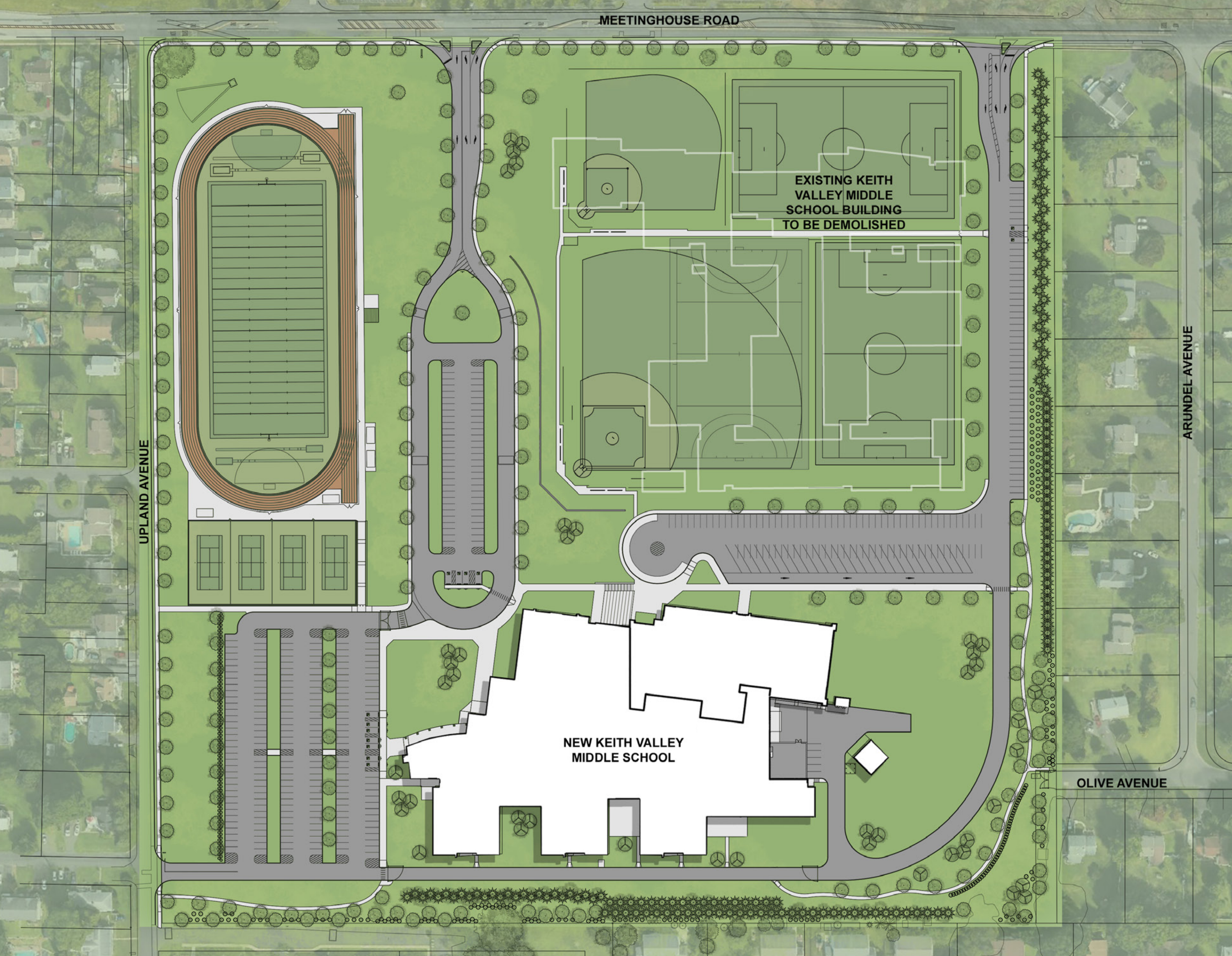
The new Middle School and District Administration Office (DAO) were planned as a cohesive campus that enhances safety, functionality, and future site development opportunities through the "quadrant" planning concept. Three distinct entry sequences for buses, parent/visitor traffic, and the DAO improve circulation, security, and operational efficiency across the site.

The building organization responds to both program and context, with the main public entrance located on the first floor while bus and athletic functions are positioned on the second level. Public-facing spaces are oriented toward the street to strengthen the school's community presence, while quieter classroom pods face the surrounding neighborhood to create focused and comfortable learning environments.

The athletic fields that are being installed after the completion of the new KVMS makes the new school a community anchor, promoting athletic and community programs. The new KVMS includes a competition-sized natatorium that is shared with the entire school district and for community-use.



Existing Keith Valley Middle School that was occupied during construction and then demolished to be replaced by athletic fields



The existing old middle school is outlined in this aerial view of the site where it is now demolished and the new middle school is built. Currently, athletic fields are being installed on the site.





1



2



3



4



5



6

## Design for the KV Learner

### 1. Community & Inspiration

The core of the building is a hub of innovation, activity, collaboration, and inspiration - a flexible space capable of supporting any activity, from large community events, to independent research activities. It empowers individual agency and encourages educational risk taking.

### 2. STEAM & Research

The INNOVATION CENTER is where students are motivated to create, to think critically, and to step outside of their comfort zones. The technology lab sits atop a learning stair, directly connected to the Library, which has direct access to two maker spaces on the lower level. Students learn how to research, make, and present their findings in this connected zone. The STEAM graphic at the top of the stair introduces students to the inner workings of building systems with exposed piping, conduit, and ductwork through a glass window.

### 3. Outdoor & Wellness

Outdoor patios on the 2nd and 3rd floor, and courtyards accessed from the ground floor, provide opportunities for all students to enjoy a direct connection to the outdoors, encouraging a more healthy, active lifestyle.

### 4. Diversity & Inclusion

Universal toilet rooms are incorporated throughout the building to provide safe, accessible, and inclusive facilities for individuals of all abilities and gender identities. Dedicated wheelchair nooks are thoughtfully integrated into the learning stairs, ensuring students with mobility devices can participate comfortably and equitably alongside their peers without feeling isolated. Together, these features foster a welcoming and supportive educational environment that values dignity, accessibility, and belonging for every member of the school community.

### 5. Health & Activity

Student health and wellness are promoted with a unique running track that runs across the 2nd level of the commons around the library, connecting physical education with traditional education and promoting movement into a daily part of student life. Designed around the belief that healthy students learn better, the school integrates physical activity into academics, counseling, and social interaction, with classes using the track for lessons in fitness, math, and teamwork. More than a place for exercise, the track has become a symbol of community and well-being, creating a positive environment where students feel energized, focused, and connected while making health an essential part of the school culture.

### 6. Teams within a Big School

Each learning community is organized with a cluster of four classrooms and two smaller seminar rooms surrounding and feeding into a central commons area. Designed for flexibility, the classrooms can open and combine to support shared instruction and collaborative learning between multiple classes. Together, these spaces foster communication, adaptability, and a strong sense of community, creating an engaging learning environment that supports collaboration and flexible instruction across all grade levels, while offering students different environments to learn in throughout the day.

*“We want every student to want to go to school. To do that we want to make a family for them to go to each day. That family consists of small learning environments staffed by a familiar and consistent group of adults and mentors. The small learning environments will facilitate this ‘want’.”*



## Educational Environment

The design of the new Keith Valley Middle School is intentionally crafted to nurture and reflect the qualities outlined in its Portrait of a Learner. Every aspect of the building—from its scale to its flexible learning environments—supports students in becoming intrinsically motivated, empathetic, empowered, and community-minded individuals.

Recognizing that middle school represents a significant transition—from small neighborhood elementary settings to a much larger school environment—the design prioritizes both **belonging and agency**. While the 1200 student building functions as a unified middle school campus, the educational environment is structured around 12 smaller interdisciplinary Teams of about 100 students. This approach creates a more manageable and familiar scale for students entering sixth grade while strengthening long-term relationships between students and educators. Teachers remain with their Team cohort as students progress from sixth through eighth grade, allowing each learner to experience a close-knit community where relationships are prioritized, fostering **empathy, understanding, and appreciation of others' differences**.

The physical environment further reinforces the development of **critical thinkers and learning risk-takers**. Each learning community was designed to support a wide variety of learning and teaching styles—traditional classrooms, seminar rooms for small-group collaboration, and shared commons areas for large-group instruction or individualized support. Flexibility and adaptability are central to the educational environment. Operable partitions allow teachers to co-teach and create dynamic, interdisciplinary learning experiences, modeling collaboration while encouraging students to explore ideas, take risks, and think deeply. The absence of a traditional bell schedule offers two key benefits: it supports flexible, organic transitions that empower students take ownership of their learning and develop a strong sense of agency and voice, while also providing teachers the flexibility to collaborate on designing instructional activities that promote cross-disciplinary learning and mirror real-world experiences.

Beyond the learning communities, project studios provide hands-on, experiential learning environments where students can engage in inquiry, design thinking, and real-world problem solving. These lab-style spaces foster **intrinsic motivation and authentic passion for learning**, allowing students to pursue meaningful work that connects to both their interests and the broader world.

The design also reflects a deep commitment to **equity, inclusion, and well-being**. Universal restroom facilities, accessible design features such as integrated wheelchair seating within learning stairs, and thoughtfully inclusive shared spaces ensure that every student feels valued and supported. These elements reinforce a culture of **kindness, respect, and understanding**, central to the Portrait of a Learner.

Physical health is embedded into daily life at Keith Valley. Features such as a running track integrated around the library encourage movement throughout the day, supporting students in living active, healthy lifestyles while recognizing the connection between physical well-being and cognitive engagement.

Collectively, the educational environment at Keith Valley Middle School promotes a strong sense of **community and purpose**. By minimizing transitions and maximizing time for collaboration, reflection, and meaningful work, the environment encourages students to see themselves as contributors—to their Teams, their school, and the wider world. Through this intentional design, students are inspired to become not only learners, but individuals **driven to serve their community and humanity**.

## Existing School District Logo



## New KVMS Logo



Elevation of School District and KVMS branding



## Building Team Identity

In partnership with the School and District, the design team enhanced the environment through graphic branding and storytelling. Several types of graphics were developed with the Hatboro-Horsham team, including a new school logo, team logos and infographics for each learning community, and a STEAM infographic that is the focal point of the Innovation Center.

Affectionately named after original Hatboro resident and 'hat maker', John Dawson, the Hatboro-Horsham Hatters take great pride in their identity and local history.

A key element of the educational structure for KVMS is the "team" structure. The large 1,200-student middle school is broken up into 12 100-student learning communities - each with its own unique identity. As part of another workshop process towards the end of the design phase, the educators created identities for each grade level and for each individual team within the grade structure. It starts with "Hatters Building a Foundation" in 6th grade (located on the lower level of the building). In 7th grade they elevate to the 2nd floor where "Hatters Take Flight". Finally, 8th graders are "Hatters Reaching for the Stars" on the upper floor. Each of the individual team logos relate to those unifying themes, and all of the team names and logos were created by students and staff. They literally wear it proudly, as they are given t-shirts to start the year with their team logos and names on them.

Each "learning community" or "pod" is clearly identified at the entry of each by the large logo and grade-level color palettes (yellow, orange, blue) - which strengthens the team identity and school pride. As one enters the team pod, the wall graphic continues from the logo at the entrance into infographic-style illustrations that highlight facts about local, state, national, and global history, events, and notable figures - reinforcing that learning happens everywhere.

## Original Team Logos (created by KV students and staff)

First floor, 6th Grade Pods, "Hatters Building a Foundation"



## Refined Team Logos

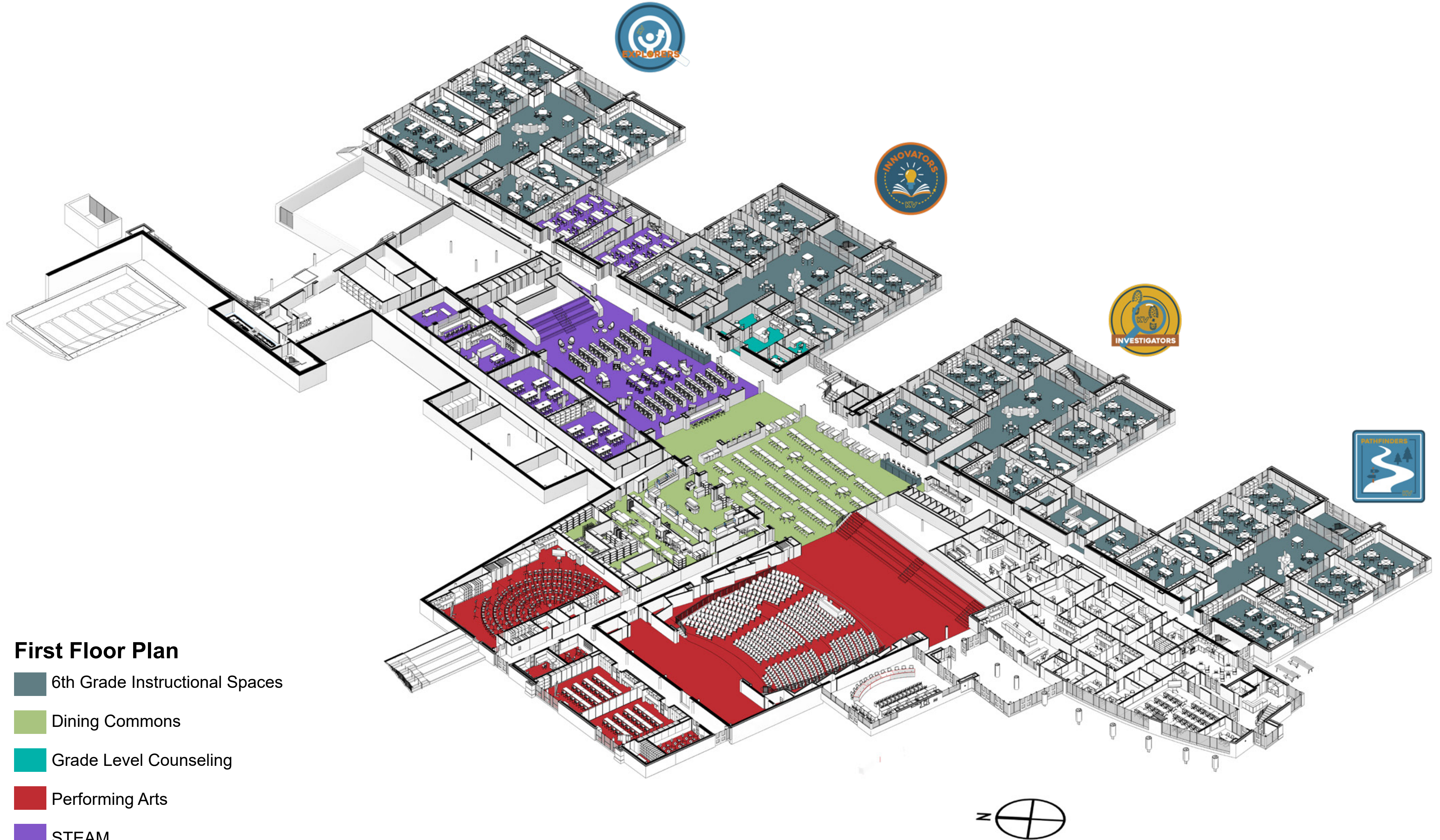


Second floor, 7th Grade Pods, "Hatters Taking Flight"



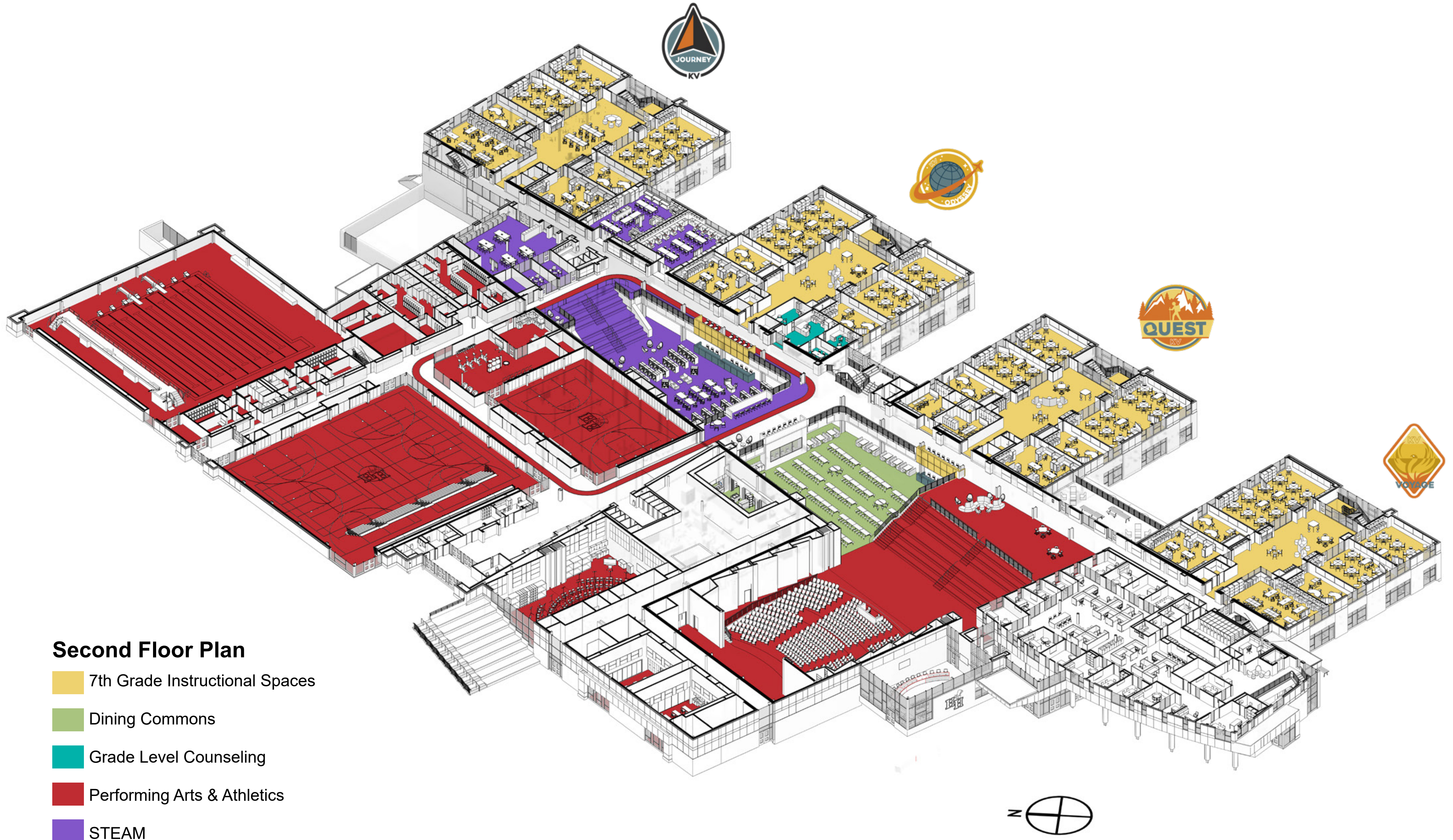
Third floor, 8th Grade Pods, "Hatters Reaching for the Stars"

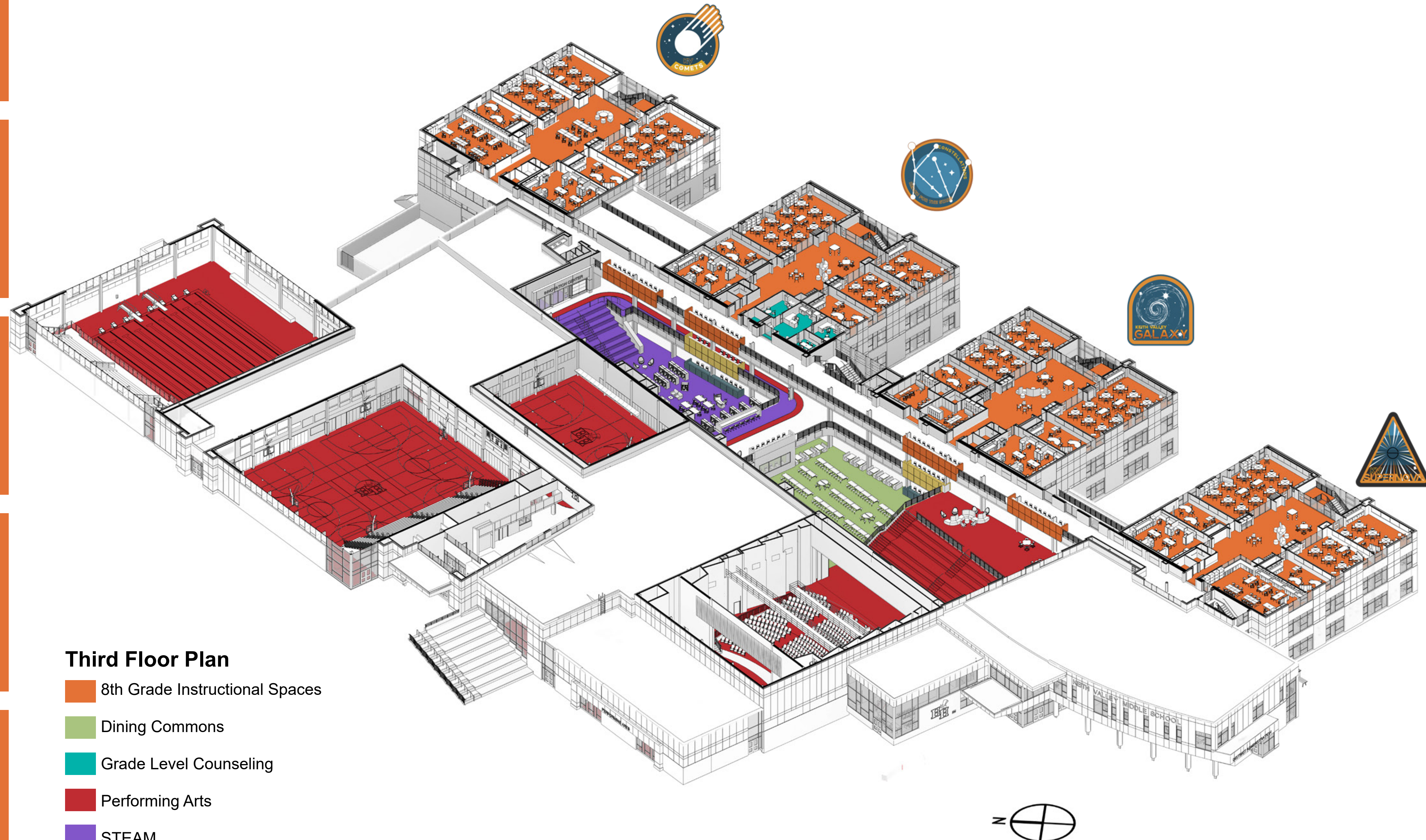
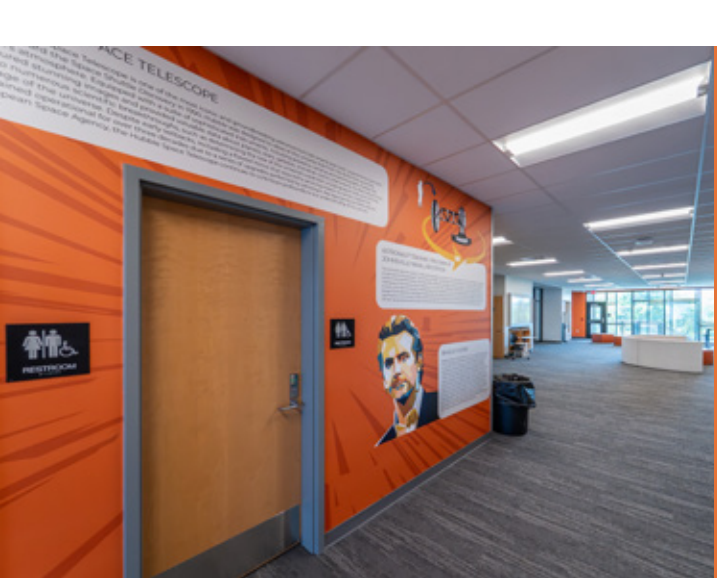
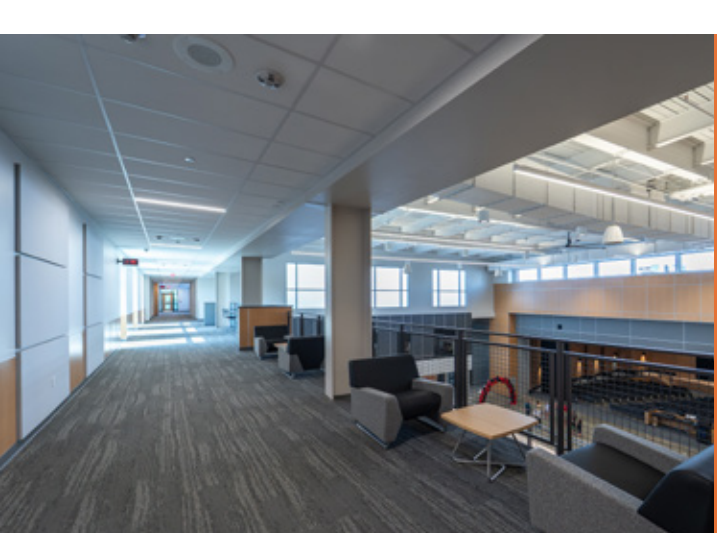




**First Floor Plan**

- 6th Grade Instructional Spaces
- Dining Commons
- Grade Level Counseling
- Performing Arts
- STEAM





### Third Floor Plan

- 8th Grade Instructional Spaces
- Dining Commons
- Grade Level Counseling
- Performing Arts
- STEAM

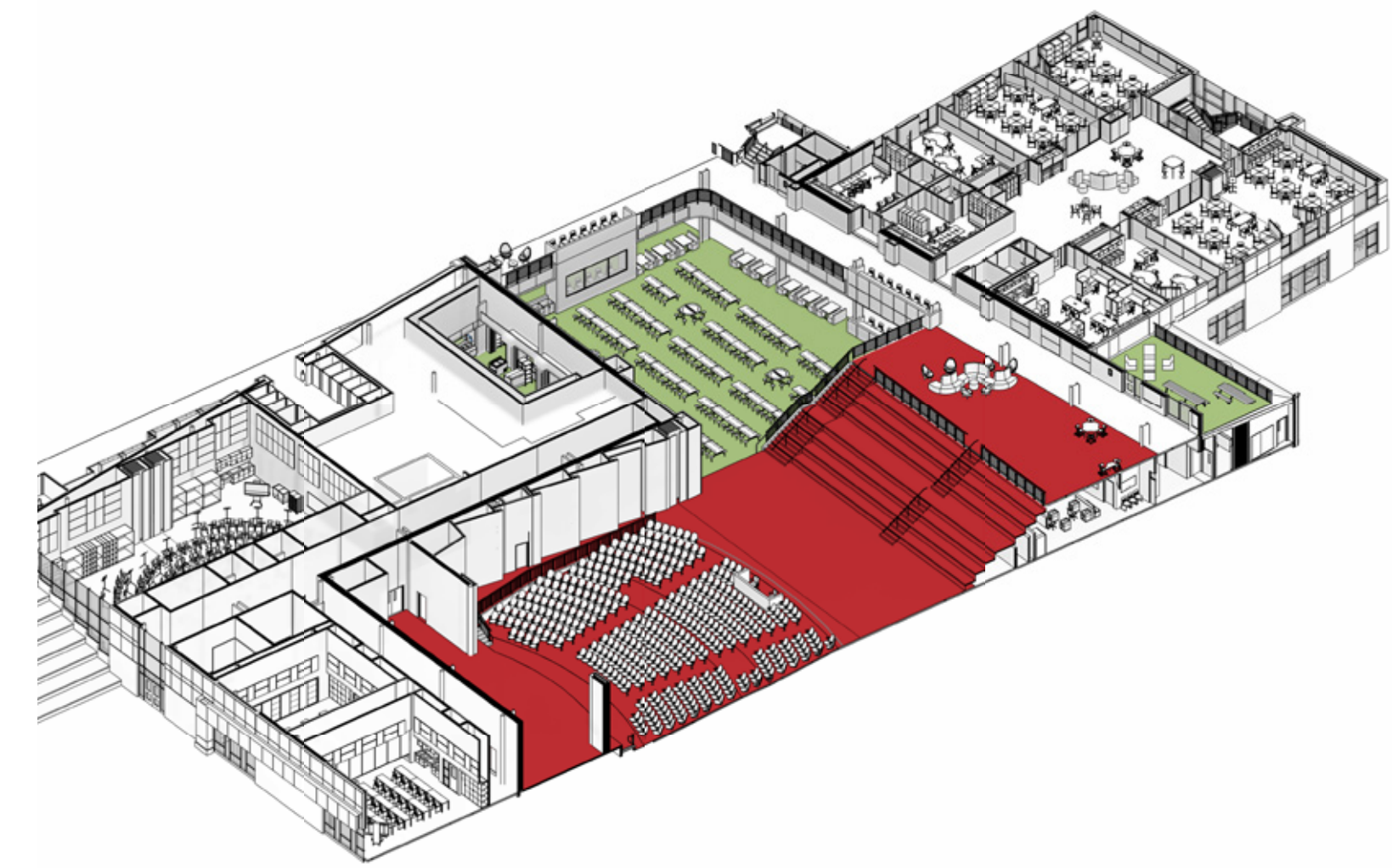





## Community & Common Spaces

The core of the building is designed around flexibility and adaptability. Just inside the main entrance, a large learning stair serves as a dynamic gathering space capable of accommodating an entire grade level for presentations and shared learning experiences. Throughout the day, the stair transforms into an informal collaboration zone where students work in small groups, study independently, eat lunch, or connect with peers. Strategically positioned adjacent to the auditorium, it also functions as overflow seating during full-school assemblies, allowing the entire student body to gather together as one community. Above the learning stair, an open, flexible area features movable furniture that can be easily reconfigured to support a variety of learning, social, and community needs.

Extending beyond the learning stair is the cafeteria and open food court-style serving area. Designed with flexibility in mind, the cafeteria is intentionally open so tables can be rearranged or removed entirely, enabling the space to transition into a large venue for after-hours activities and community events. A bridge bisects the commons area, visually and physically linking the athletic spaces on the second floor with the academic learning houses. This elevated connection leads directly to a centralized vertical circulation core, reinforcing accessibility, inclusion, and ease of movement throughout the three-story building. Beneath the bridge, a smaller and quieter dining area offers students a more intimate setting, supporting the school's commitment to creating environments where every student fits everywhere.



 Dining Commons

 Performing Arts & Learning Commons



## STEAM/Media Center/Research Spaces

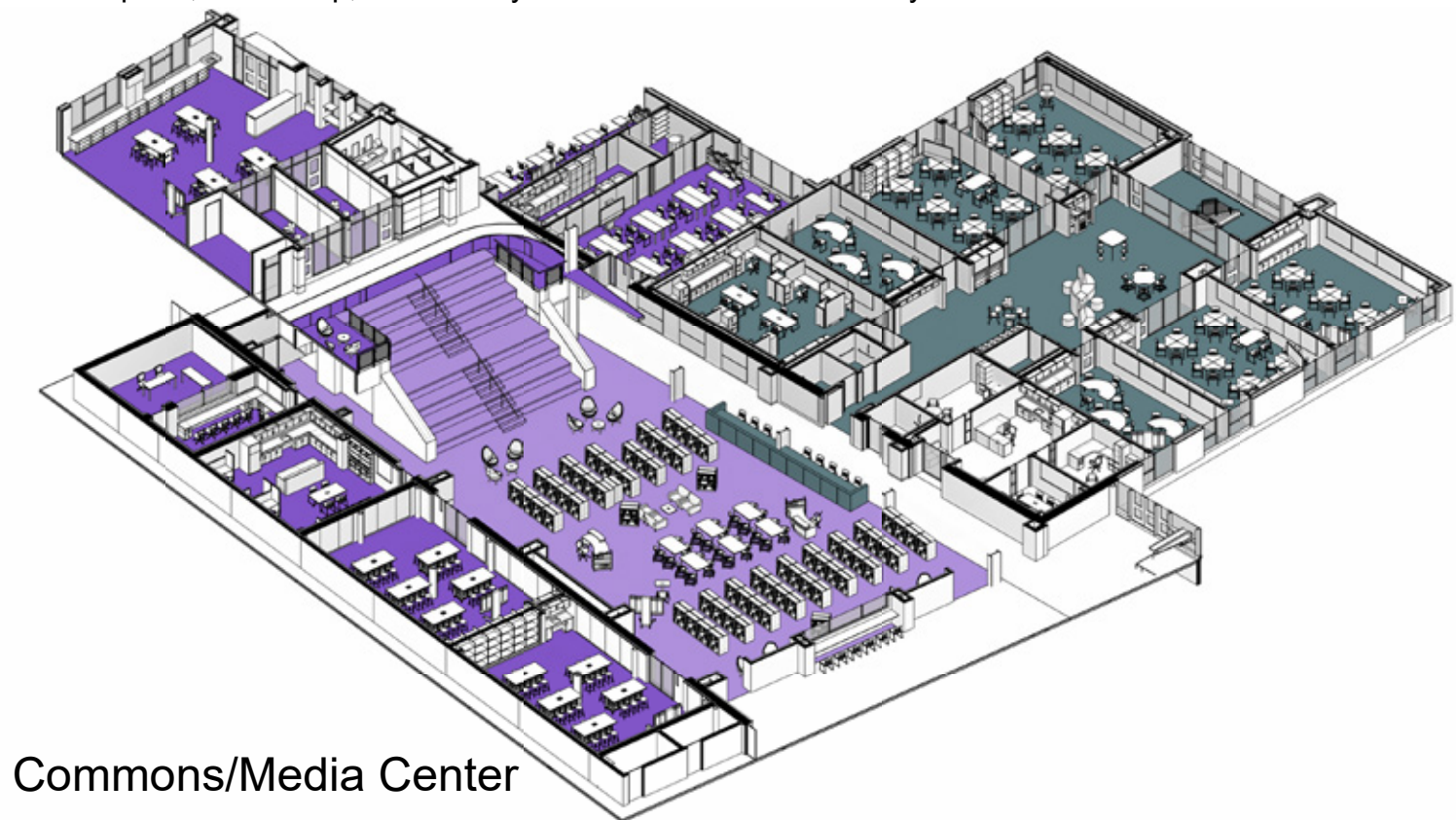
Beyond the bridge, the building transitions into the Innovation Center, a hub for creativity, exploration, and interdisciplinary learning. At its heart, the library acts as a connective anchor between maker spaces, technology labs, and art classrooms, encouraging students to engage in hands-on, collaborative, and inquiry-based learning experiences. The environment is intentionally designed to inspire curiosity and innovation, empowering students to think critically and create confidently. A second learning stair further strengthens these connections, linking the lower-level library directly to the technology lab on the second floor and reinforcing the seamless integration of learning, movement, and collaboration throughout the building.

The open library is designed to foster a culture of literacy, curiosity, and continuous learning throughout the day. Around every corner, students encounter opportunities to pause, collaborate, and engage in small-group learning, whether at the “genius bars” lining the open corridors or within the inviting gathering nooks created at the top of the learning stair. These informal learning areas encourage both academic engagement and spontaneous peer interaction, extending learning beyond the traditional classroom.

Directly adjacent to the library are two maker spaces that provide flexible, hands-on environments for exploration and creativity. These spaces can support quieter instructional settings for library classes while also encouraging students to experiment, build, and create in a ‘tools-centric’ lab. Positioned above the learning stair are two small-group collaboration rooms that connect visually and physically to the technology lab, reinforcing interdisciplinary learning and innovation.

The environment itself becomes a teaching tool. A large wall graphic illustrates the building’s mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, culminating in a “window into the walls” that exposes the pipes and ductwork powering the facility. This feature transforms the architecture into an interactive learning experience, encouraging students to better understand the systems that support the world around them.

Throughout the building, generous pin-up areas and display cases celebrate student creativity and achievement. These curated spaces showcase artwork, projects, and collaborative work, reinforcing a sense of pride, ownership, and identity within the school community.



- Commons/Media Center
- STEAM Programs
- Pods with Instructional Spaces, Commons, & Project Studios

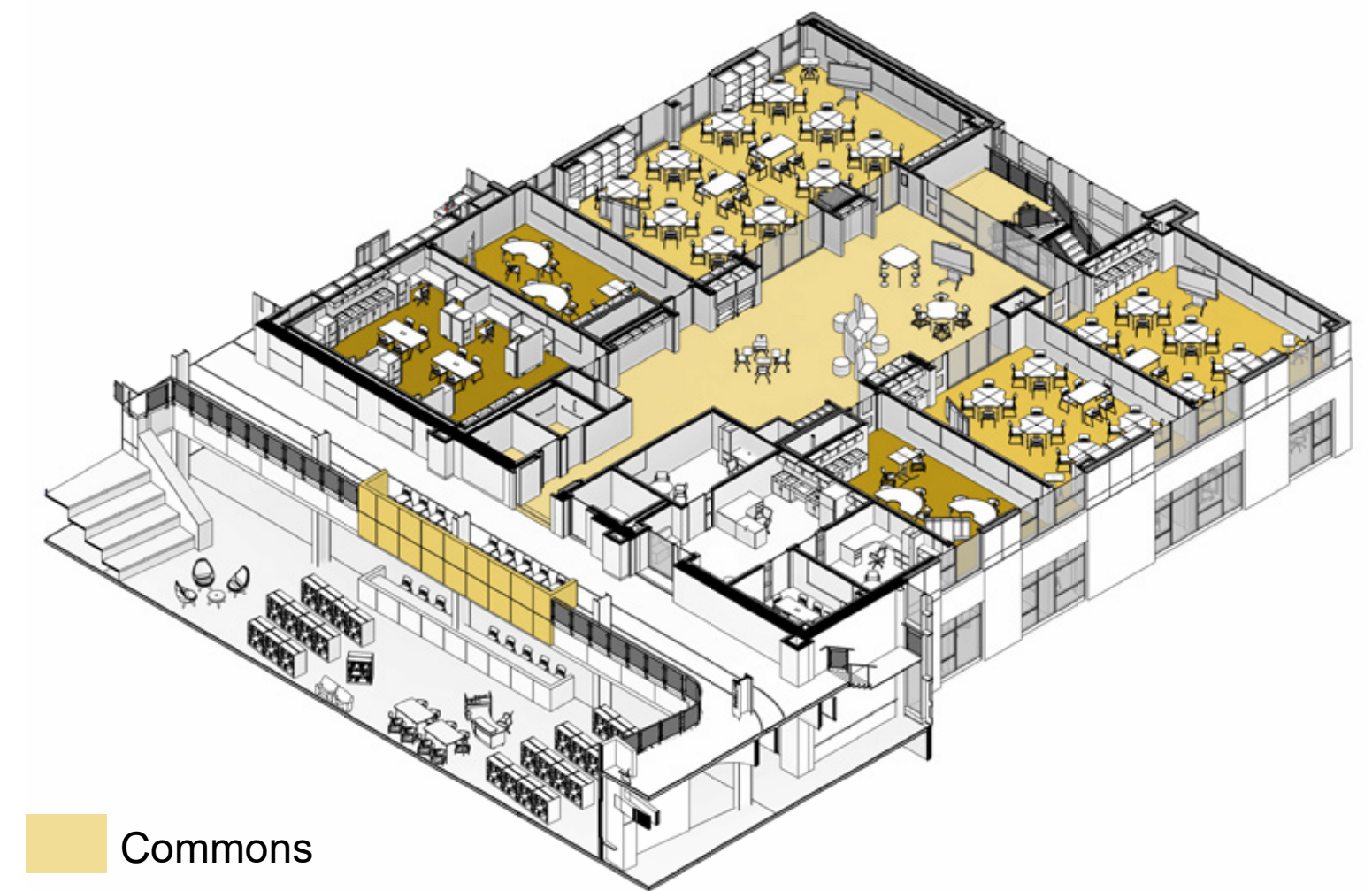
## Learning Studios & Flexible Learning

As students enter their team area, they transition immediately into a more intimate and welcoming learning environment designed to foster connection, comfort, and belonging. While the school serves approximately 1,200 students, each team functions as a smaller learning community of about 100 students, creating a scale that feels personal and manageable. Within these communities, students develop strong relationships with peers and educators while gaining opportunities to shape their own learning experiences and connect with the unique identity of their team.

The team environment is intentionally designed to support flexibility in both teaching and learning. Rather than assigning classrooms to individual teachers, spaces are shared and utilized based on the needs of the lesson, encouraging collaboration, innovation, and a variety of instructional approaches. Each of the twelve teams includes four traditional classrooms, two smaller seminar rooms, a dedicated teacher collaboration space, and a large central commons area that serves as the heart of the learning community.

The learning spaces are supported by thoughtfully integrated amenities, including student cubbies, printer alcoves, sinks, drinking fountains, and individual restroom facilities, ensuring students and staff have the resources they need throughout the day. Two of the traditional classrooms are separated by operable partitions, allowing the rooms to open into a larger shared environment where teachers can co-instruct and students can engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary learning experiences.

Smaller seminar rooms provide focused environments for instructional support, small-group collaboration, and testing, while the open commons area offers exceptional flexibility for a variety of learning styles and activities. The commons can accommodate large-group instruction, informal collaboration, independent work, or project-based learning. Extensive interior glazing between classrooms and the commons maintains visual connectivity and allows staff to comfortably supervise students while encouraging greater independence and flexibility within the learning environment.



- Commons
- Instructional Classrooms
- Project Studios



## Performing Arts & Athletics

The Hatboro-Horsham team approached the performing arts spaces with a philosophy that extends beyond traditional design, prioritizing flexibility, adaptability, and community engagement. Rather than creating a single-purpose auditorium used only during performances, the design transforms the performing arts center into a dynamic, multi-functional learning environment capable of supporting a wide variety of educational and community activities.

At the heart of this concept is the auditorium itself, which features a large operable partition at the rear of the space. When closed, the auditorium functions as a comfortable and intimate performance venue with seating for approximately 500 spectators, creating an ideal setting for concerts, theatrical productions, presentations, and school events. When performances are not taking place, the partition can be opened to seamlessly expand the space into the adjacent commons and learning stair areas. This flexibility transforms the auditorium into a large-scale instructional and gathering environment capable of accommodating an entire grade level—or even the full student body—for assemblies, collaborative activities, and community events. The result is a performing arts venue that remains active and relevant throughout the school day rather than serving as an occasionally occupied destination.



This commitment to adaptable learning environments continues within the music department. The band and orchestra rooms are separated by acoustically engineered operable partitions, allowing the spaces to function independently for daily instruction or combine into one expansive rehearsal hall capable of supporting full ensemble performances and interdisciplinary collaboration. This approach provides educators with the flexibility to tailor the environment to the specific needs of instruction, whether focused small-group rehearsals or large collaborative practices.

The performing arts department also establishes a meaningful connection to the outdoors. Just beyond the music spaces, an exterior amphitheater provides opportunities for outdoor performances, instruction, and community gatherings. A stepped window feature visually connects the interior music rooms to the amphitheater outside, reinforcing transparency, creativity, and the blending of indoor and outdoor learning experiences.

Located across the commons bridge, the athletics department reinforces the school's holistic approach to student wellness and engagement. The athletic facilities include a full-size competition gymnasium, an auxiliary gymnasium, a weight room, and the District's natatorium, which serves not only the middle school but also the high school and broader community. These shared-use facilities strengthen the school's role as a community hub while maximizing opportunities for student participation and wellness.

One of the most distinctive features of the athletics department is the approximately one-tenth-mile indoor running track that weaves throughout the building. Rather than isolating physical education spaces from academic environments, the track intentionally integrates movement and wellness into the daily experience of the school. The track circles the weight room and auxiliary gym before extending outward into the commons and around the perimeter of the library, visually and physically connecting physical activity with academic life. This design emphasizes the importance of health, movement, and well-being as essential components of student success, reinforcing the idea that learning extends beyond the classroom and includes the development of the whole child.





## Results

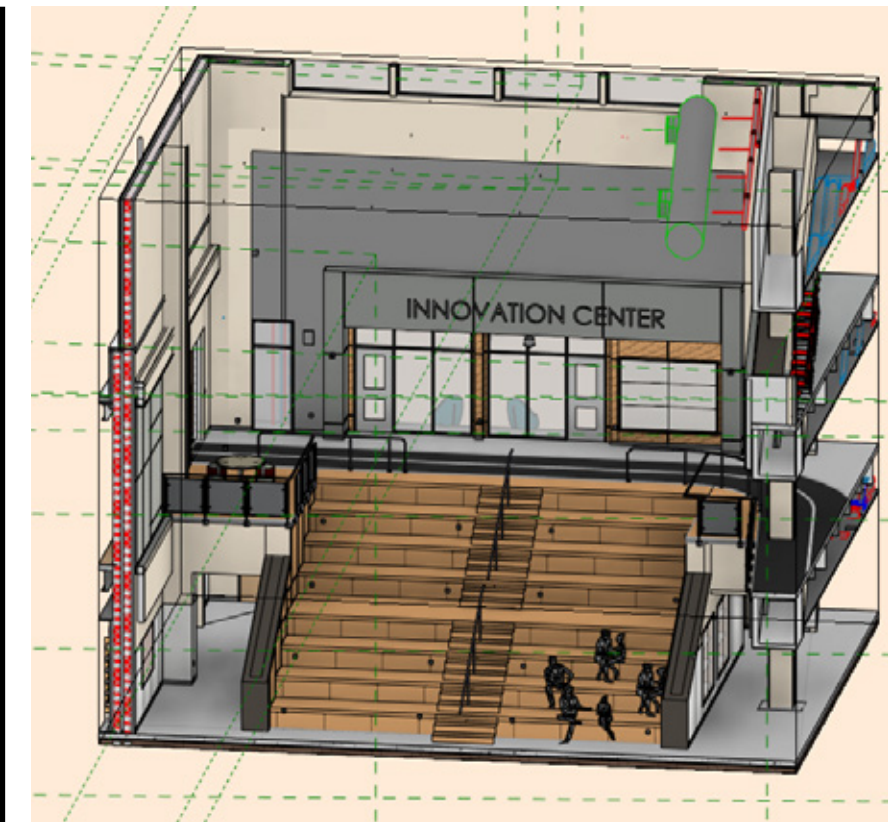
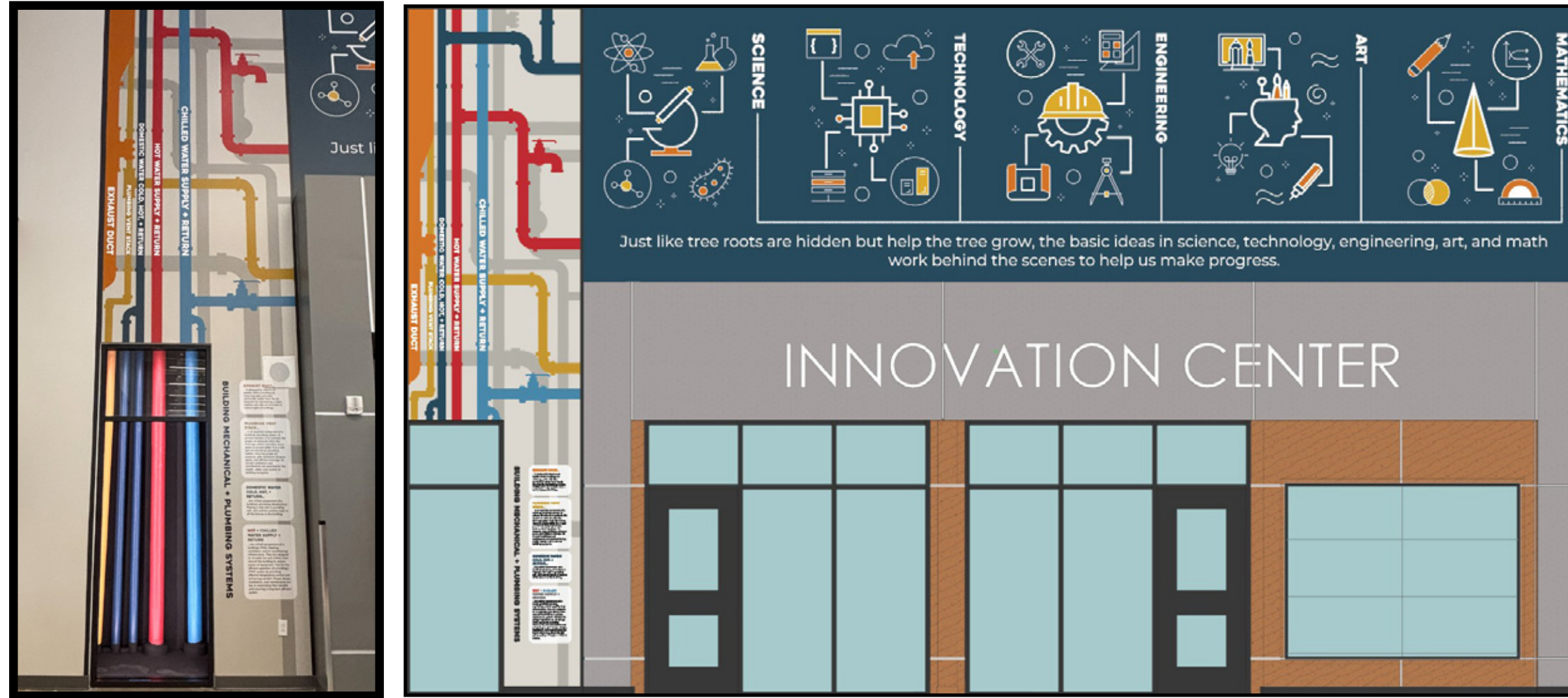
Jon Kircher, Principal of Keith Valley Middle School, has been actively involved in the planning and design process since the project's inception and has been a strong advocate for the innovative educational spaces and learning environment the new school provides. He and his faculty have remained committed to fully utilizing the building's flexible and forward-thinking design to support and enhance their curriculum. The following statements from Mr. Kircher reflect his perspective on the impact and vision of the new school.

*"KVMS was designed with student learners in mind. Looking at research and visiting other schools, we looked at how students truly learn and how the learning environment impacts that. We aimed to create flexible learning environments for teachers to use with students, outside of a traditional classroom setting. In the design phase, Dr. Ira Sokol called these areas "Campfires and Cozy Spots" to get our teachers and staff thinking about using dedicated spaces that felt smaller and using furniture and spaces to augment student learning.*

*Each team has control over how their learning pod and classroom spaces are used each day/week. Grade-level teaming, where students are divided into smaller, interdisciplinary teams to make a big school feel small is at the core of our design. This allows for students feel seen and heard and their learning to be personalized. Teachers have a classroom that can act as a base, but also have other spaces within the team (a combined double classroom space), as well as designated Project Studio space to enhance learning with collaboration and collegiate planning and co-teaching."*

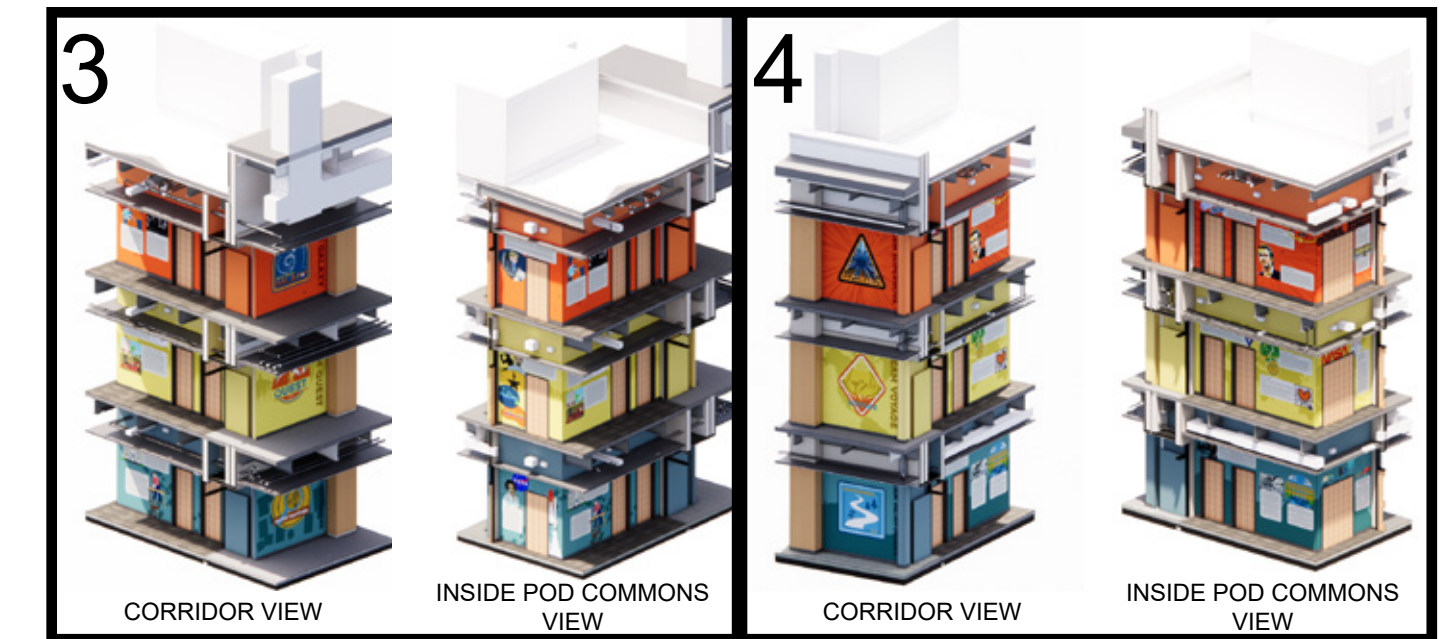
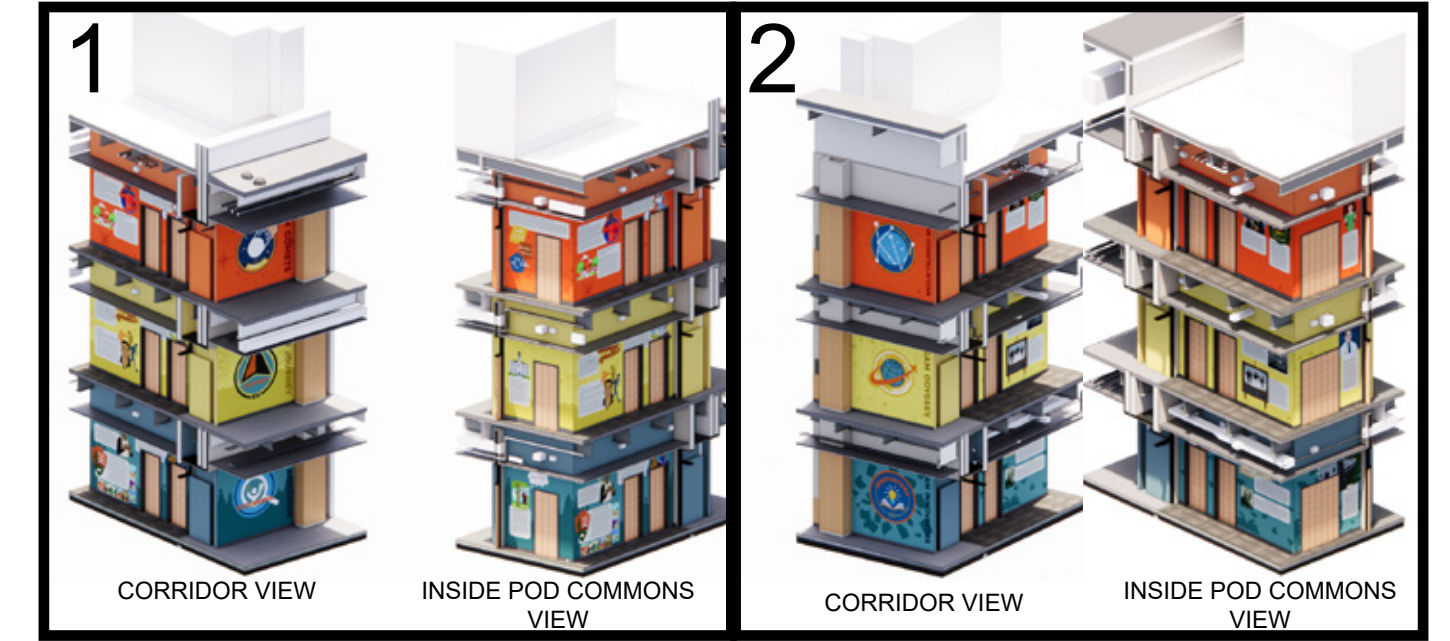
The following pages are quotes from KVMS' teachers providing feedback on how they're using the flexibility of the spaces to promote the community and collaboration between their student and classes.

Wall Graphic Elevations & Axons



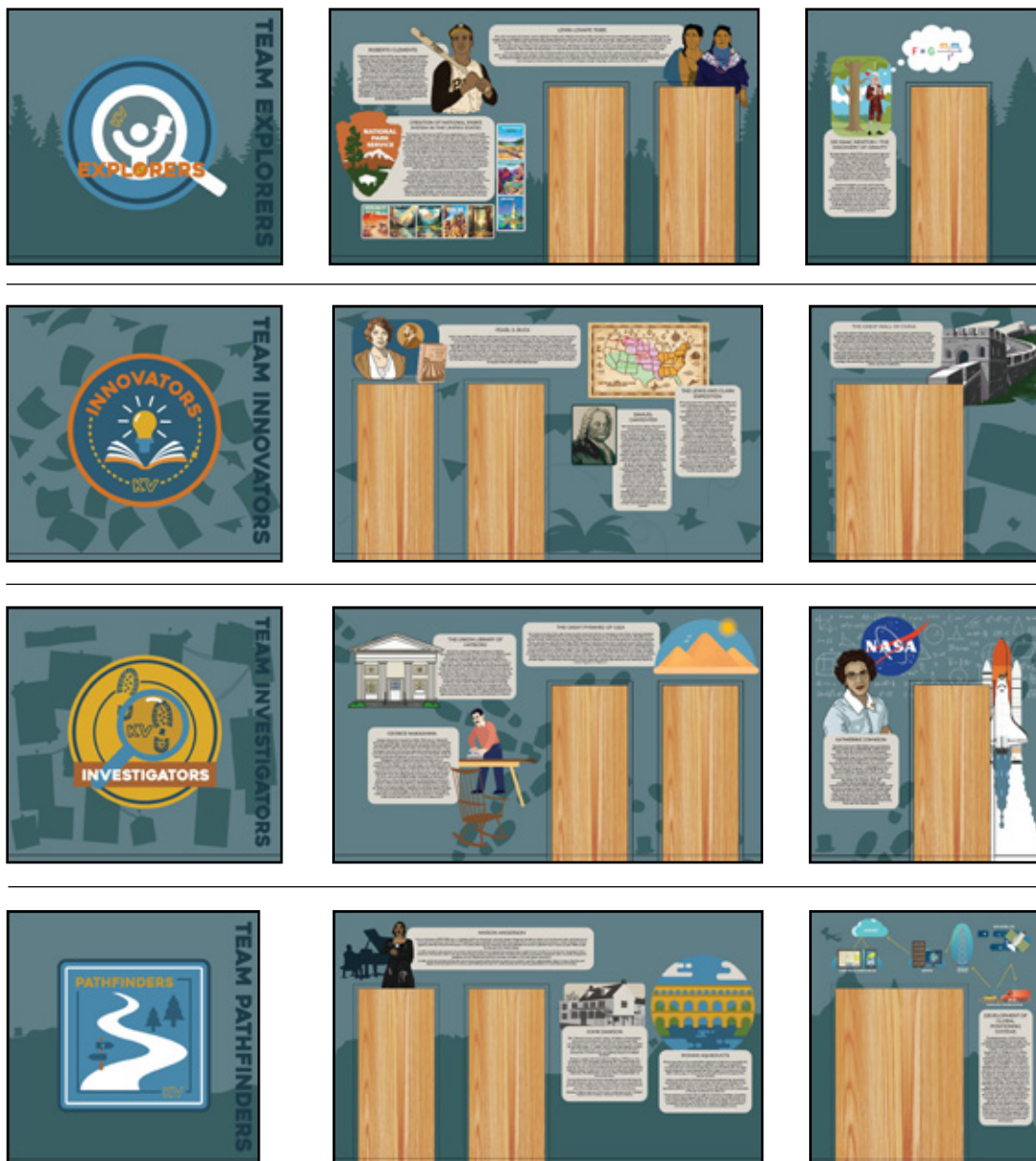
STEAM Learning Commons Area

From left to right: a completed building system learning wall with color-coded piping and graphics explaining building systems; a wall elevation; and an axon view showing the learning stair connecting the media center, STEAM programs, and classroom corridors.



6th Grade. Hatters Building a Foundation

From left to right, corridor wall outside of the classroom pod, bathroom doors wall leading into the pod, electrical closet door wall from inside the pod learning commons area.



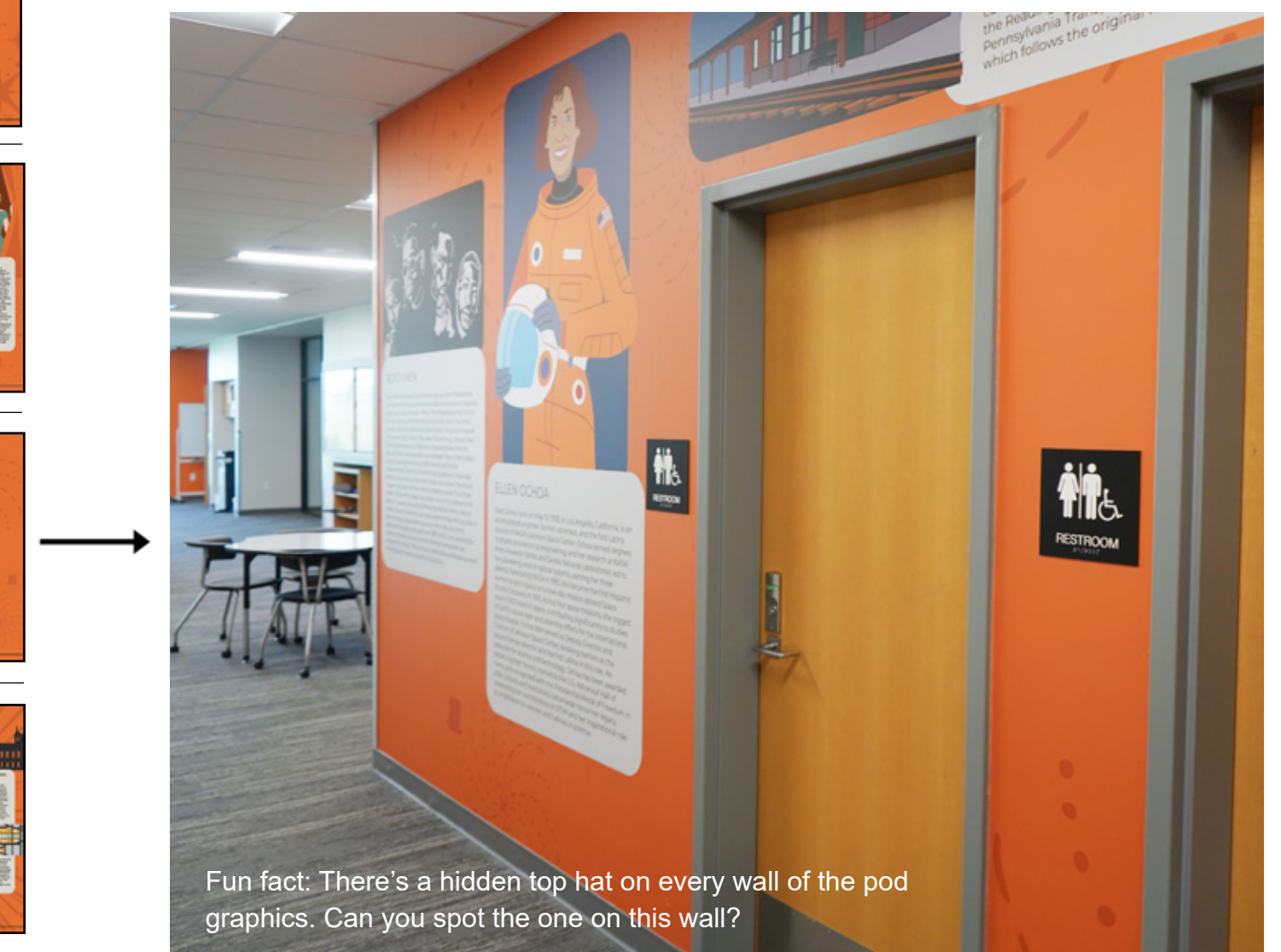
7th Grade. Hatters Taking Flight

From left to right, corridor wall outside of the classroom pod, bathroom doors wall leading into the pod, electrical closet door wall from inside the pod learning commons area.



8th Grade. Hatters Reaching for the Stars

From left to right, corridor wall outside of the classroom pod, bathroom doors wall leading into the pod, electrical closet door wall from inside the pod learning commons area.



Fun fact: There's a hidden top hat on every wall of the pod graphics. Can you spot the one on this wall?



## Feedback from the Teachers using the Spaces

**Ms. Meredith Kane-Sokol, Language Arts Teacher, & Ms. Emily Wilkomm, Social Studies Teacher, open the partition to combine their respective English and Social Studies classes.**

*“We wanted to take advantage of our shared space, our beautiful classroom that we can divide up but also, we can open up the space because we were looking at a very complex primary source about reconstruction. However, there were a lot of different elements that connected to the ELA curriculum and instructional focuses. We were able to make those connections to what we’re learning about in social studies, which is reconstruction.*”

*I would say that it allows us to be really flexible and to create flexible groupings, so we can really highlight and underscore the importance of the cross-curricular nature of the humanities subject. And It also allows the students to work with students who they might not work with in those other subjects and so they’re learning with each other, they are able to talk to one another about some of the complex curriculum and skills that we’re practicing.”*

*“So, I think the space lends itself to not only collaboration, communication, but in a traditional classroom, I didn’t have the ability to cross-curricular share vocabulary, share instructional practices. And Emily and I share a lot of instructional routines. We’re implementing what we’re learning in our structured literacy practices. and I think the students are really catching on and they’re sharing vocabulary in both classes.*”

*When the partition is open, it looks really big. So, they feel like they’re part of both classes at the same time and then they can go out into the pod, and we can see them. They can also feel independent when they’re doing some of their work, as well.”*

**During class time, Ms. Michelle Campellone, Science Teacher, & Ms. Megan Boletta, Science Teacher, allow their classes to rotate around and view each other’s progress on group projects about Body Systems.**

*“So, we are finishing up our unit on body systems. Today we’re just having them go around and see what other groups have done, and they’ve all done different body systems to see how they interact together.*”

*We have been collaborating with other teams so students can see, you know, other friends across the grade level, and these two spaces allow us to do larger group activities. We will bring our own set of students here to the project studio. This is our main lab if you will for science. The learning stairs is a great opportunity for students to spread out. There’s comfortable chairs for them to use, they can lounge. They have lots of flexible seating up there. But, for a project like this, it’s really good for them to be able to utilize these different spaces.*

*Our project studios, there’s two on each side of the building--as a science department, we’ve used both of these, and they’re great spaces. So, it gives kids another place to go rather than just staying into the classroom and in our pods. We try to utilize them as much as possible.”*

**Ms. Jenn Kosoy, Technology Teacher, utilizes the technology in the STEAM lab to facilitate a project focusing on creative business ideas.**

*“A space like this really helps because the kids are able to spread out. It gives them opportunity to use tons of different resources. Everything is flexible in terms of seating, walking around, growing into different things, using the 3D printers, using the smart board, building 3D models of things, and it helps them visualize their possibilities in the future.”*

*"I love it. I feel very lucky to be in this space, and I love what I get to do in here with all of the kids."*

- Ms. Jenn Kosoy, Technology Teacher

*"We have more ability to move around, more ability to do more better projects now. 'Cause back then it was a limited space, and people would move around, but now we can move to places where they have couches, we can go outside. It's pretty nice."*

- 8th Student