

GRANT HIGH SCHOOL | PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS | PORTLAND, OREGON



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For this \$138 million 1,800-student modernization of a 1920's historically significant school set within prestigious Grant Park, a highly successful year-long public engagement process critically uncovered how Grant students were experiencing social injustices that persisted solely because of the building's architecture and organization, despite the school's progressive commitment to equity.

The historically significant structure disadvantaged students by color, lower socio-economic status, and gender identity. The design team's work focused on leading the initiative for 100% all-access, inclusive restrooms; fluid internal connectivity between all levels and all spaces; excavating 5 disconnected, fully submerged basements; healing the relationship to Grant Park; and marrying yesterday's historical character with tomorrow's best-practice teaching spaces.

Grant's redesign offers a study in how bold spatial solutions can overcome; creating learning environments that intentionally address legacies of disadvantage through design; and how, by designing for all, Grant has realized a more physical, racial, socioeconomic and gender-inclusive community in which all students feel welcome, accepted, and connected.

Now a revitalized, equitable home for learning, Grant's modernization (of building stock ubiquitous in the American school experience) demonstrates that restoratively addressing hidden bias will empower students to build inclusive communities; uplifting the next generation through the power of architecture.

SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET	OWNER Portland Public Schools	SITE AREA 10.2 acres	BUILDING AREA 293,360 SF	GRADES HOUSED 9-12	STUDENT CAPACITY 1,800+	SQUARE FEET PER PUPIL 163 SF	OCCUPANCY DATE Fall 2019	CONSTRUCTION COST \$138M	COST PER SQUARE FOOT \$470

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Portland Public School's historic Grant High School is fully nestled into Portland's beloved Grant Park and is immediately surrounded by highly-desirable neighborhoods like Irvington and Laurelhurst, that are characterized by historic single-family homes, quiet residential streets and large mature trees in inner Northeast Portland. Equally within Grant's boundary are culturally vibrant neighborhoods at the heart of The Soul District. In this creative center, Portland's black American community has fostered business development, artistic expression, multicultural preservation and community advocacy.

Grant High School, together with Grant Park, has been considered the center of the neighborhood since the early twentieth century. With Grant's shared fields and open green space, an entry portico referred to as the "front porch" of the neighborhood, and a broad front lawn where the community has gathered for decades, it is no wonder that early in the design process there was a community-wide call to eradicate the boundary and buildings that had, over time, infilled the campus and severed the connection between the two public institutions. Ideally, this project would erase the line between where the park stops and the school begins.

ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders included not only the Design Advisory Group (DAG) made up of 20+ members including the principal, students, teachers, parents, neighbors, local businesses, alumni, and a school board member, but also neighborhood activists, alumni, Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), local neighborhood

GRANT HIGH SCHOOL



associations, and the general community-at-large. Also included were school partners such as Head Start, Providence Health System, and other wrap-around support service providers.

The year-long public engagement process consistently drew community participation of well over 100 people, and was followed by in-depth stakeholder engagement, over 100+ user group meetings and countless student outreach sessions. The inclusive and transparent process ensured that all voices were heard and considered in the outcome. The resulting collaborative co-creation of the design outcome developed strong relationships between the students, the school, the School District and the design team that are based on trust, respect and mutual support.

AVAILABLE ASSETS

While the environmental footprint of new construction dominates the discussion about sustainability goals, the successful reuse of existing facilities provides the biggest impact in regard to resource preservation. Grant's modernization exemplifies how the reuse of an existing structure dominated by double-loaded corridor traditions can result in an effective, modern, collaborative high school learning environment that is not compromised, but instead enriched by its historic structure and character. Additional assets included:

- Grant Park
- An historic building
- An activated community and student body
- An engaged school leadership team
- A strong social justice curriculum & focus
- A desire to re-imagine with the rebuild

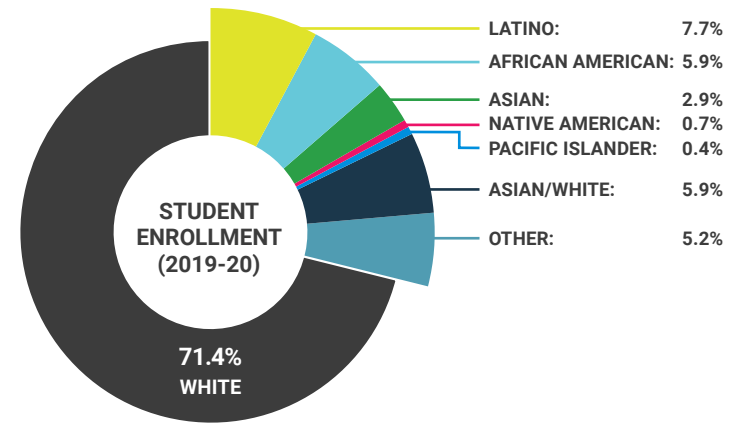
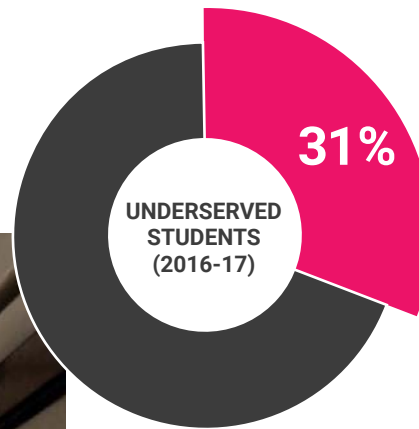
PROJECT CHALLENGES

Although the original 1920's Grant High School buildings were beautiful, prominent historic structures, the student experience was rife with challenges, including:

- A campus without a heart
- 5 Disparate, disconnected, daylight-lacking basements (30% of the learning spaces and cafeteria occupied five basements in sub-par condition and void of daylight)
- A large, comprehensive high school program overflowing a tiny 10-acre site
- Accessibility and equity challenges
- Double-loaded, highly irregular structure
- Significant lack of maintenance
- Environmental material concerns, seismic challenges, failing brick and the inherent "unknowns" of an historic structure
- Challenged budget

A LEGACY OF RACIAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC DIVIDE

The original Grant High School cafeteria was located in the basement and carried decades-old, unwanted legacies of social inequity as students on free or reduced meals were sent to the dark and dreary basement, while students that could afford it were eating upstairs, outside or off-campus at will.



The Moment You Hear It

Members of the Grant community recall how the N-word has affected their lives

Tearale Tripiett, 46, counselor (below)
"I grew up with a lot of social consciousness, as well as pride for who I was as a black person. The first time I experienced... the personal attack with the word was when I was about 15. I saw it all over my locker and upon seeing it, I felt pretty violated, honestly, that that person or group of people would target my locker... and not have the guts to say it to my face... I was in high school, so a group of friends and I settled matters, if you know what I mean. I'm in no way, shape or form endorsing any kind of physical reaction. But that's kind of just where we were as kids, and it was quite shocking to the group, as well."
 — Interview by Blu Midgett • Photo by Eliza Kametling-Brown



PHOTOGRAPHED FOR PAGEANT
BY FRED LYON

The Best High School In America... How Does It Compare With Yours?

BY CHARLOTTE and ED GROSHILL

■ IN THE SEARCH for the nation's best high school, PAGEANT consulted with dozens of top educators. None would award any that accolade. But Portland, Oregon's Grant invariably appeared high on their Ten Best lists, so we went to Grant to find out why. This is our report.
 The dean of boys at Grant High School is a very busy man. Part of his job is to take charge of discipline and attendance, and since there are some 1,200 boys at Grant

"The lowest levels were taught in the basement and the higher levels were taught in the upper floors...**one of the things you see between those two classes is a huge socioeconomic rift.**"

DYLAN LEEMAN,
GRANT HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

"I'm always the one bringing it up, and I've asked people... 'Why don't you eat in the cafeteria?'...we all know the real reason...**it's an ugly truth that people don't want to really think about.**"

ZACH LEONARD,
GRANT HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2017

VALUE OF PROCESS AND PROJECT TO COMMUNITY AT LARGE

Grant High School's community is passionate, involved, and working towards educational justice. With the school mission "Every Student Matters, Every Student Succeeds," Grant's community called for the rebuild to address legacy inadequacies for the students furthest from educational justice.

The Grant High School modernization will result in an **inclusive learning environment that fosters strong, productive relationships among students, teachers, and the community** through inspiring, flexible spaces that honor the history while supporting students' success in college, career, and life.

DESIGN ADVISORY GROUP'S COMMUNITY CHARTER



CONTRIBUTING VOICES:

DESIGN ADVISORY GROUP

GRANT PARK

COMMUNITY

STUDENTS

PARENTS

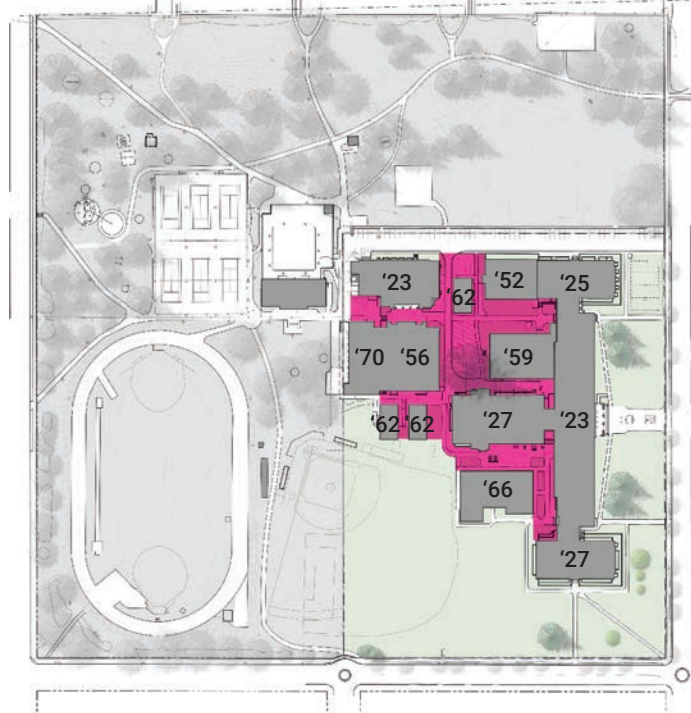
TEACHERS & STAFF

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION

PORTLAND PARKS &
RECREATION

CITY OF PORTLAND

STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICE

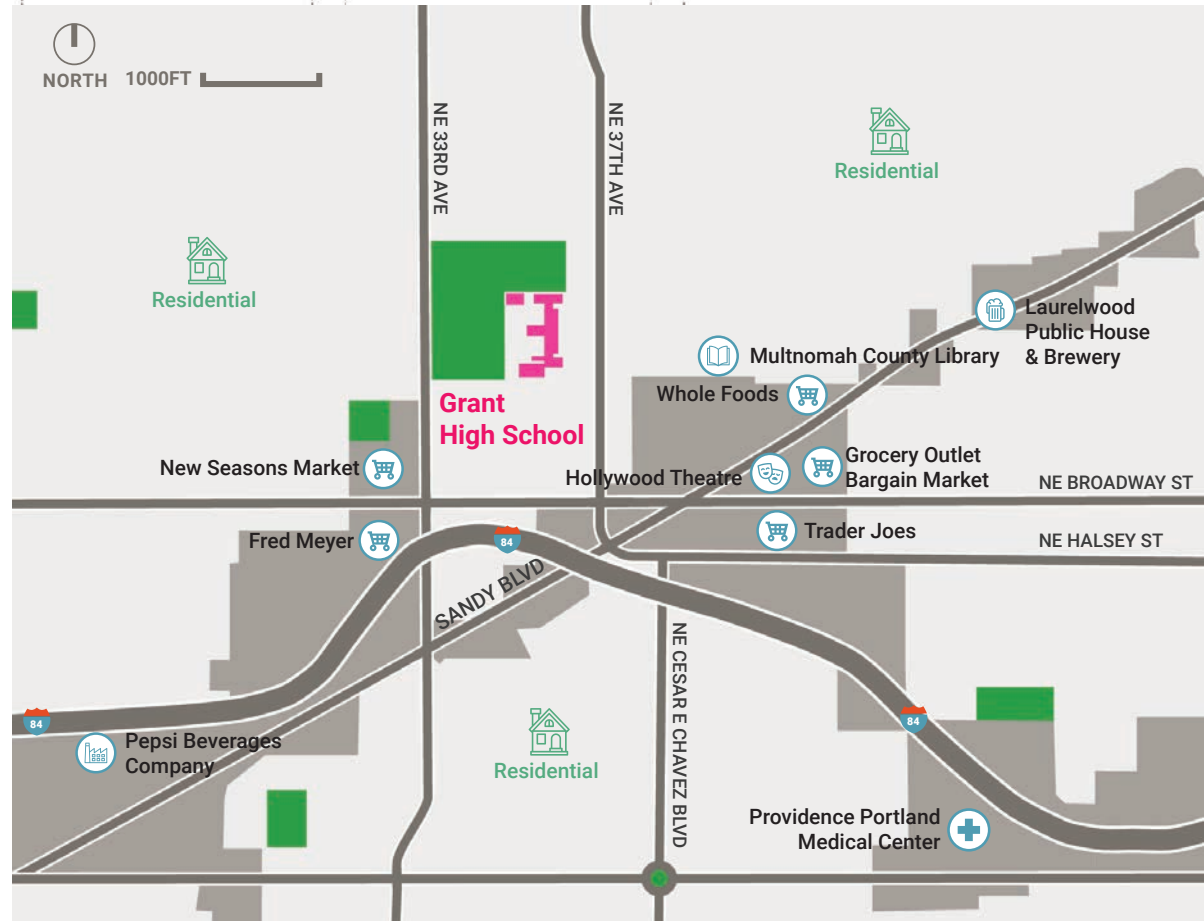


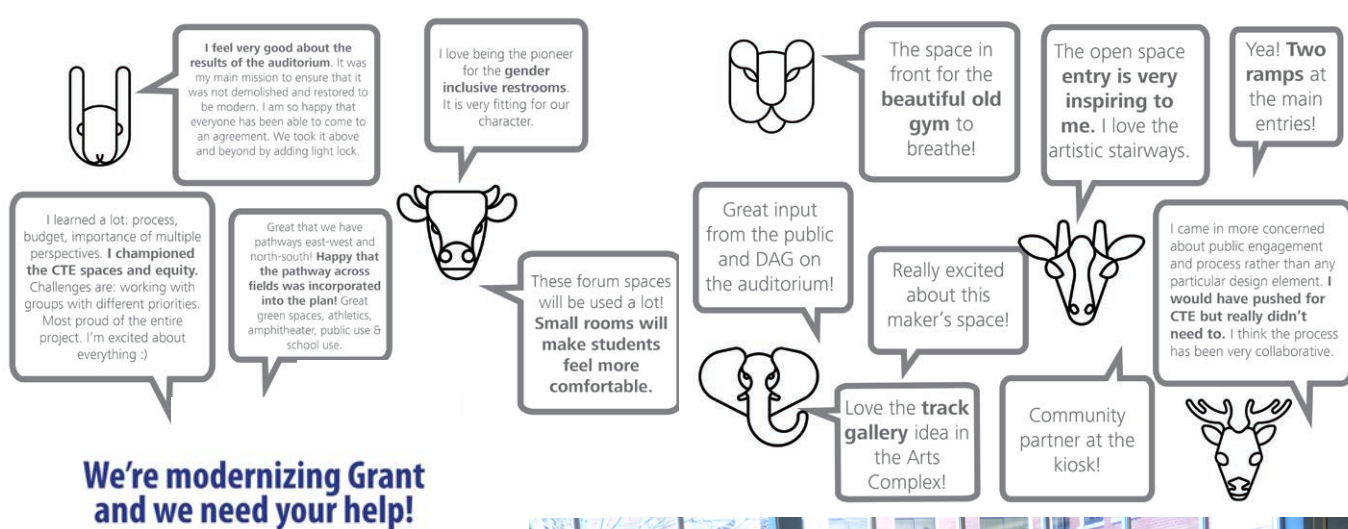
< LEGACY

Grant High School was originally built on a tight 10.2 acres site in 1923, then endured eight additions and renovations over the next 47 years until it was left to languish unimproved for 49 years. Parking, portables and ill-placed 1950s, 60s and 70s additions congested the center of campus, pushed students to the perimeter, and created an unsupervised barrier between the school and adjacent Grant Park.

CONTEXT

Grant's site is co-located with Grant Park, a separate but co-joined 20-acre treasure near a busy, business district and several key cross-town thoroughfares.





**We're modernizing Grant
and we need your help!**



Help shape your student's future school!

Free childcare provided and translation available in Spanish.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- 100+ STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS
- 12 DESIGN ADVISORY MEETINGS
- 4 COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS
- 2 COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES

"THE PROCESS ENSURED THAT ALL VOICES WERE HEARD AND IDEAS WERE PRESENTED WITH A FOCUS ON EQUITY..... GRANT'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS HAS SET THE BAR AND WILL SERVE AS THE MODEL FOR ALL OUR FUTURE CAPITAL PROJECTS."

- JERRY VINCENT, FORMER PPS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

EDUCATIONAL VISION AND GOALS

By drawing on individual strengths of all participants, the community of practice surrounding Grant kindled designing for equity, inclusion and social justice from initiation to completion, in support of Grant's goal to see improved learning outcomes and a positive school climate. As a school, Grant believes that Generals should **LEAD** – Live to learn, **Engage** with purpose, **Advocate** for self and others, **Demonstrate** with passion; and they hold all members of their school community, as well as their building, to these expectations.

Further project goals included:

Sustain a student-centered approach, where all learners feel connected by celebrating diversity and inclusion.

Design a building to inspire learning; to serve as a place of possibility.

Support the educational mission of Grant with a variety of flexible study and project spaces.

Accommodate diverse teaching and learning styles to facilitate strong relationships.

Create state-of-the-art facilities for all disciplines.

Focus on college and career readiness, preparing students to enter the workforce as positive contributors of society.

Blend indoor and outdoor spaces to enhance quality of learning environment and deepen our connection to nature.

Rebuild the school as the heart of the community through services, opportunities, and recreation.

Provide a variety of spaces to gather, eat and hangout throughout the campus.

Honor the history of Grant by preserving architecturally and culturally significant features, without continuing legacies that should end.

HOW THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS THE CURRICULUM

Originally designed in the typology of a double-loaded corridor, a simple 30-foot, three-story bay to the west side of the existing structure was added, basements were either removed all together or connected, and the ground plane was sculpted to reveal new exterior courtyards that allow Grant Park to flow seamlessly onto campus. When these elements combine, the resulting design fluidly connects all spaces and places, removes isolation and reduces student anxiety, and replaces the existing double loaded corridor arrangement with a central core of modern learning spaces that are varied, day-lit, open, or acoustically enclosed, single, and multi-story and have become collaborative resources for every learner and educator.

In addition, the design intentionally responded to the legacy of division. The once dis-jointed inter-connectivity between the upper floors and a separate, fear-inducing stairway to the submerged lower level has been replaced with a 3-story open central stair, dramatically carved out of the center of the existing building. Tiered, multi-story gathering spaces flank the stair, and rise into forums at either end, further connecting all levels. This has transformed a school that had struggled



with 30% of its learning environments in five disparate basement levels, into a unified, collaborative, cohesive, light-filled environment that serves all, with equity.

Not one, but two commons now serve food; further reducing the need for students accessing reduced-fare food to be limited to any one location. Campus is now filled at lunch, full of life, laughter, and has successfully brought students of all socio-economic means back to the heart of campus, to eat and learn together.

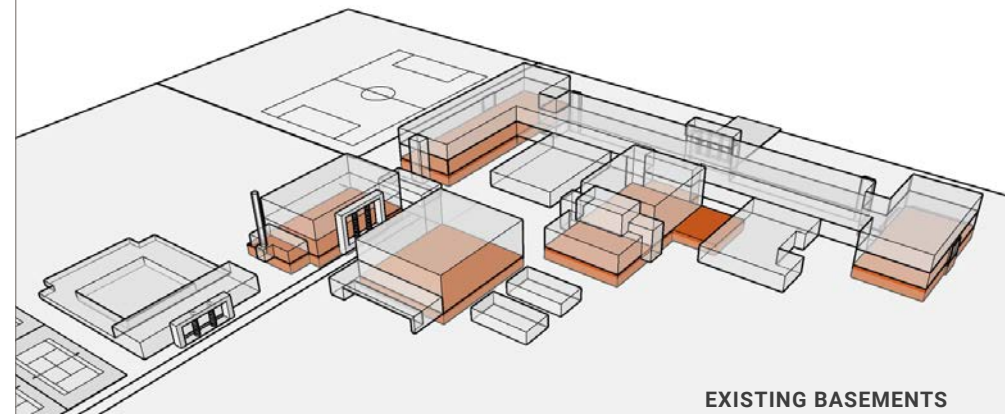
Further, CTE programs are not isolated but are integrated and distributed throughout campus. This creates opportunities for both curriculum and program expansion with better programmatic integration, while elevating and equalizing new, exciting pathways to career.

HOW THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING STYLES; HOW THE ENVIRONMENT IS ADAPTABLE AND FLEXIBLE

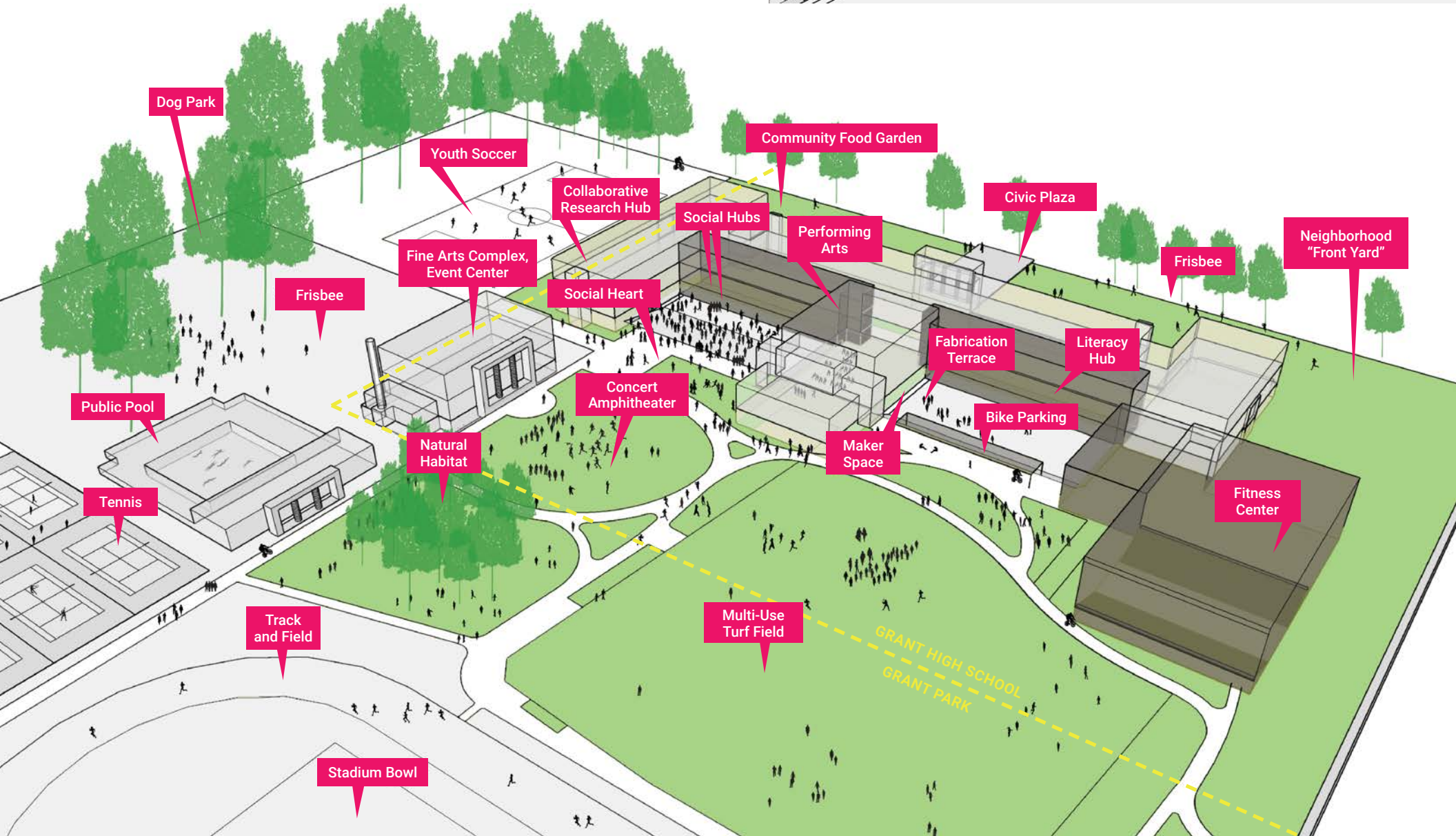
Descriptions and illustrations are represented on the following pages.

REUNITING WITH GRANT PARK

There was a community-wide call to eradicate the boundary and buildings that had, over time, infilled the space between the school and the park and severed the connection between the two public institutions. The new campus design erases the line between where the park stops and the school begins. Replaced instead with cross-park connectivity, the design creates a new outdoor experiential framework; path, pool, sport, field, event space, art, public recreation, amphitheater, education and green space have become the new heart of the “park” and gem of the neighborhood. While cues and ground-plane changes create clear definitions of what is public versus private during the school day, there are no fences or lockable gates to discourage activation, use, cultural events or community gathering.



EXISTING BASEMENTS

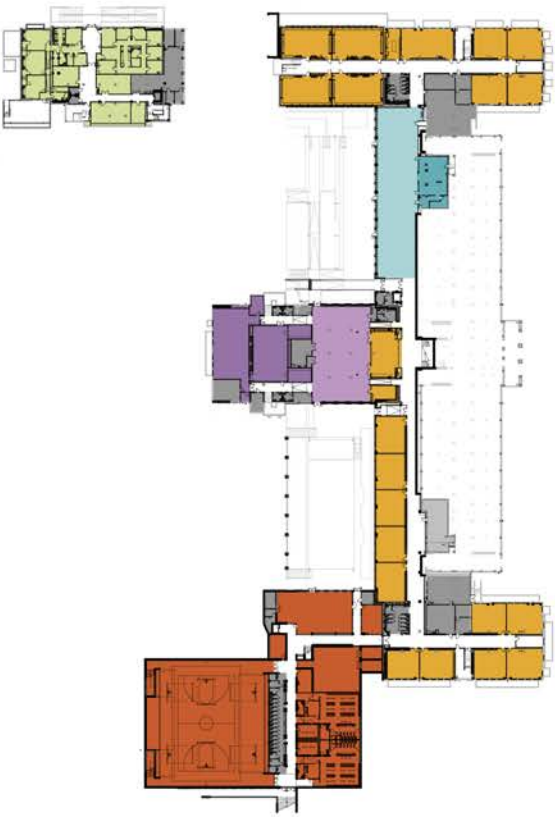


FLOOR PLAN LEGEND

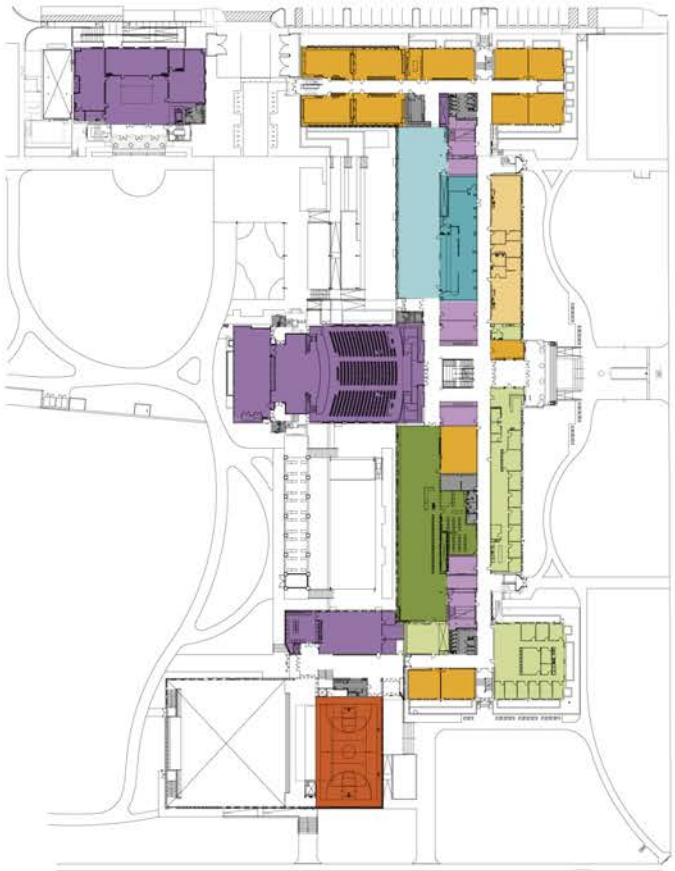
- Gymnasium
- Classrooms
- Special Education
- Administration
- Academic Support
- Commons
- Kitchen
- Music/Art
- Service



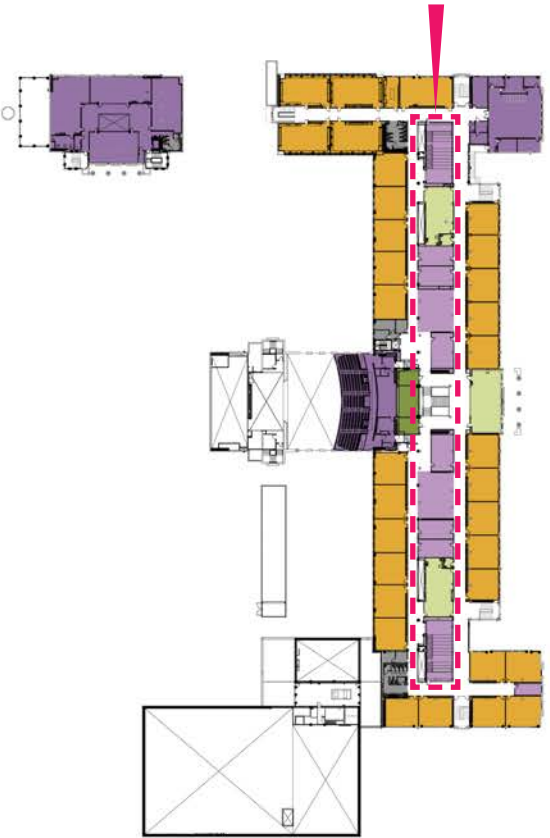
ILLUSTRATING THE RANGE, VARIATION, ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY IN LEARNING SPACES ALL ALONG THE COLLABORATION CORE



LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN



FIRST LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

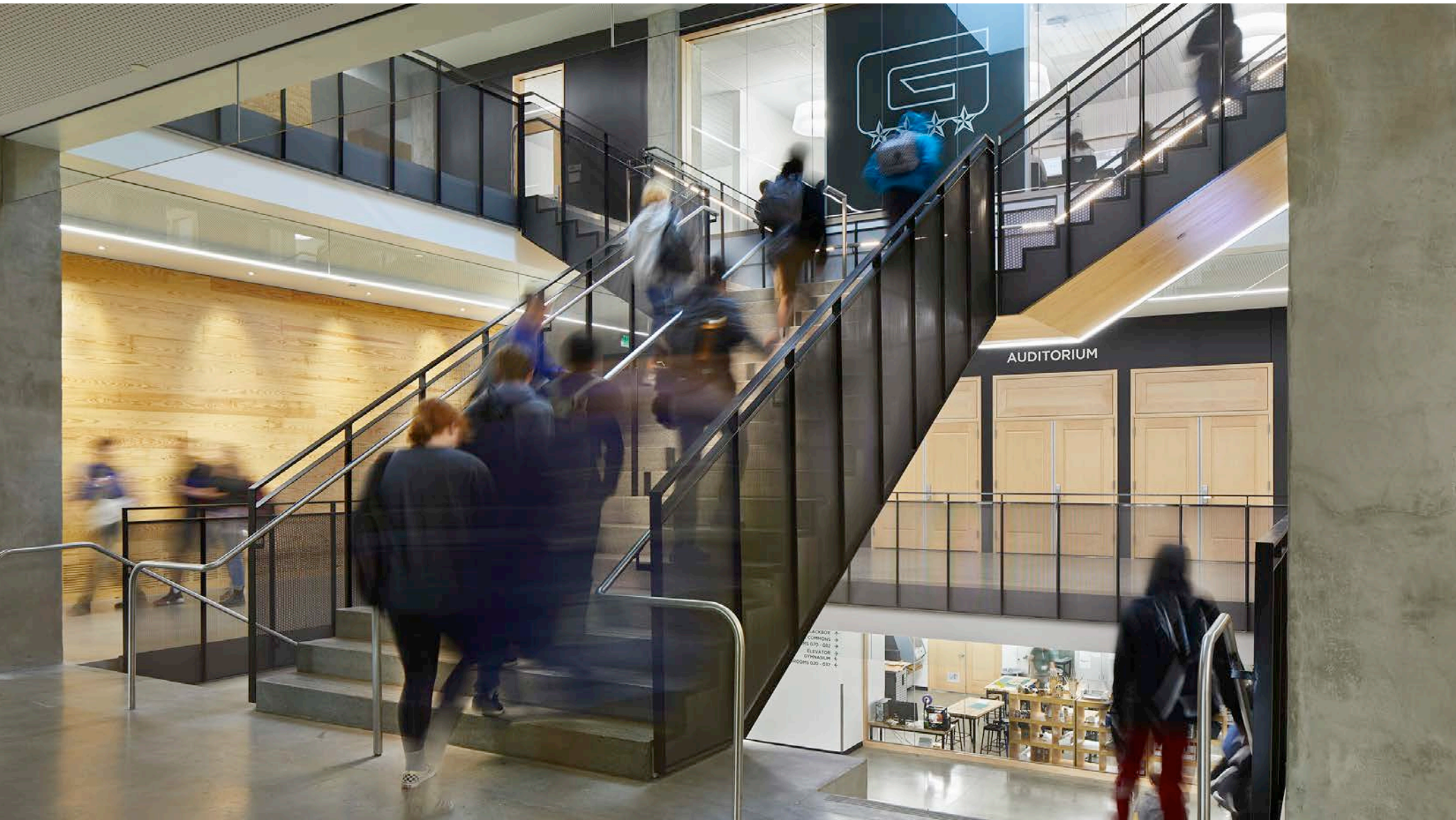


SECOND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN



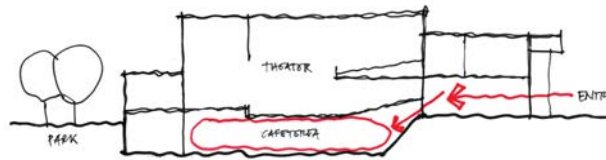
CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN ALL LEVELS

The lack of connectivity between the upper floors and a separate, dark stairway to the submerged lower level has been replaced with a 3-story, grand central stair, dramatically carved out of the center of the existing building.

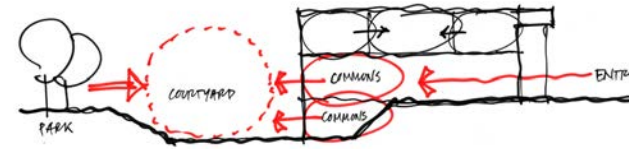


NEW COMMONS AND COURTYARD

The original cafeteria was located in the windowless, lowest level for students who received free or reduced price meals, while those who could afford it were eating upstairs, outside or off-campus. Two new commons now provide a choice for students. Created by excavating and sculpting the land, the lower level commons is a bright, daylight area for all to eat, socialize and study, and it connects to the exterior courtyard where students can spill out to have lunch and hang out. The upper level commons overlooks the courtyard and Grant Park, and is connected to the park by way of a new, elevated walk.



PREVIOUS BASEMENT CAFETERIA



NEW LOWER AND UPPER COMMONS



BRINGING IN THE LIGHT

Once a stately building, the exterior was in disrepair and the top 1/3 of the existing window openings were infilled with solid panels. The interior learning spaces lacked light, so the design team brought back the grandeur of the original windows with energy-efficient and operable replicas. Energy-efficient light fixtures, along with new systems and technology also help create a comfortable and modern learning environment.



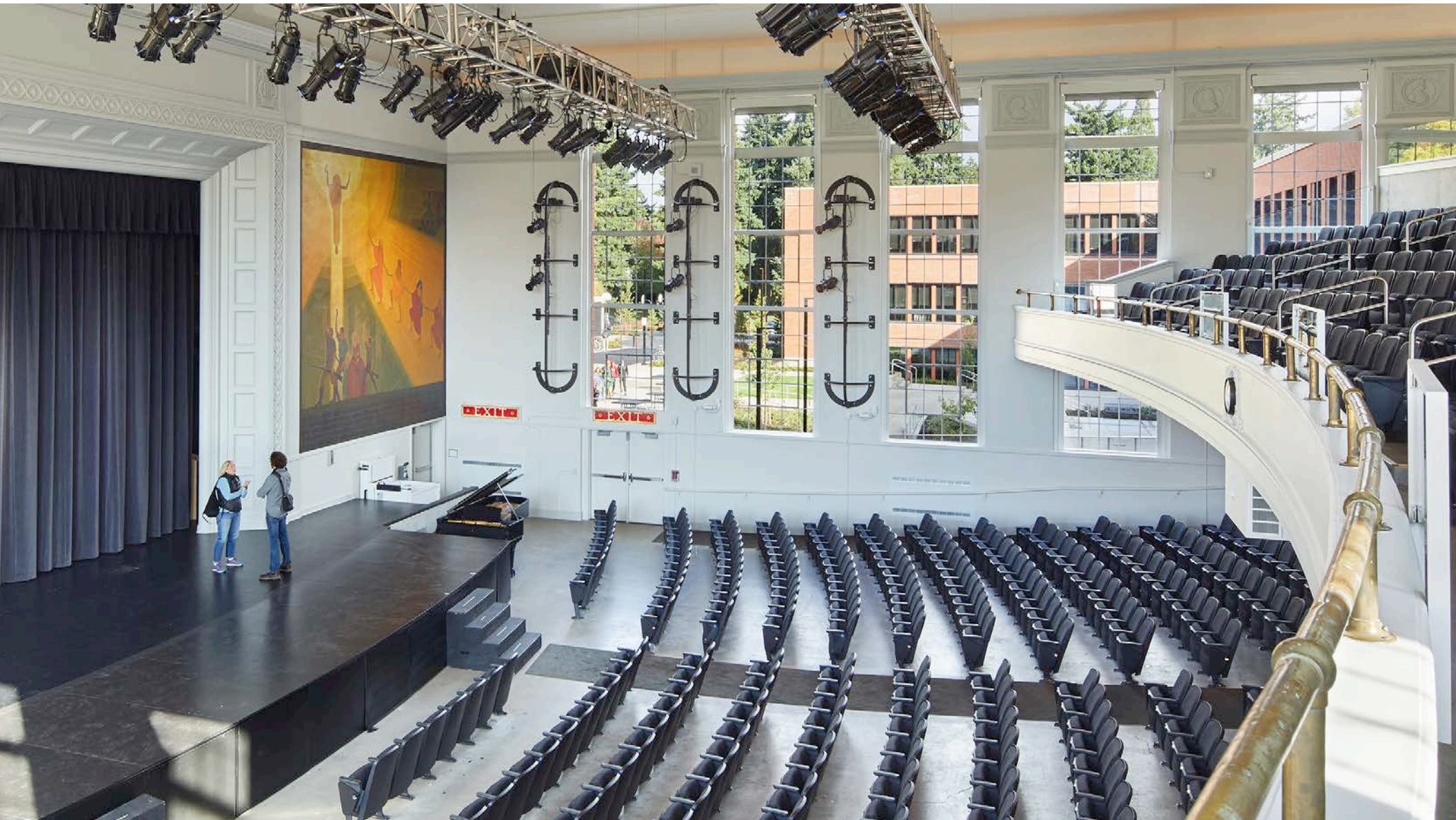
COLLABORATION FORUMS

Enclosed stairways, solid hallways, and no sense of connectivity between the three floors contributed to a dark and isolating environment. Acoustically separated “forums” were created at both ends of the historic building by cutting out the existing floor plate to create a transparent double-height learning environment. Highly adaptive, they have been designed to flex between large group learning, social hangout, and presentation spaces, while also providing a visual connection between floors, cross corridor, and the outdoors.



COMMUNITY THEATER

Grant's historic auditorium was lacking in stage height, depth, proscenium width, technical support, lighting, and suffered from poor acoustics. Recognizable as the set from the 1995 film, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, the community successfully campaigned the school district to restore and improve the 900+ seat theater. State-of-the-art improvements, including seismic upgrades, created a new home for the local performing arts scene for both community driven performances and school events.



REPURPOSED GYMNASIUM

Too small to be used as an auxiliary gym, the original 1923 gymnasium building has been transformed into the new home for the fine and visual arts programs. Studios flank a double-height gallery space at the center of the building which showcases student artwork, facilitates larger group activities, and becomes rentable event space after-hours. A second-level floor floats around the central gallery, encouraging cross-disciplinary exploration.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES: HOW THE ENVIRONMENT INSPIRES AND MOTIVATES

Inclusion! Grant inspires students to be themselves regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, etc.

On the first day of school, as students entered the building, there was a definite sense of surprise, awe, and gratefulness. Students were smiling and Grant's Principal, Carol Campbell, reported hearing many students comment that they "couldn't believe this was their school." She also heard students say, "it looks like a community college." And most critically, in an interview with the local media, a previously disenfranchised student commented, "I feel like someone really cares about us."

The remodel created teaching spaces that promote collaboration and allow students and teachers to access modern technology. The Arts Complex highlights the emphasis on electives and creativity that has always existed at Grant, and students who saw all the new CTE spaces for the first time signed up for classes they otherwise would not have considered.

So many students are now choosing to eat together on campus that the commons, upper and lower, are now packed, and who is receiving free or reduced lunches is undetectable.

The all-user restrooms have eliminated the safety concerns related to having large restroom areas behind closed doors. Students and adults are saying that the individual toilet rooms are private and safe. Other schools and businesses who are remodeling have visited to see the restroom design.

Once skeptical teachers have embraced the small instructional spaces and are finding ways to enhance instruction through group work and project-based activities. The flex areas provide "break out" space for classes, wall space for gallery walks and spaces for students to socialize and study together.

The two collaborations forums are used almost everyday for events such as guest speakers, student presentations, music performances, and club meetings.

The building design provides a variety of spaces that appeal to the diversity that exists in a large comprehensive high school. Students are finding their niche and new ways to use the spaces for learning (academically and socially).

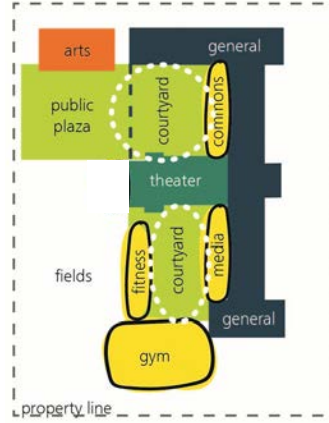
HOW THE FACILITY FITS WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNITY

Grant High School models what social justice in educational buildings can look like for the larger Portland community. In addition, the graceful way the project now seamlessly knits together park and school grounds as a wholly integrated, vibrant and safe public-use facility challenges building walls and fences between schools and their neighborhoods.

Grant is now the heart of the Grant Park community, enrollment continues to increase dramatically, students are transferring in from private schools, graduation rate is 94%, the highest in Portland Public Schools and in the top 10 in the state, and this year's school forecasting numbers indicate students are very excited to be learning in the new space.

STAYING ACTIVE

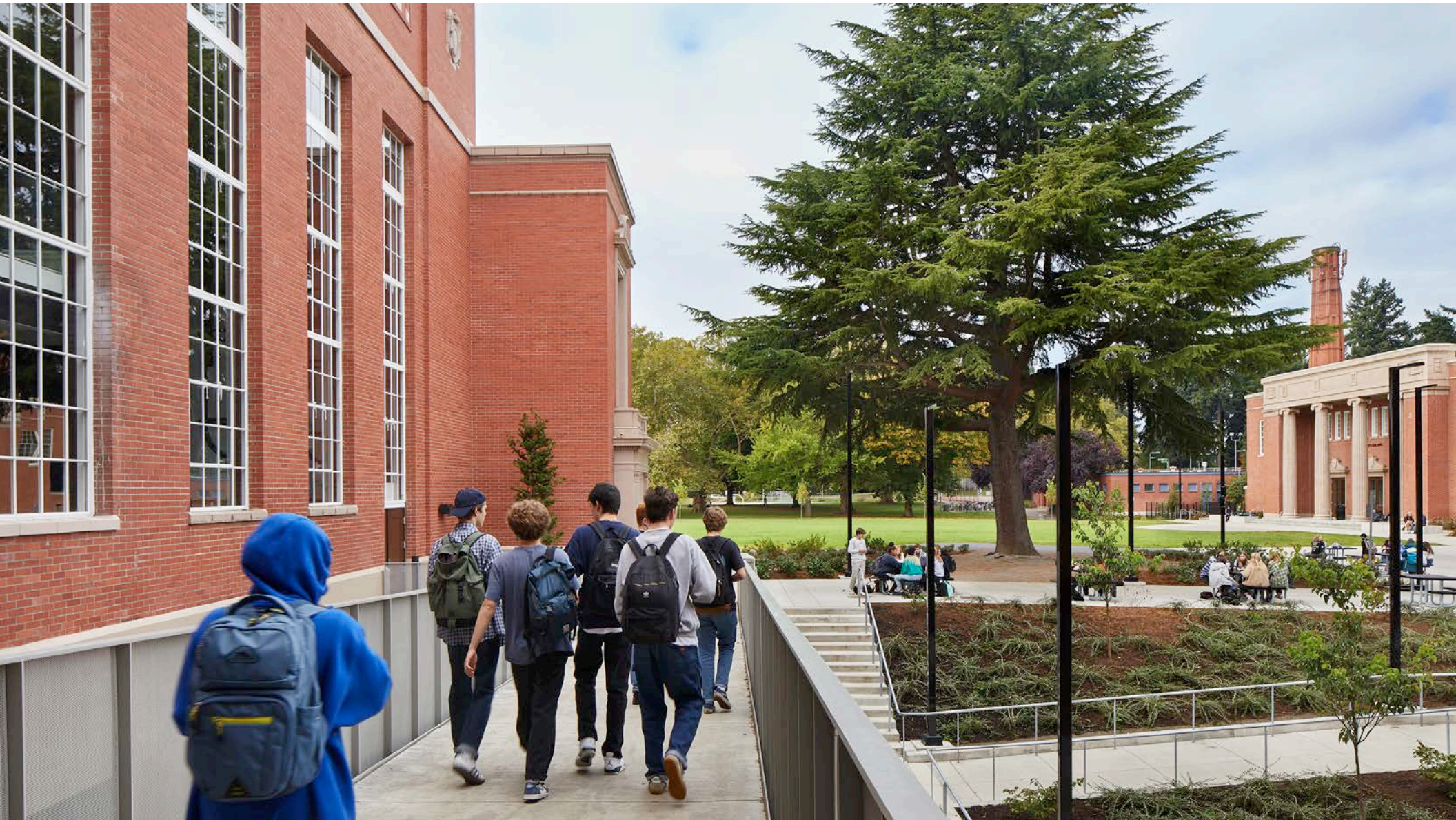
A previous subsurface teaching space was removed and a fitness courtyard was created by digging out the site to provide natural light to the lowest level. This fitness courtyard is directly connected to the new gymnasium and weight room. The all-weather turf surface ensures year-round outdoor exercise opportunities for students. Located directly above the courtyard is a solar panel covered bike shelter.



MAKING GRANT'S HEART THE HEART OF THE PARK

Several poorly considered additions had blocked students from accessing the adjacent 20-acre park. A rabbit warren of pass-through spaces and hidden corners. With the removal of a gym, portable and library additions, the north courtyard is now the primary point of connection between the school and Grant Park. From the new multi-level commons, the view and physical connection to Grant Park has been restored.

FUN FACT: Grant Park is also home to the Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden; the author of the same name made nearby Klickitat Street the fictional home of Ramona Quimby in her famous series of children's novels.



ALL-USER INCLUSIVE DESIGN

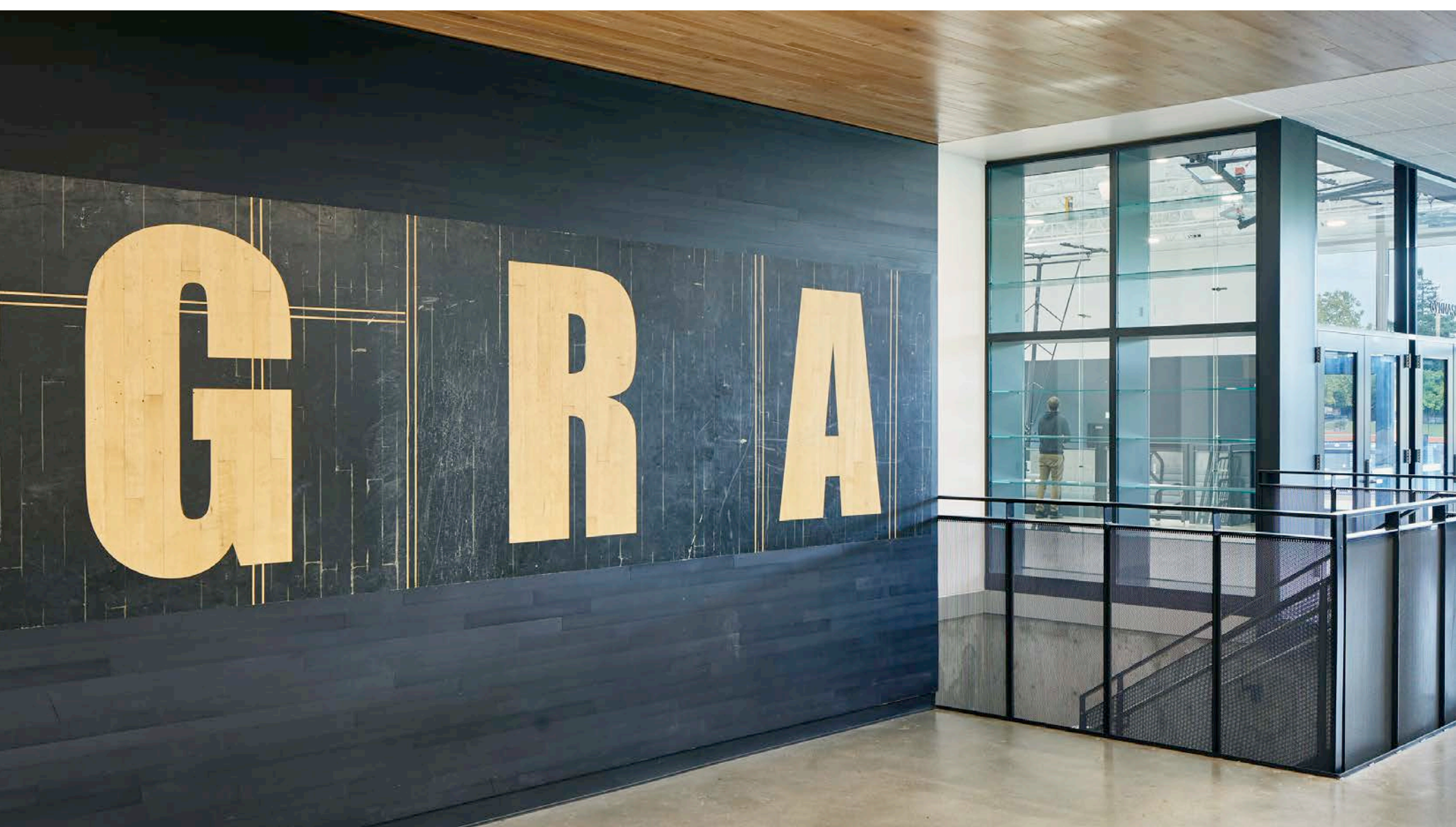
Early in the engagement process, staff and students revealed to us that Grant was home to more than a dozen openly transgender students, and asked that we address the bias of the male and female segregated bathrooms.

To help combat bullying and the real risk of drop-out due to a perceived lack of safety, the design replaced existing “gang-style” bathrooms with 100% individual toilet rooms. Full walls and doors open to a shared space for wash basins and drinking fountains. As a pass-through space with multiple ways in and out, the design limits entrapment and allows passive supervision. Students have stated the bathrooms have been a success in their first year of operation.



HONORING THE PAST

The wood floor of the 1950's gymnasium, with its bold GRANT letters, was salvaged and re-purposed at the entrance to the new gymnasium as a prominent wall graphic, along with the reclaimed wood bleachers that are now used throughout the building as ceiling and wall panels to create a warm environment. The new gym is sunken into the site to respect the surrounding neighborhood scale while providing views to Grant Park.



RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

“We’re welcoming over 1,800 students to a newly modernized school, with incredible teaching and learning environments, very tech enabled classrooms, safety and security features, brand new athletic facilities.”

**GUADALUPE GUERRERO, SUPERINTENDENT
PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



“My whole team broke down in tears when they first walked in. We just couldn’t believe that we get to teach here. **It is powerful design for social justice, and we are grateful!**”

**CAROL CAMPBELL, PRINCIPAL
GRANT HIGH SCHOOL**

“It’s completely brand new, and even the outside, the bricks are clean... it’s beautiful!”

**RUBY PAUSTIAN, CLASS OF 2020
GRANT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT**

“High school rebuild transforms not just the architecture, but its occupants. **It’s lunchtime at the renovated and expanded Grant High School in Northeast Portland, and the place is buzzing....every table is taken and the soundtrack is enthusiastic laughter.** Around the corner, a new entry atrium with built-in terraced seating is full of students too, playing chess and rehearsing dance moves....lunch breaks were not always like this at Grant.”

BRIAN LIBBY, JOURNALIST



“The impact this has had on our students.... I really didn’t anticipate or think about that. I knew it was a great thing we were getting, but to see the students’ faces and have them say things like “I really want to be here” and “I can’t believe that we have this!” It really struck me. **I believe that all students should have this experience in school, it’s really cool and really changes the learning environment.**”

**CAROL CAMPBELL, PRINCIPAL
GRANT HIGH SCHOOL**

“I feel like someone really cares about me!”

GRANT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



ULYSSES S. GRANT HIGH SCHOOL

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RECEIVED FROM THE SCHOOL