

WATERLOO CAREER CENTER

Waterloo Community School District
Waterloo, IA



Association for Learning Environments LEResolutions Planning and Design Awards Submissions



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Hands-on Learning and Career-focused Pathways

Not all students learn best in a traditional classroom.

Many students learn better by doing. These truths are accepted today, but many learning spaces and curricula still fail to reflect that. Schools throughout history have often been built for a traditional lecturing model, which has all too often been the prevailing method of instruction. Today's educators work hard to innovate within these restrictive environments, yet some students are still inevitably hard to reach.


FINDING INSPIRATION FROM PARTNER FACILITIES

The design team worked with the Board of Education to plan the Waterloo Career Center (WCC), with the goal of expanding career pathways for area students. Project planning was collaborative and involved touring education and business partner facilities. The resulting design supports 15 new career training programs, ranging from Construction and Advanced Manufacturing, to Culinary Arts and Nursing. High-bay labs, active maker spaces, and collaborative classrooms offer an intentionally flexible space plan; programs will continually adjust as the community demand changes and many were undefined at the time of design.

CONTINUED ENROLLMENT INCREASES

Today, the WCC is flourishing, with enrollment increasing each year. Students from area schools have the ability to explore career opportunities, earn college credit, and support local business partners along the way. The program has been so successful for the district that plans for a new building are underway to further support the program. The new, modern Waterloo Career Center is a visual beacon for students and the community, with a wide range of educational and career opportunities available in this active, flexible 21st-century learning space.





Bringing to life an old, underutilized building

The Waterloo School District undertook the creation of the new Waterloo Career Center in an effort to match their physical space to the tenets of 21st-century teaching and learning. Their new program focuses on developing hands-on learning and providing career-focused pathways for interested students. The existing Central Middle School was an old, underutilized building without the spaces to support the innovative programming the school board had in mind. The first step in the process to provide a different form of learning for Waterloo students involved a minor single-story addition and a major interior renovation to the existing school: the new home of the Waterloo Career Center.



“ON A SCALE OF 1-10... IT’S A 35!”

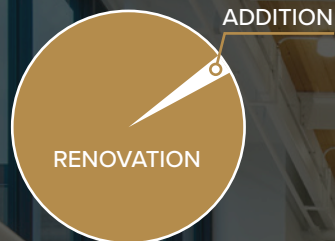
Dr. Jane Lindaman - Superintendent



Small addition – Big impact

The \$13 million Waterloo Career Center project renovated 77,000 square feet of the existing Central Middle School. The 2,500 square foot addition consists of a new main entrance and community multi-purpose space leading into the renovated area. The space is now home to programs for Advanced Manufacturing, Applied Math, Culinary, Digital Graphics, Digital Interactive Media, Early Childhood Education, Electrical, Entrepreneurship/Finance, Health Careers, Hospitality/Tourism, IT - Networking, IT - Web & Mobile Programming, Marketing Management, Plumbing, and Sustainable Construction.

\$13M
Construction



2,500
Square Foot
Addition

15
Programs
Added





Filling a need in the Cedar Valley Region

UNIQUE COMMUNITY WITH VARIED NEEDS

Waterloo is a diverse community compared to greater Iowa — ethnicity, culturally, and socio-economically. The ninth largest city in the state, Waterloo grew steadily in population until the 1990s, after which it declined and now holds steady at approximately 67,000 residents. The Blackhawk County seat and major metro of the Cedar Valley Region of Northeast Iowa, Waterloo is a hub for government, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, education, and retail for the region.

Various social and cultural festivals bring visitors from across the country to the city of Waterloo, including the Iowa Irish Fest and National Cattle Congress. Waterloo's Museum District includes seven different museums within walking distance of one another. Major brands located in Waterloo include John Deere, Tyson Foods, ConAgra Grocer Products, Bertch Cabinets, and more.

There are 45 different languages spoken in Waterloo Schools, and 1 in 5 staff are people of color. In 2019, Waterloo Schools had the highest graduation rate in district history. For higher education, Waterloo is also home to Hawkeye Community College, Allen College, and Upper Iowa University, with the University of Northern Iowa in adjacent Cedar Falls. Waterloo's TechWorks Campus is another unique feature for the region, a 30-acre advanced manufacturing, research & development, innovation, and education center.

DRIVEN BY COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND PASSIONATE SCHOOL BOARD

The creation of the new Waterloo Career Center was driven by a passionate school board and the design team worked closely with a Building Facilities Committee throughout the project's design and completion. The nature of the Career and Technical Education Pathways (CTE) program that's

run at the WCC necessitates close working relationships with local business partners and leaders, to determine what they're looking for in a new graduate and which skills are most important to teach. During the planning process, the design team and the Building Facilities Committee met with the local electrician's union, and a major cabinet manufacturer in the community, among many others. Today, the program is sponsored by 10 local businesses and institutions, including John Deere, Omega Cabinetry, and UnityPoint Health Allen Hospital.

FLEXIBILITY A FOCUS FOR THIS VINTAGE SCHOOL

The greatest challenge to the successful completion of this project was the existing school building itself. Primary masonry and pre-cast construction, Central Middle School was hardly conducive to modern, innovative, 21st-century teaching and learning. The renovation took place in the vintage portion of the building, a low-ceilinged concrete

“THIS CAREER CENTER AND THE HANDS-ON TECHNICAL CAREER EDUCATION IS TRANSFORMATIONAL.”

Governor Kim Reynolds



structure with almost no natural daylight and plenty of load-bearing walls. The site slopes steeply from the front of the building down to the parking lot, which was another added challenge in designing the new entrance. The middle school was underutilized, outdated, and unattractive. It's a large, central, district building that was clearly not living up to its potential.

Beyond dealing with the physical structure itself, middle school operations needed to be maintained with as little disruption as possible, which led to a complex phasing plan working around the academic schedule. Also, the team was planning for an unknown future. The school didn't know exactly which programs would come to fruition by the time the Career Center opened. This uncertainty pushed the design team to imagine as many flexible and adaptable

spaces as possible with the assumption that future changes to programs were inevitable.

Thankfully these negatives were countered by the enthusiastic Building Facilities Committee, community and passionate district leadership. The design team was able to work with the committee closely and collaboratively throughout the project's development to ensure the outcome matched the needs of future students. The importance of this program to the district and its significance in the community as a whole lent excitement and a sense of purpose to the entire process.

A NEW WAY TO THINK ABOUT EDUCATION

The added value for students in the ability to pursue a wide variety of career paths as early as high school cannot be

overstated. The flexible, innovative approach to learning represented by the Waterloo Career Center makes education more inclusive, accessible, and meaningful to area students, accommodating a variety of learning styles and career interests.

At the Waterloo Career Center's grand opening in October 2019, many prominent figures in Iowan politics were present and took the opportunity to speak about the impact of the new building. Iowa governor, Kim Reynolds, spoke about how the program would support state-wide initiatives, such as Future Ready Iowa, which aims to ensure 70% of Iowa workers have training or education beyond high school by 2025. "This career center and the hands-on technical career education is transformational," emphasized Reynolds.

Vision defined by seven project drivers

The core of Waterloo Schools' mission for the Career Center and CTE program is for "students to have the ability to explore in a career field, help them with what they want to be, and to have hand-on experience opportunities." To support this, the design team identified seven "project drivers" to guide the design of the Waterloo Career Center: **Engagement, Adaptability, Identity, Align, Heart, Experience, and Waterloo.** Before even beginning the design, these drivers were developed to guide decision making. The drivers emerged from a combination of what the design team heard from the planning committee and experience with past educational facilities; each driver represents a unique goal and focus-point that informed the design as it progressed.



WATERLOO

Be distinctly and uniquely Waterloo. The facility should convey a bold and powerful statement that projects a presence and vision about what education is, does and how it serves the diverse past and future of young adults in the Cedar Valley.



ENGAGEMENT

The space enables and promotes a spectrum of innovation and engagement from individual to collaborative opportunities for teaching and learning. Live to learn.



HEART

Give the program a heart that binds the programs together encouraging multidisciplinary teaching and learning opportunities. Provide Learning on display through the use of transparency between spaces.



IDENTITY

Planning should provide identity to the Career Center and Middle School that are publicly visible, cohesive but differentiated.



ADAPTABILITY

Spaces should be adaptable to meet a variety of future needs for learners, educators and industry partners in diverse and unique ways.



ALIGN

Planning should align types of spaces available in the building with appropriate curriculum and cost, maximizing value in the existing building while planning for future growth.



EXPERIENCE

Provide spaces that challenge the perception of what school is, looks like and feels like. Unique environments should offer experiences that attract the best staff and students to challenge not just what is learned but how it is learned.



ALIGN



The planning team underwent an extensive space planning process to ensure that the final design would **Align** as much as possible with the existing spaces. Comparing the inventory of available spaces to the probable needs of future programs, the team matched space to program element and then determined what was missing and how to improve the functionality of the existing spaces. Manufacturing and similar programs were assigned to high-bay lab spaces, while business and technology programs were given flexible studios.



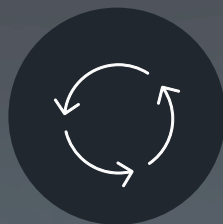


HEART



The **Heart** space is a unique centering feature and gathering space within the WCC. A new, brightly-colored stair to connect the two levels of programs brings a sense of cohesion to the entire project. Flexible seating options provide informal meeting and relaxation space for students; there is also a large writable wall when inspiration strikes. The removal of structural concrete slabs to create the two-story opening and bring in much-needed daylight makes the Heart space shine like a beacon at the end of Main Street, beckoning students in with a sense of welcome and belonging.

ADAPTABILITY



Adaptability, however, was a must-have, as the nature of the CTE program is to change its offerings based on demand. In the interest of future-proofing the spaces in the Waterloo Career Center, flexibility was designed into the program from the beginning. Classrooms are open, with movable furniture to fit various functions. Studios on the upper floor are divided by sliding glass walls, providing the opportunity for multiple spaces to come together. However, spaces, such as the former “girls’ gymnasium,” required a significant transformation in order to align with the needs of the Culinary Program and multi-purpose space.





ENGAGEMENT



To ensure opportunities for **Engagement** for all types of learning personalities, the design provides a wide range of spaces: from small seating nooks and informal areas of soft seating, to small group rooms and flexible classrooms, all the way to presentation spaces and wide-open collaborative labs, the building supports whatever makes a student feel most comfortable and engaged for any given task.



WATERLOO



The creation of the WCC at a prominent, yet underutilized, school building represents an investment in the young people of **Waterloo** and the Cedar Valley and the future of that community. A bright, modern, open, transparent building that welcomes in the public reflects an openness and transparency of the school district as well, inviting everyone to have a stake in the next generation's future. The bold design shows pride in the work the WCC is doing and inspires the students to take pride in themselves, their work, and their space.

EXPERIENCE



The entire CTE program is centered around the re-imagining of what high school can look like and the WCC provides a distinct **Experience** for students. The building puts them in a different frame of mind, giving them the freedom to think more openly about what it means to learn and to explore their different interests. The transparency of the spaces allows students to see the happenings of other programs and draw inspiration from their classmates' work. The visually open spaces are different from what students expect of a high school; as students spend more time in the WCC, they can discover the potential of the different spaces what happens in other programs.



IDENTITY



The new canopy and main entrance to the WCC were designed to be an identifier for the program, as well as a welcome to the surrounding community. The scale and rectilinear form of the new addition maintain its cohesion with the existing building, as well as a similar - yet modernized - color palette for the exterior materials. Simultaneously, the light and the bright pops of color throughout the design, visible even from the exterior through the expansive glass wall at the entrance, give the WCC a separate **Identity** from the rest of the existing building. This unique identity gives the students a special sense of place and marks the experience as distinct from that of a typical high school. The transparency and openness of the spaces are a visual signal to students, instructors, and visitors alike of the modern 21st century approach to teaching and learning the building supports.





Offering new opportunities for growth with adaptability and flexibility

RE-IMAGINING WHAT A SCHOOL CAN OFFER

“Learning on display” is the prominent pedagogy of the Waterloo Career Center, with openness, transparency, and a hands-on approach creating an entirely different environment from a traditional high school. Via each of the project drivers, the design supports the CTE program and Waterloo School District’s curricular goals.

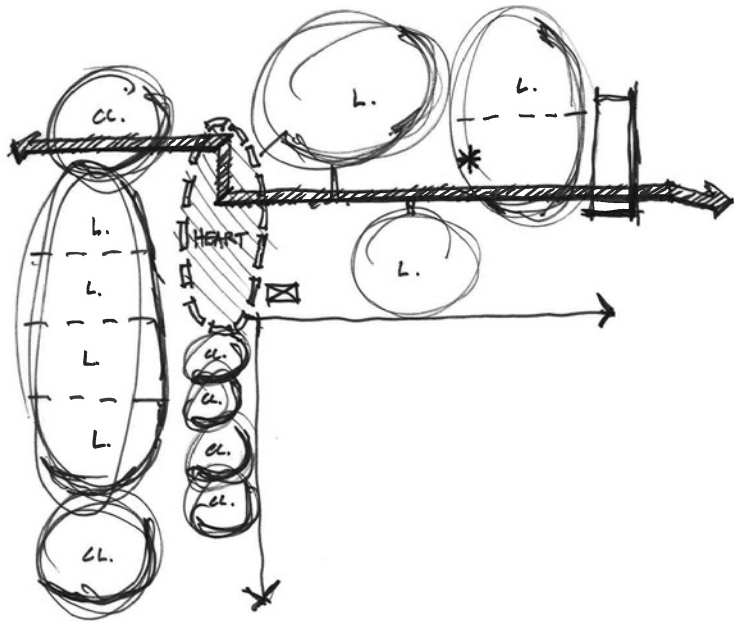
Built-in bench nooks with integral lighting along Main Street provide a semi-private space for focused work or just some quiet reading time. Comfortable soft seating in multiple areas can be utilized for team brainstorming sessions, chats

between students and mentors, or just a nice place to sit during breaks between classes. Flexible classrooms and small-group rooms provide pin-up and presentation space to work out ideas or present the finished product. Labs and maker spaces are stocked with all the necessary tools and technology for hands-on projects and experimentation.

FLEXIBLE DESIGN SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF LEARNING & TEACHING STYLES

The multitude of different types of spaces to support the individual programs’ needs is a testament to the district’s commitment to inclusion and empowerment of students

and instructors. The WCC is anything but a one-size-fits-all approach to education. The variety in CTE program offerings speaks to the amount of different teaching and learning styles the WCC spaces can accommodate. The flexibility and adaptability inherent in the design make this variety possible. Even if needs change in the future, the building is designed to continue meeting those needs. Flexible, open classroom spaces of varying sizes feature movable furniture that allows for lectures, group work, debates and discussions, or individual study. Small group rooms support team meetings and brainstorming sessions, as well as interactive presentations. High bay labs are



home to the manufacturing and maker spaces, while the upstairs studios are ideal for small project scale and tech-based learning. The WCC even includes a specialized space for hands-on Culinary training.

OPEN CONCEPT OFFERS ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Creating openness in the existing building was a challenge, going from the closed-off, individual rooms of a traditional, school building to the open concept spaces of a 21st century learning environment. The flexibility of teaching styles that's possible in an open classroom with movable furniture, for example, ensures that a larger population of students is better-served by their education. But the WCC has more than just open classrooms, of course. The classrooms and labs come in different sizes and many can be combined with neighboring spaces as well. Sliding glass walls and operable garage doors give the option to open up or close off spaces.

Beyond the school day, the WCC supports community functions as well. The public is welcomed into the space, whether it's utilizing the outdoor covered patio during events at the adjacent stadium or a class reunion in the multipurpose space catered by the Culinary kitchen.

The teaching and learning spaces were designed to be non-specialized, to spatially provide a blank slate for each program's instructors and allow them to determine what they need for their individual methods. This ensures that the district will be fitting a space to a program, rather than trying to fit a program into a space - an important distinction that avoids compromising any of the programs by virtue of not supporting them with the physical space and features they need to be successful.

HEART

Physical and visual connections between lab spaces provides meaningful inter-disciplinary connections.



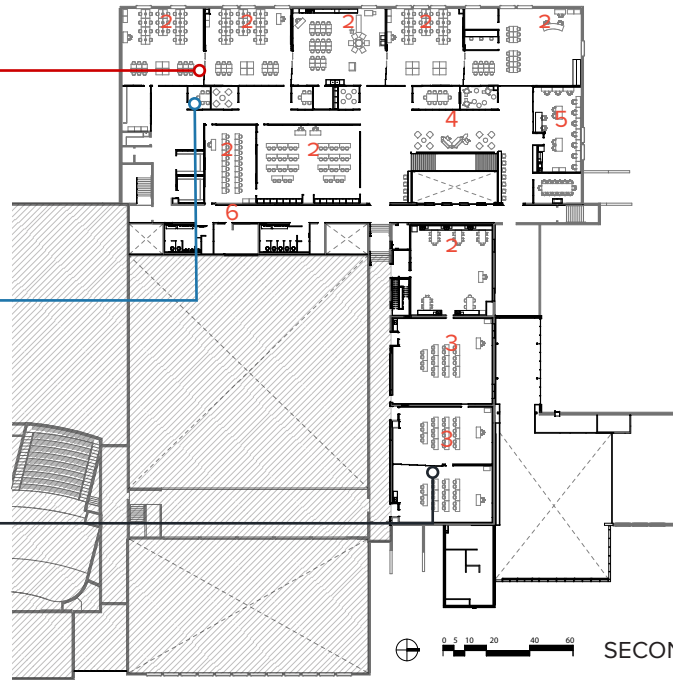
ENGAGEMENT

Individual to group collaborative teaching spaces.



ADAPTABILITY

Movable partitions to adjust room sizes to meet the needs of learners, educators, and industry partners.



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SECOND FLOOR PLAN

1 ENTRY

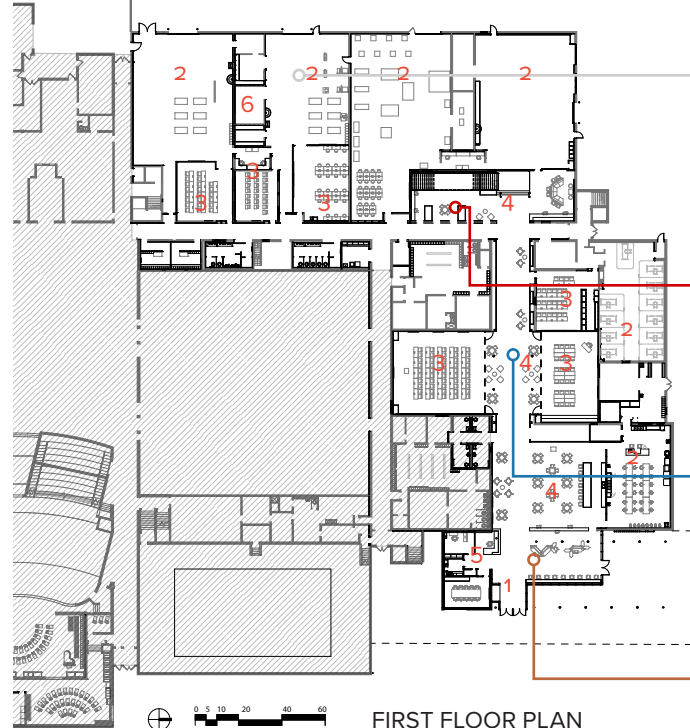
2 LABS

3 SHARED STUDIOS

4 SHARED CO-WORKING AREAS

5 ADMINISTRATION

6 BUILDING SUPPORT



0 5 10 20 40 60

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

ALIGN

Re-purposing existing high-bay spaces as heavy lab space brings together program spaces in a low-cost way.



HEART

Central stair that connects the floors, gathers students and links to a variety of learning spaces.



ENGAGEMENT

is enhanced through the use of transparency and openings to provide learning and display.



EXPERIENCE

Unique materials and spaces at the front door set the stage that this is not "typical" school.



“WE KNEW WE NEEDED SOMETHING DIFFERENT WITH THIS PROJECT. WE WERE DEVELOPING A NEW IDEA AND NEEDED A FIRM TO GET US THERE. THE DESIGN TEAM ENABLED US TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX AND CREATE SOMETHING UNIQUE—ALLOWING US TO BE PART OF THE PROCESS WHILE GUIDING AND LISTENING ALONG THE WAY. IT WAS AN AMAZING COLLABORATIVE AND CREATIVE PROCESS THAT WAS DELIVERED!”

Shanlee McNally, Board President



BLEND OF ELEMENTS DRAWS YOU INSIDE

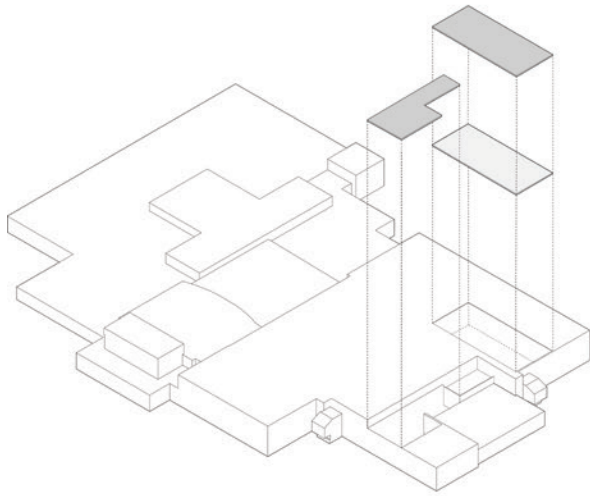
Chosen for its prominent location upon entering the site, the addition to the Waterloo Career Center is clad in weathered steel panels with an exposed steel structure. The main entrance brings you up a new concrete stair with weathered steel signage, to arrive beneath an expansive canopy, held high on slender steel columns. The scale of the entrance and its natural-toned materials match those of the existing school building, but its modern lines, bright interior, and wide glass facade set it apart as a unique and special destination.

The wood underside of the canopy pulls you inside the building, where it continues down the Main Street in the form of a wood ceiling. The weathered steel featured on the exterior is a recurring motif inside as well, lining the front office and accenting the design throughout. The main multipurpose space took the place of the building's old gym, retaining its high ceilings but given new life with colorful wall coverings, playful furniture, and a swath of natural daylight from the front glass curtainwall. At night, the effect is reversed, with the Career Center emitting light from within and shining like a jewel.

The natural light continues along the corridor, a true breath of fresh air compared to the dark, low-ceilinged original structure. A major goal of the project was to introduce as much daylight as possible and infuse the spaces with natural light.

Warm entry pulls students, staff, and visitors to naturally lit space





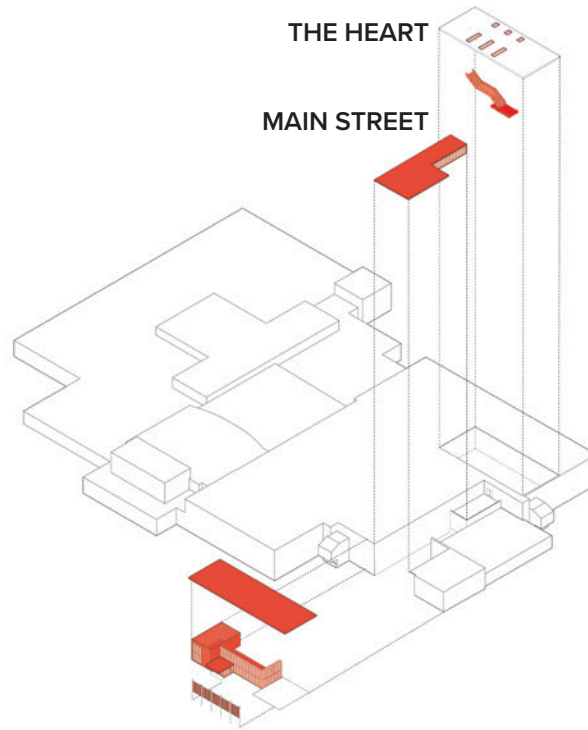
REMOVAL OF EXISTING ROOF & FLOOR

Following the path of this daylight leads from the entrance directly to the **Heart** space and stair, moving up through the two-story space to more classrooms and studios above. The construction of the stair and opening involved significant structural coordination to create a hole in the structural floor.

The upper floor consists of flexible classroom and studio spaces, with plenty of glass and colorful accents to keep it as visually bright and open as possible. The studio spaces are separated by sliding glass walls allowing opportunities for collaboration or more space as program needs change. The classrooms, as well, have the option to be combined or separate as required for groups of different sizes.

MULTI-PURPOSE SPACE AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY USE

The addition was located for visibility and to serve as a key indicator of entry from a major traffic artery; it was intentionally designed to have an open and welcoming appearance, to indicate that it's a space for the community in addition to the students. The Career Center is also directly adjacent to the school's stadium, allowing the



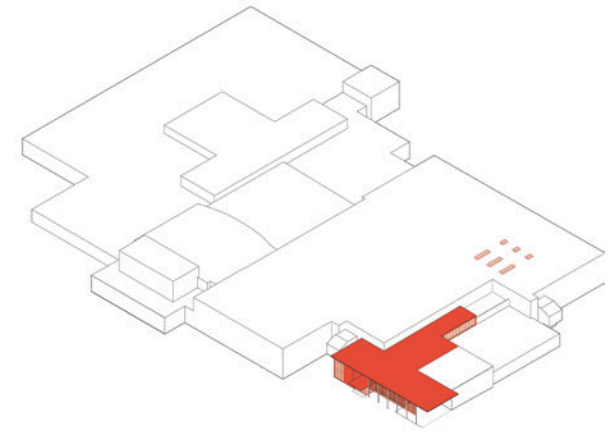
INSERT & EXTEND

public to utilize the covered outdoor patio during events. The WCC's bright, open multipurpose space just inside the entrance addition also hosts community events, which utilize the Culinary kitchen as well and occasionally even serve as practice for the students in that program.

INSPIRING AND MOTIVATING THROUGH TRANSPARENCY

The concept of "Learning on Display" drove the design of the space in many ways. The connectivity and transparency throughout the space is an intentional move to promote connectivity and collaboration among the space's inhabitants. Students have the opportunity to observe other programs and see their classmates' work in a natural and informal way. The openness and connectivity have the added benefit of spreading the now-abundant daylight throughout the space, which promotes attention and improved mental health in both students and staff.

Sometimes schools are built defensively, ensuring the durability of the materials and furnishings instead of focusing on the experience of the space and the best



COMPLETE

learning environment for students. What the School Board has found with the WCC is that students, and even staff, want to be in this part of the building specifically because of the environment. Furthermore, the students have a sense of ownership of the building and pride in their surroundings, meaning destructive behavior is much less of a concern than in a typical school; students want to take care of their space when it's nice to begin with. Students want to perform well and enroll in the program after being inspired by the space itself.

The opportunity for the students to earn college credit and get involved with prominent local business partners motivates young people to seriously consider - and get excited about - their futures. The investment of the school district in the CTE program and the WCC building in such a visible way shows their passion in the future of generations to come. At the project's grand opening, both state and local leaders emphasized the importance of the Waterloo Career Center as an educational model for the future.

EXPERIENCE

Unique materials, such as weather steel panels, and spaces at the front door set the stage that this is not “typical” school.

HEART

Exterior glazing highlights the activity in the building and puts learning on display to the visiting public. Vertical steel fins provide shading to the glazing.

**IDENTITY**

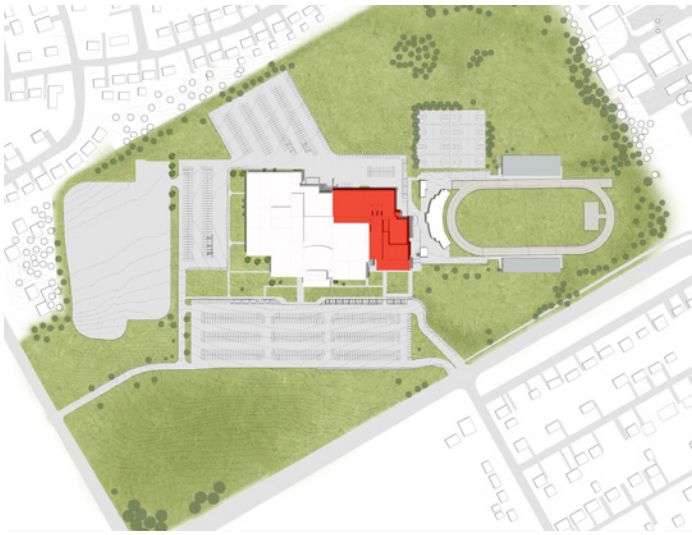
Small, jewel-box like addition provides new face and distinct identity to the building and program with a small footprint.

WATERLOO

Covered plaza and interior hospitality space serve as a front porch between the school and the community. Community gatherings and sporting events bring the public to the building.

IDENTITY

Connection to the stadium is reinforced by new signage and a pathway.



Site Plan

HEART

Glazing and overhead doors provide visual connections between lab and collaboration spaces.

**ADAPTABILITY**

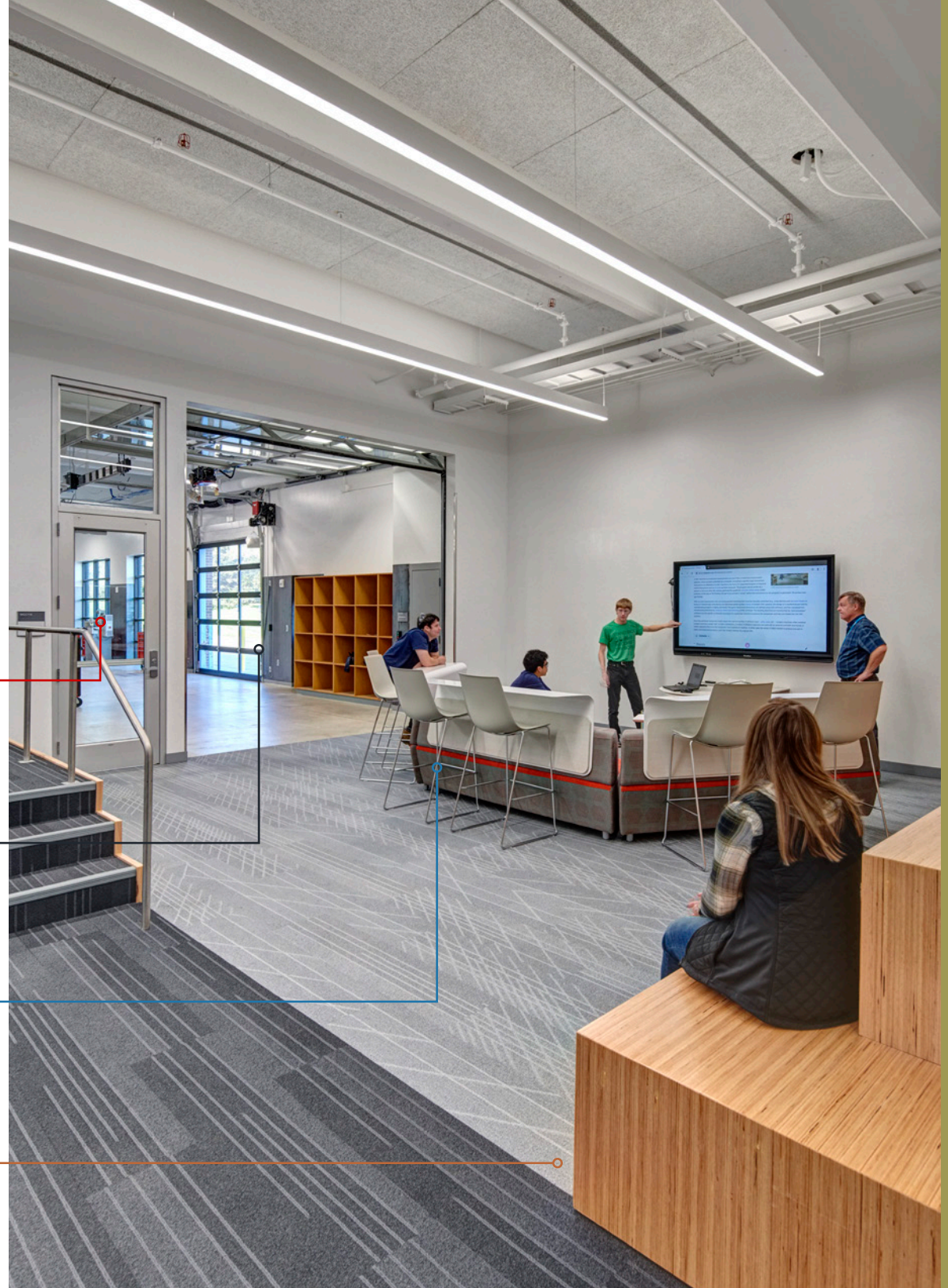
Overhead doors connect lab spaces with adjacent shared co-working and collaboration nodes.

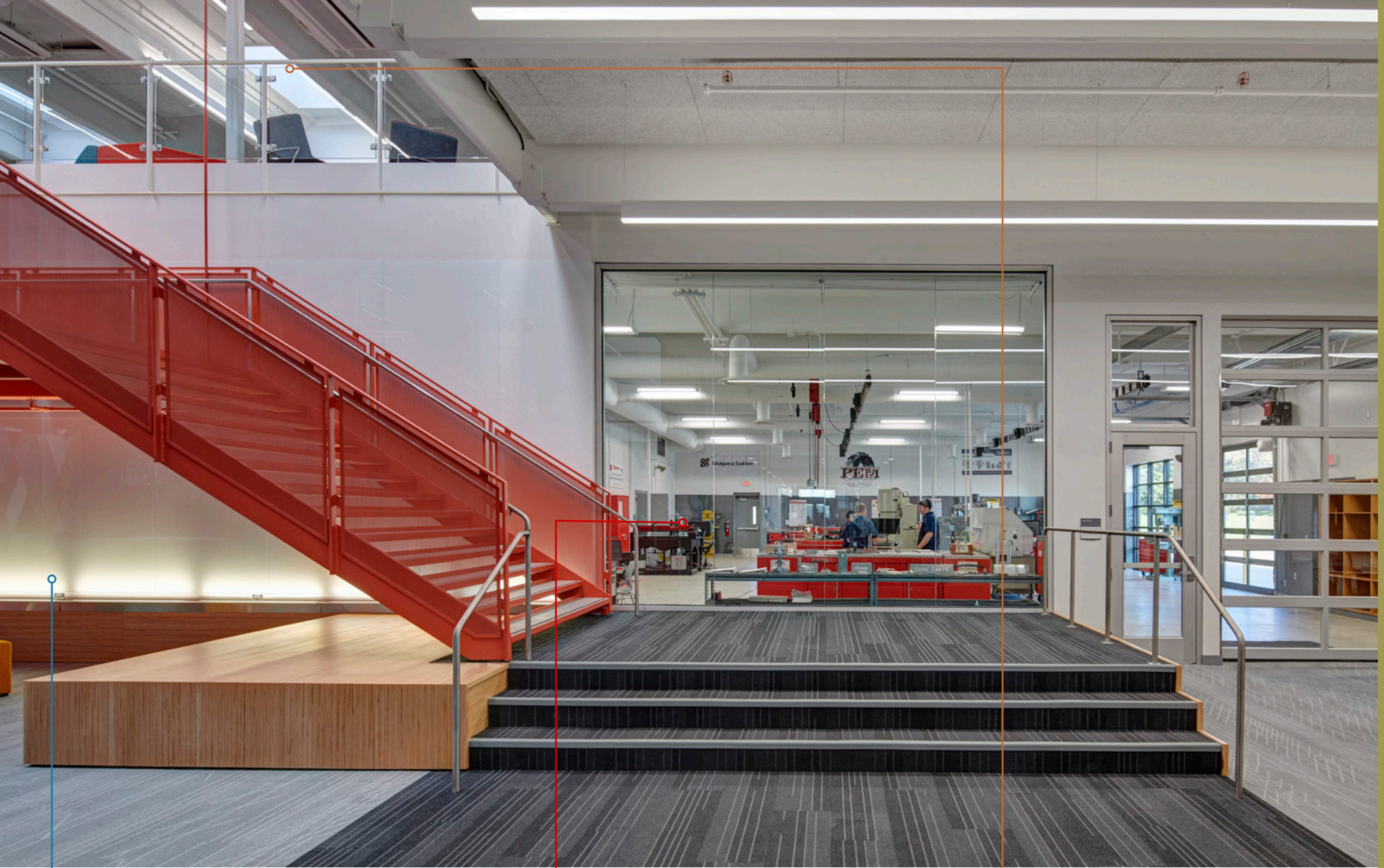
**ENGAGEMENT**

Multi-level furniture and presentation space allows for students to collaborate and present their ideas.

**EXPERIENCE**

Built-in benches allow for additional seating or heads down work while providing unique spaces not found in other district facilities.



**ENGAGEMENT**

Markerboards and collaborative furniture at the crossing of circulation paths create dynamic group spaces.

**HEART**

Glazing and overhead doors provide visual connections between lab and collaboration spaces. Removed floor above also provides vertically connected spaces.

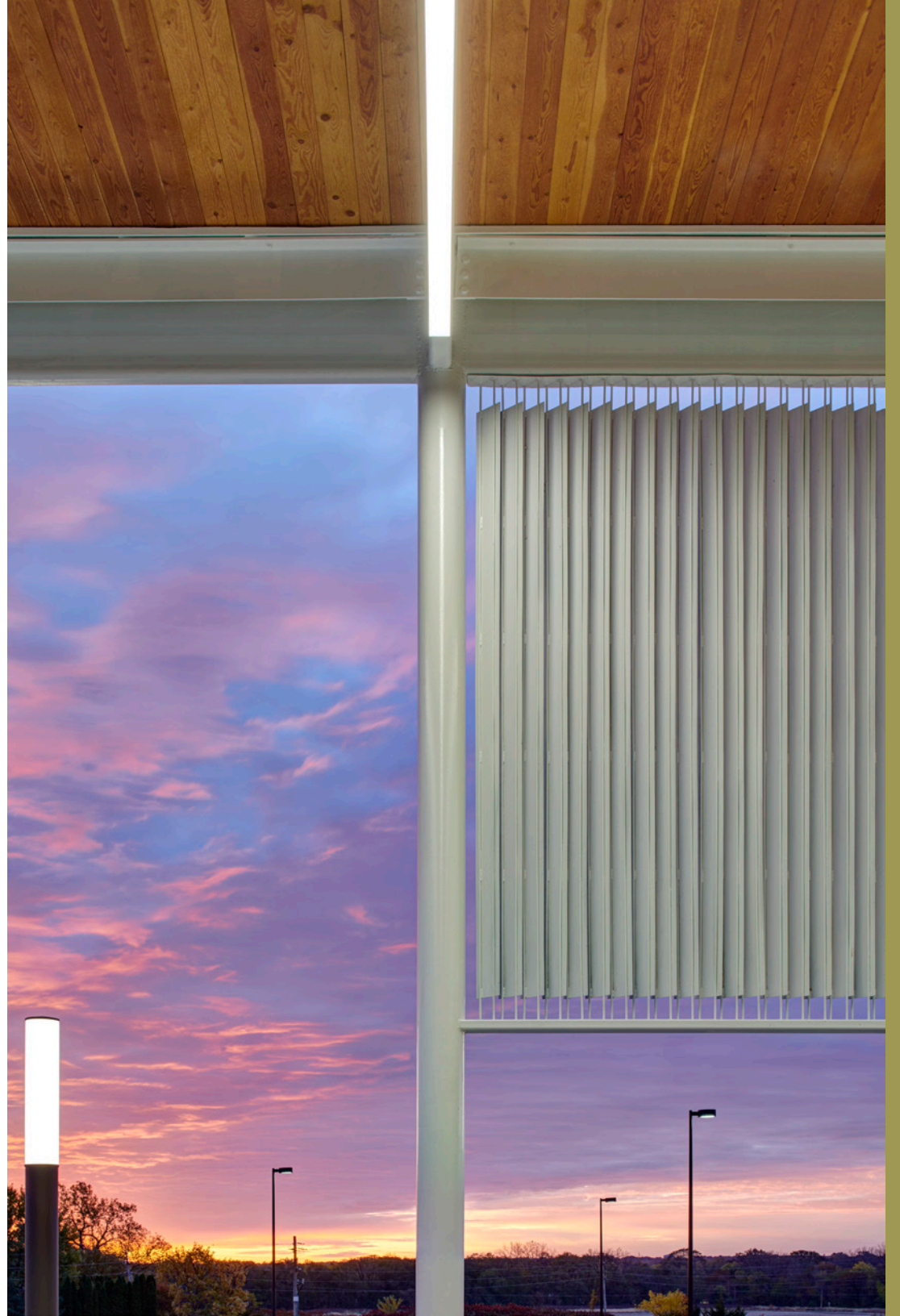
**EXPERIENCE**

Inserted skylights within the existing roof structure provide transformed, daylight spaces.

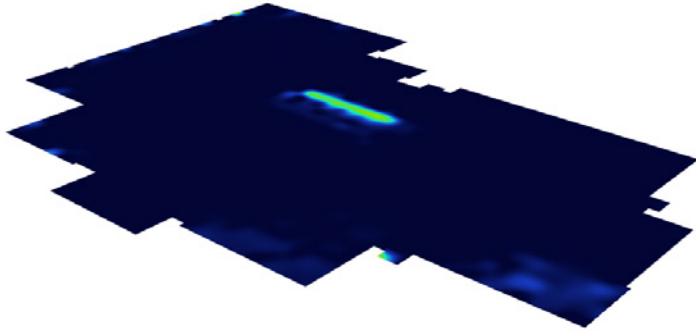


REVIEW OF DAYLIGHTING OFFERS THE BEST THROUGHOUT THE DAY

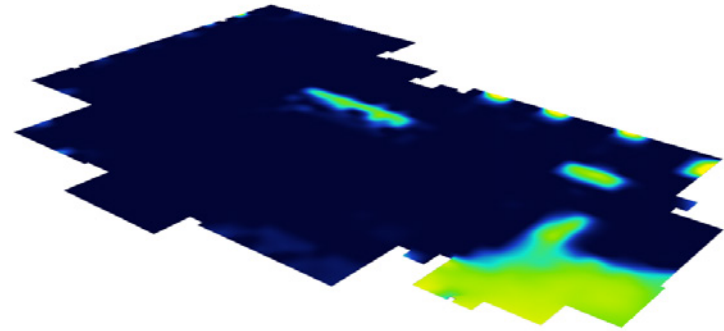
A steel fin veil was lightly applied to the steel structure of the addition and designed to permit infiltration of soft morning light into the main entry area while shielding the same area from harsh afternoon sun, while still porous enough to avoid constricting inward and outward views.



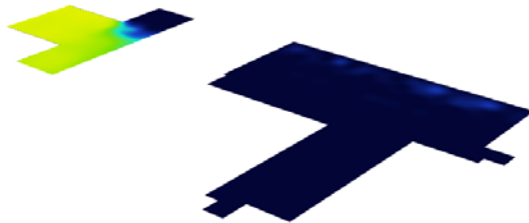
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR



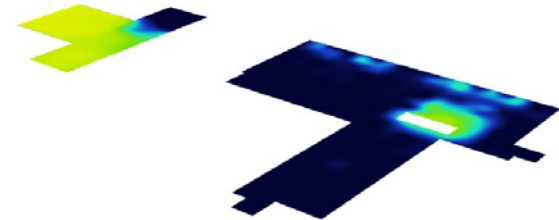
RENOVATED FIRST FLOOR



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR



RENOVATED SECOND FLOOR



Percentage of occupied hours where illuminance is at least 400 lux, measured at 2.79 feet above the floor plate.



INCREASE IN DAY LIGHT POSITIVELY IMPACTS STUDENTS

Studies show that daylighting in schools may significantly increase student's test scores and promote better health and physical development. The existing masonry facility offered very little natural daylight to the interior. The design team deployed several daylight strategies

to bring natural light into the building to further enhance the learning environment. The roof was raised in the central Main Street corridor to collect even, north light, and skylights were cut in above the new central **Heart** stair. Original high slit windows were enlarged in the second floor classrooms more than doubling access to daylight and views.

Unlocking opportunities for youth in the Cedar Valley

NEW FACILITY EXPANDS CAREER-FOCUSED PROGRAMMING

Assessing the completed project's performance against the project drivers, the Waterloo Career Center clearly achieves its objectives. The bold design and modern approach to teaching and learning creates a new **Experience** for students, encouraging them to engage their interests to jump-start their careers. The Career Center demonstrates school can be more than a traditional classroom and inspires students to take an active role in their futures.

The planning process to **Align** with existing spaces and design for **Adaptability** resulted in an open, flexible plan that will function as well in the future as it does today. These flexible spaces provide opportunities for **Engagement** on an entire spectrum of learning, from individual to collaborative, depending on needs and preferences. The **Heart** of the design promotes connectivity in the physical space, and socially as well, providing a comfortable yet functional multi-purpose gathering space.

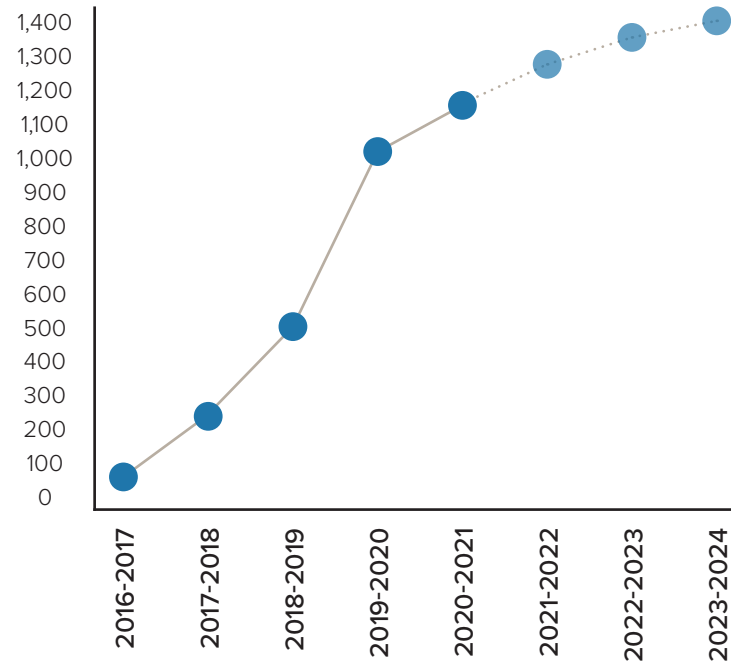
Both the interior and exterior of the WCC give it a distinct **Identity** from the existing building, drawing the community in and giving students a sense of pride, ownership, and agency. The significance to the community of Waterloo and the surrounding Cedar Valley of this innovative program, housed in a bright, modern beacon of a building, is a signal of growth, education, and investment in the region's future.

"Students are discovering it's a huge competitive advantage," noted Jeff Frost, Waterloo Schools' executive director of professional education, when talking about the ever-increasing enrollment. Whether students plan to continue their education after graduation or enter their chosen career, their experience of hands-on learning in the CTE program is preparing them. As of 2019, 16 businesses were partnered with WCC in various ways, with plans underway for adding more.

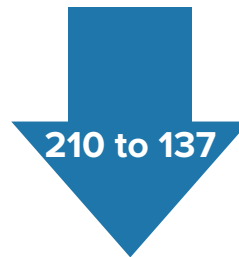
EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE COMMUNITY TO NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS

As of 2019, students from the three Waterloo area high schools, as well as neighboring Cedar Falls, Hudson, and Dike-New Hartford districts can also enroll in the program. These high school students also earn concurrent college credit at no cost, in most cases from Hawkeye Community College, giving them a head-start. Students could also

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

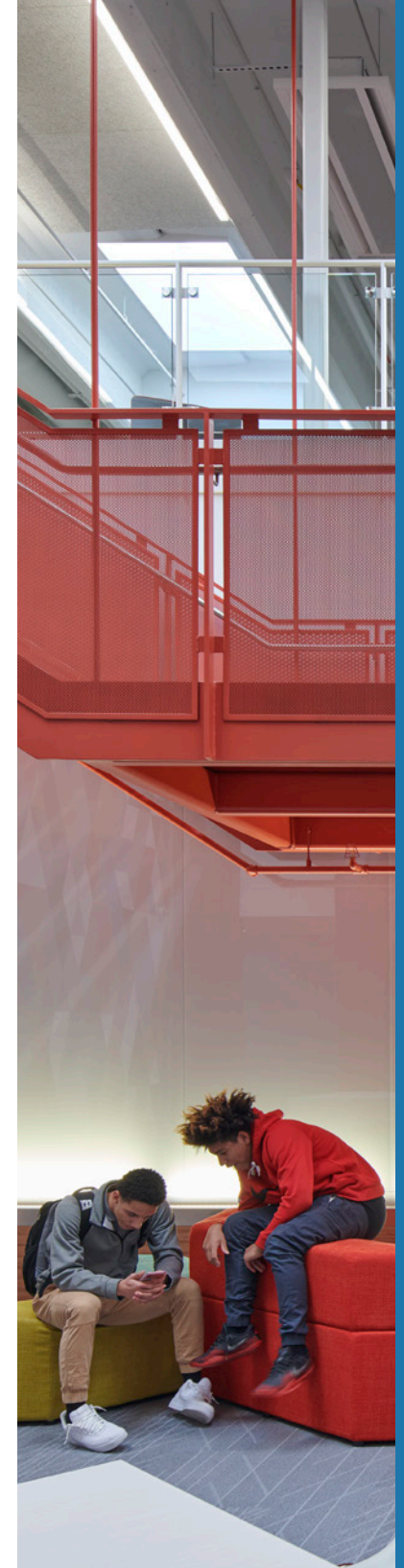


Dropout Rate



59%

Post-Secondary Enrollment



earn credits from Kirkwood or Des Moines Area community colleges in programs not offered by Hawkeye, which shows the program's reach.

All the programs set students up to earn career-related credentials or certifications that can help them get a job and/or further training after high school. The program has been so successful, there is discussion about an additional new building on the site to allow for future expansion. "What we're doing out there is really, really good for students," emphasizes Frost.

ENERGIZING AND INSPIRING STUDENTS TO FOLLOW THEIR OWN PATHS

The new Waterloo Career Center provides high-quality educational spaces, a new space for community events, and an investment in education to help keep kids in school. When students realize there are options beyond the traditional classroom, when they get a chance to spend their school day working with their hands, it can inspire, energize and increase overall performance for students who otherwise may not thrive in a typical high school setting.

In addition, the CTE program may also help keep graduates in the area post-high school. Like many smaller cities, Waterloo experiences what's sometimes referred to as "brain drain," wherein the educated population, high school and college graduates, leaves for bigger cities to pursue advanced education and careers. With a program like CTE, the connection to local businesses and educational institutions has the potential to keep young people invested in their community.

U.S. Representative Abby Finkenauer said at the WCC's grand opening that it was a model for the state, with the potential to attract and bring people back to Iowa. "If we have programs like these all across the state, this is how we keep folks here," she said. Senator Joni Ernst described it as "...really a positive impact for Waterloo," adding that "[when] individuals have that workforce training and that skill set, they really unlock that opportunity to succeed." On a local level, Hawkeye Community College President Todd Holcomb agreed that one of the major goals of the partnership is to address the lack of skilled workers in the state of Iowa. "Waterloo Career Center and Hawkeye Community College will meet the needs and demands for workers in our state," promised Holcomb.

CAREER CENTER PROGRAM GROWS BEYOND ANTICIPATION

The creation of the Waterloo Career Center revitalized and modernized a tired, old building. It also gave a permanent home, and therefore new legitimacy, to the CTE program. With this boost of momentum, the program has continued to grow much faster than expected. The physical asset, the renovation and addition, made the program a priority, made it visible, and made it special. Ideally, it will become a model for other school districts, providing practical, hands-on learning opportunities to more students and increasing the skilled workforce across Iowa.

**"WHAT WE'RE DOING OUT
THERE IS REALLY, REALLY
GOOD FOR STUDENTS."**

Jeff Frost, Executive Director
of Professional Education

