

Columbia City High School



2021 LEsolutions Planning & Design Awards

August 30, 2021



Executive Summary

New high school, opened in 2020



Previous high school, opened in 1958

Columbia City High School is the first new high school designed and built in Indiana since 2012.

The 295,000 SF facility replaces a 1958 building which was created for a 20th century education. Driven by community needs and the local economy, design of Columbia City High School allows educators to apply a 21st century curriculum focused on graduation pathways, collaborative learning and real-world experiences. Utilizing their high-performing technical program, Eagle Tech Academy as a framework for all student education; the school is organized into learning academies that provide a mix of open collaboration space and specialty space for instruction and research. The school also features advanced security techniques multiple sustainability strategies and various community-use opportunities.

Scope & Budget

PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT TYPE

New Construction

NAME OF PROJECT

Columbia City High School

PROJECT LOCATION

Columbia City, IN

CLIENT

Whitley County Consolidated Schools

PROJECT AREA (SQ. FT.)

295,000 SF

PROJECT COST

\$74,220,442

COST PER SQUARE FOOT

\$251.59

STUDENT CAPACITY

1,200

GRADES HOUSED

9-12

COMPLETION DATE

December 2020



Community Engagement

Stakeholders expressed a strong desire for extensive community use of the building.

DESIGNING FOR AND WITH THE COMMUNITY

Planning & Design Process:

A 15-month planning and design process began with community conversations around 12 key topics, including **STEM, safety, agriculture and technology**.

Subsequent building tours, staff meetings and Board work sessions established a vision for the new high school centered around learning academies tied to the economic needs of the region.



Student Input on Design Elements



Community Partners & Educators Planning Session



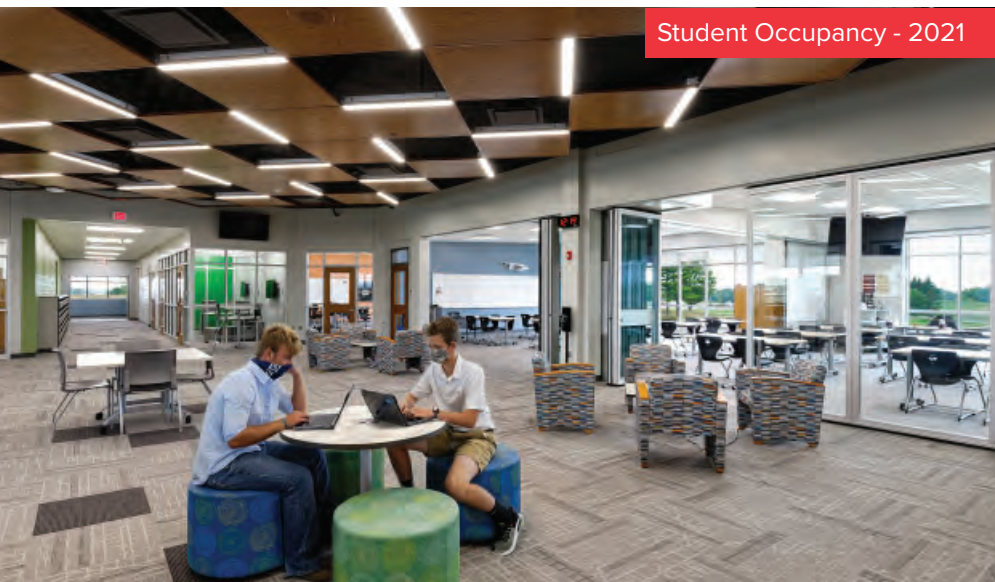
Community Engagement

Community needs
were at the heart of
design process.

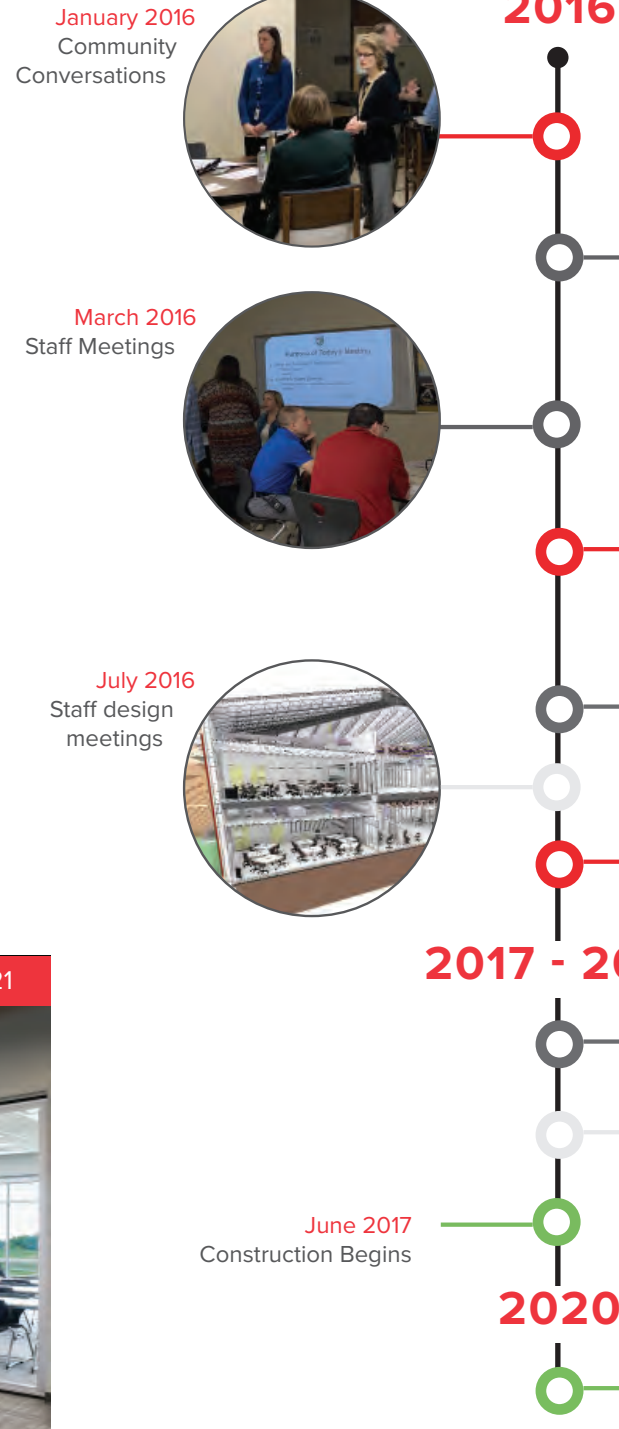
A TRULY COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Stakeholder Involvement

The design of Columbia City High School is a culmination of direct community input, stakeholder collaboration and years of developing best practices for learning environments. Collaborative sessions throughout the planning process drove the design decisions from developing a robust agriculture suite to adding graphics and installations that show the district history.



Student Occupancy - 2021



“Prior to design, the planning team invited all members of the WCCS community to meet and discuss needs and expectations for the new school. Multiple meetings were held to gather input regarding every facet of the school. While in design development, community needs and expectations were considered in all aspects of the building design. The final project successfully reflects the expectations of our community.”

— DR. PATRICIA O’CONNOR, RETIRED
SUPERINTENDENT

*Whitley County Consolidated Schools
Columbia City, IN*



Community Engagement

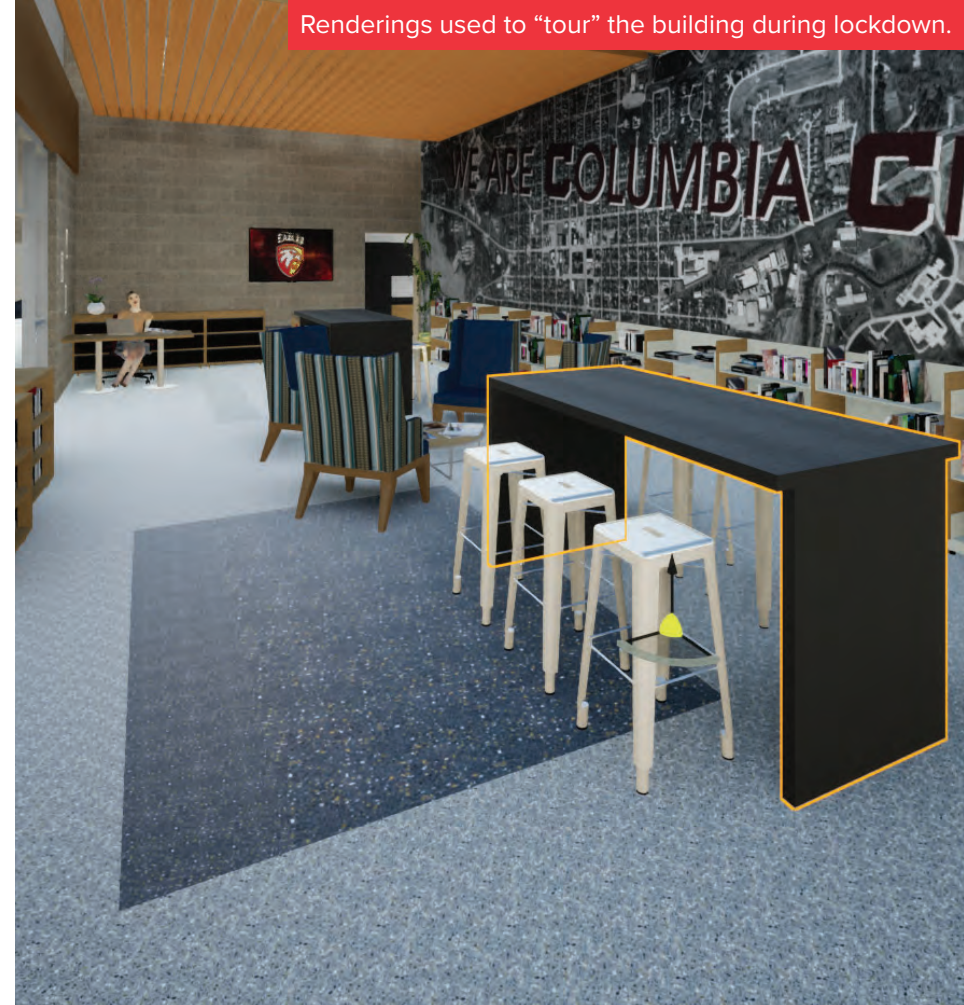
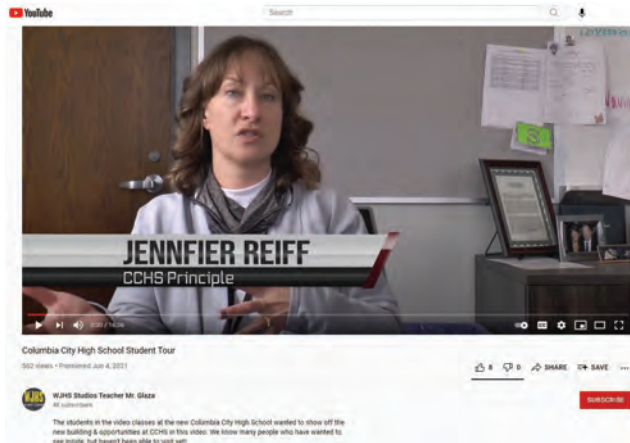
Changes were made to the process in order to continue to build community buy-in and support while working completely remote.

UNEXPECTED SHIFT IN METHODOLOGY

Virtual Community Engagement:

The final step in community engagement involves building excitement for the new facility as construction comes to a close. Our team and the district had to get creative at this point because of the pandemic. Previously planned in-person tours for community members and local press had to go virtual.

Presentations at board meetings were broadcast online to the community. We relied heavily on our rendered models to “walk through” the building design as it was under construction. The principal took the district on an “in-person” tour via a prerecorded video, walking through the new school and highlighting the design features that stakeholders were most interested in. Meanwhile, a concerted effort to share progress on social media using [#BuildingCCHS](#) helped generate excitement.



RIGHT: District Assistant Director, Jake Hoag tweeting project progress



Educational Environment Design

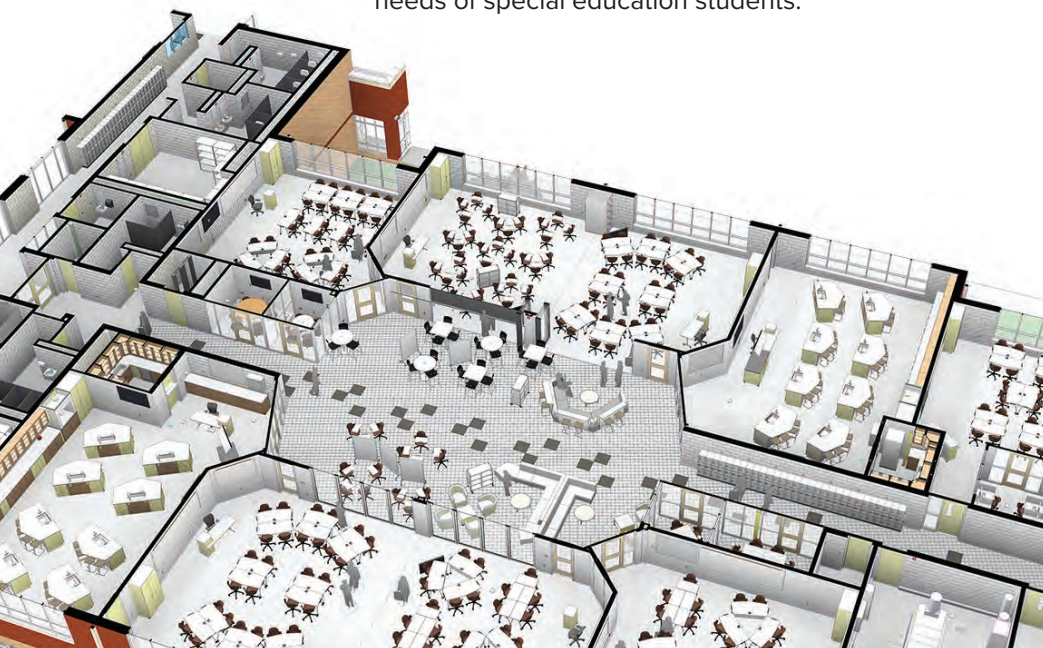
The high school design is a flexible model that allows for program changes in future years.

FLEXIBILITY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

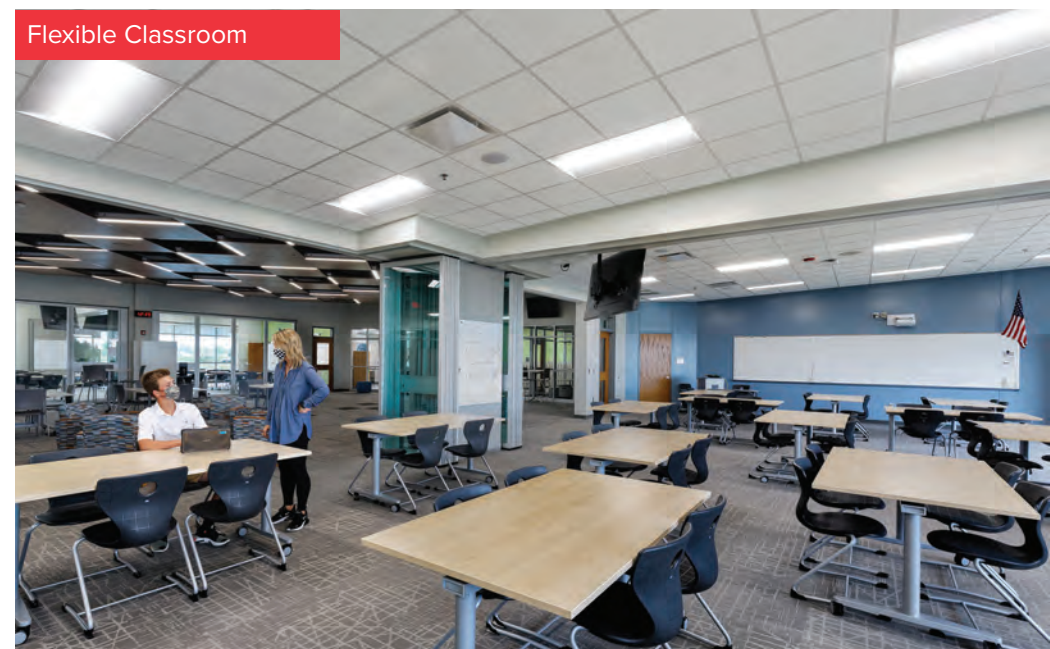
The design creates six learning academies:

Freshman, Sophomores, Business/Communications, Health & Human Services, Manufacturing/Engineering and a four-year New Tech community called Eagle Tech.

Design strategies for each academy use a similar flexible framework, but also create specialized labs to support the specific curriculum. Each academy is anchored by a central collaboration space with flexible furniture and seating. The design reduces the amount of casework in each classroom. Instead, mobile bookcases, desks, and even a mobile teacher's station provide maximum choice. Each academy also has small group rooms, a teacher planning area where educators can collaborate between classes, and special education classrooms designed to meet the academic and social needs of special education students.



Learning Commons



Flexible Classroom

“Every conversation regarding the design of CCHS included the question ‘Will this be useful for the next 50 years?’ Everyone knew how long this school design had to last. We couldn’t predict curriculum or program, but we could provide as many flexible spaces for use in the future.”

— DR. PATRICIA O’CONNOR, RETIRED
SUPERINTENDENT

*Whitley County Consolidated Schools
Columbia City, IN*



Multi-functional Facilities

The heart of
Columbia City
is the Grand
Commons.

FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE DESIGN

The heart of Columbia City High School is a 7,083 SF Grand Commons that is one of the largest continuous learning environments in the state of Indiana. It is the town square, where students meet for small group study, for dining or for socializing. Its flexible arrangement and central location also support everything from school assemblies and dances to surge space for athletic or performing arts events.

Located right next to the Grand Commons is the school's Innovation Center. This modern media center is one-fifth the size of a traditional high school library. It houses a collection of only 1,200 books, but provides multiple computer stations to allow students to pursue technology-based learning. The soft seating and flexible furniture in the nearby Grand Commons allows students to flow back and forth from the Innovation Center as needed.



Floor Plans



FIRST FLOOR OVERALL PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 30'-0"



OVERALL SECOND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 30'-0"



For students looking to work outdoors, an interior Legacy Courtyard allows students to experience a relaxing and secure environment for group work and study. The courtyard is positioned in the center of the academies and has direct access from the academic wing hallway and the first floor classrooms.

- Athletics
- Support Space
- Grand Commons
- Administration
- Teacher Collaboration
- Academic Space
- Specialized Labs

Physical Environment Design

The 120-acre campus includes cutting-edge sports fields and outdoor learning environments.

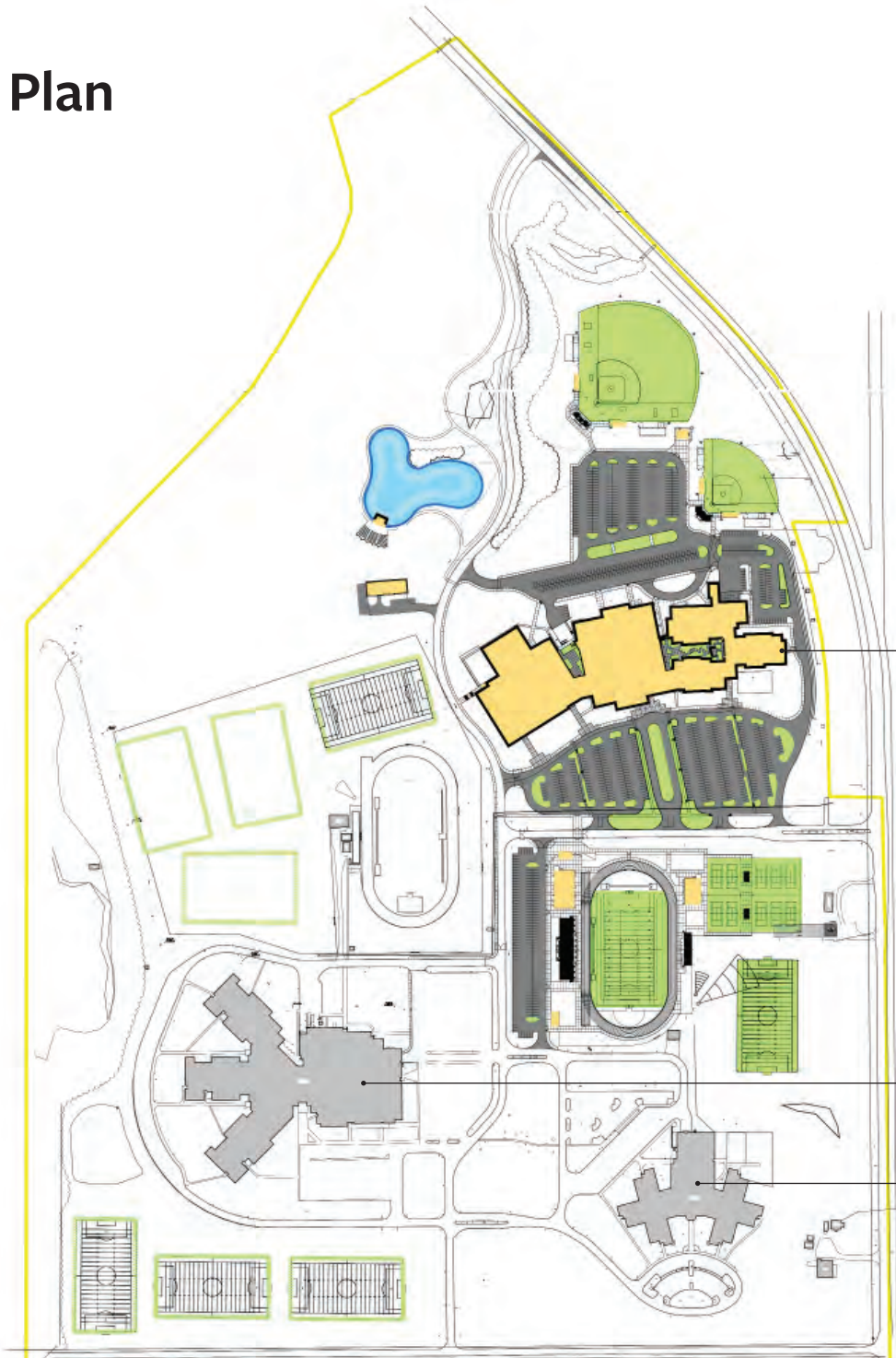
A CONSOLIDATED CAMPUS

While the previous Columbia City High School was partially located in a flood plain, the new school sits atop a 120-acre site shared by an existing middle school and elementary school. Site amenities include a new football stadium and track, sports fields and an outdoor learning lab with WiFi access.

The campus includes a Memorial Garden honoring Columbia City High School students who have been lost over the years. Memorial plaques and trees from the 1958 high school were relocated to the Memorial Garden on the new campus. A local Eagle Scout, along with other scouts, designed and built benches for the garden. Located next to the Memorial is a walking trail that will eventually connect to a biking and walking trail owned by the City at the north end of the site.



Site Plan



Dedicated entrance for Eagle Tech Academy

Existing middle school

Existing elementary school

Results

In 2018, the Indiana State Legislature passed a law requiring graduation pathways for all Indiana high school students.

SUPPORTING GRADUATION PATHWAYS

Educational Goals:

The design of the new Columbia City High School allowed Whitley County Consolidated Schools to easily incorporate these requirements in their curriculum. Graduation pathways were chosen in collaboration with local business input during the planning process.

The highly-successful Eagle Tech Academy is a school-within-a-school, with its own entrance and identity. Operable glass walls connect each classroom and the large collaboration space. The design allows students to work in smaller classroom environments or to open up the walls and hold Academy-wide assemblies for all 400 students.

The design of the remaining academies includes specialized spaces to support specific career training. The Business, Entrepreneurship and Communications Academy has a television, radio and podcasting suite, including a space designed specifically for the local radio station. The Health & Human Services Academy features a medical/emergency response training room. And in the Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology Academy, students have access to pre-engineering equipment and CNC machines donated by local companies.

Reflecting the nature of the rural community, the school also has one of the most advanced Agriculture suites in the state of Indiana. The suite includes flexible agriculture classrooms, a project-ready high bay space, a welding lab, a small animal area, a greenhouse and a food science lab where students can learn to prepare the food they grow.



Results

To secure the high school's status as the heart of the community, the design incorporates multiple aspects of Columbia City's past.

COMMUNITY LIFE & CULTURE

Community & District Goals:

In Indiana communities, the school is the center of public life, and Columbia City is no exception. The high school's design supports community use of multiple amenities, including athletics and performing arts spaces.

The athletic wing includes a trophy room with a touch screen monitor where visitors can look at pictures of past championship teams or peruse digitized yearbooks. At the south end of the gymnasium is the Hall of Champions, with acrylic plaques featuring inducted student athletes, while on the east side of the gym is a records board displaying personal bests in various sports.

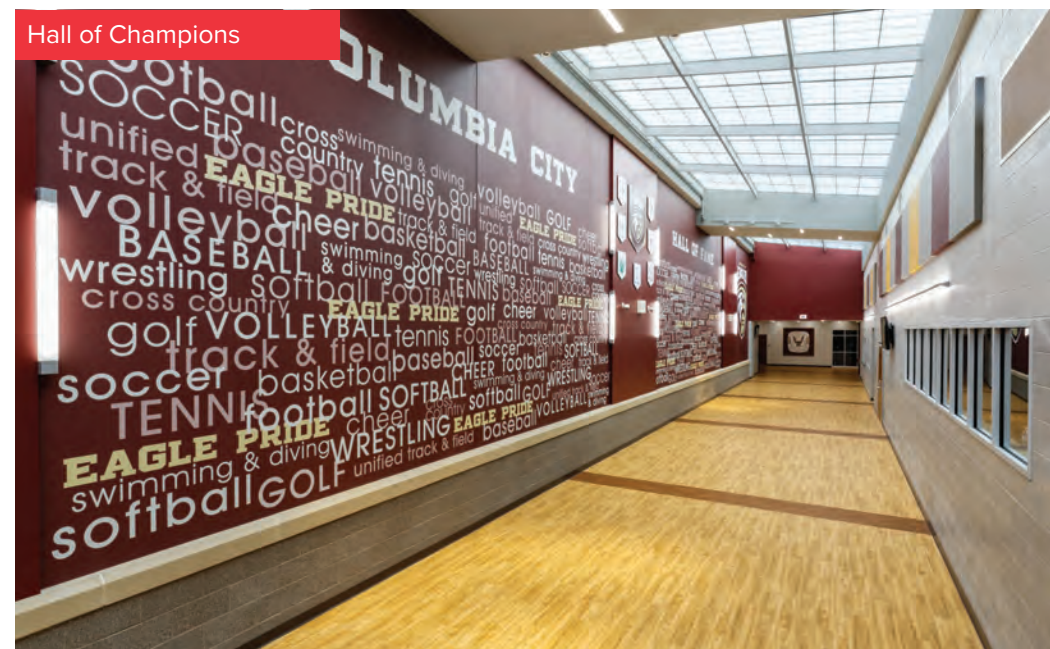
The history of Columbia City is also celebrated in a map of the town located in the Innovation Center and in a mural in the learning commons, where students can see a timeline of each of the township schools that came before the new high school.



Past High School Mascots



Map of Columbia City



Hall of Champions

Results

Plays, musicals, music, and choir performances are incredibly well supported by the community.

COMMUNITY USE

The entire west side of the building is designed for community use, including a 7,083 SF Grand Commons, which is a combination collaboration, dining and surge space. Residents have access to the auxiliary gym, the main gym, and the performing arts wing after hours.

The existing auditorium at the old High School was a centerpiece of community activities. It was essential for the new PAC to continue that legacy while providing state-of-the-art technology and new capabilities.

To bring community members into the school, the building includes a community room designed for community meetings and gatherings. The community room has a full kitchen, a presentation wall, and is fully equipped for large and small groups.



“It is a joy to hear so many positive comments from our community about these various features of the school including a community room, large areas for community events, ample parking, historical graphics, virtual trophy room, Spirit Shop, auditorium for community use, athletics area for community use, and many more spaces. Most of all, our community is extremely proud of their new school!”

— DR. PATRICIA O’CONNOR, RETIRED
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Sustainability and Wellness

Columbia City High School was designed to incorporate LEED best practices throughout, although, the district did not pursue certification.

SMARTER HEATING & COOLING

Columbia City High School is designed to serve the needs of the entire community and create a sustainable future for the district. In addition to more traditional environmental sustainability strategies, Columbia City High School includes a variety of multi-functional facilities and dual-purpose design features that serve to set up the district for success.



Sustainability and Wellness

The site and landscape architecture were designed to work with the environment and not against it.

SITE DESIGN GREEN FEATURES

The site includes a large rain garden which filters water runoff from the north parking lots using natural vegetation before it moves into a retention pond and then to the nearby Blue River. Water from the pond provides irrigation for athletic fields. The pond also includes an outdoor classroom space for students to learn about their waterways, natural vegetation and environmental design.

Additionally, significant native grass plantings were incorporated on the eastern edge of the site to reduce maintenance and mowing, decreasing overall emissions.



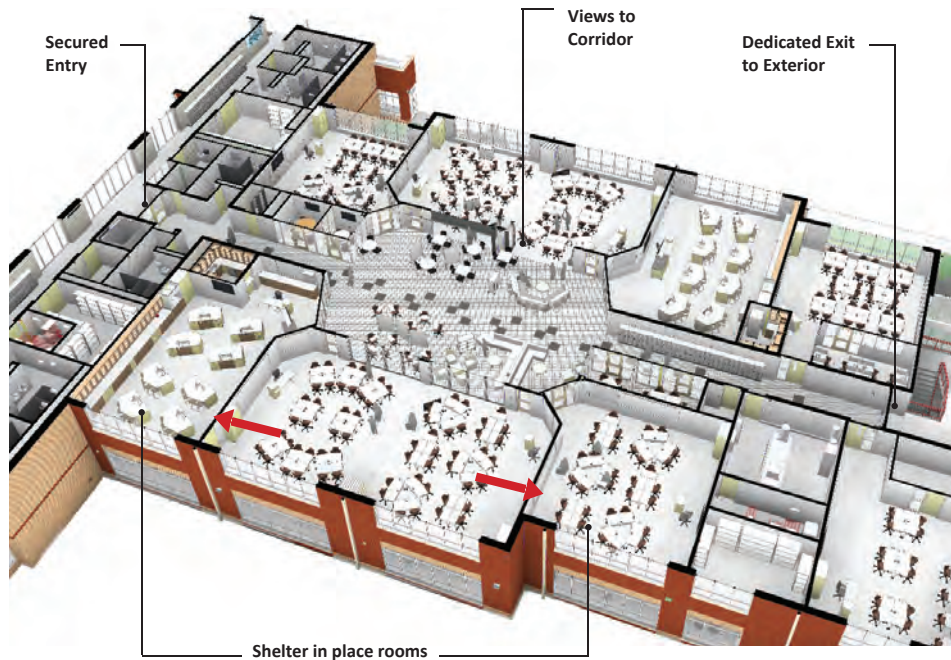
Sustainability and Wellness

Safety was a huge concern for the client.

SECURITY & ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Working with a nationally-recognized security consultant, the design team focused on using clear lines of sight and extensive glazing to provide visual control and to engage students in their environment.

Lighting design and daylighting elements throughout the building enhance security while reducing energy costs. Site lighting is LED and tied to motion sensors that control lighting levels, save energy and enhance site security. Daylighting elements in classrooms, common spaces and gymnasiums maximize natural light while maintaining indoor temperature regulation and reducing light glare.



Daylighting Measures



Line of Sight Security

