

Scope of Work & Budget

This project expands and renovates a building originally constructed in 1962 in Gering, NE.

District: Gering Public Schools

Completion Date: August 2019

Capacity: 900 Students at full capacity (currently housing 700)

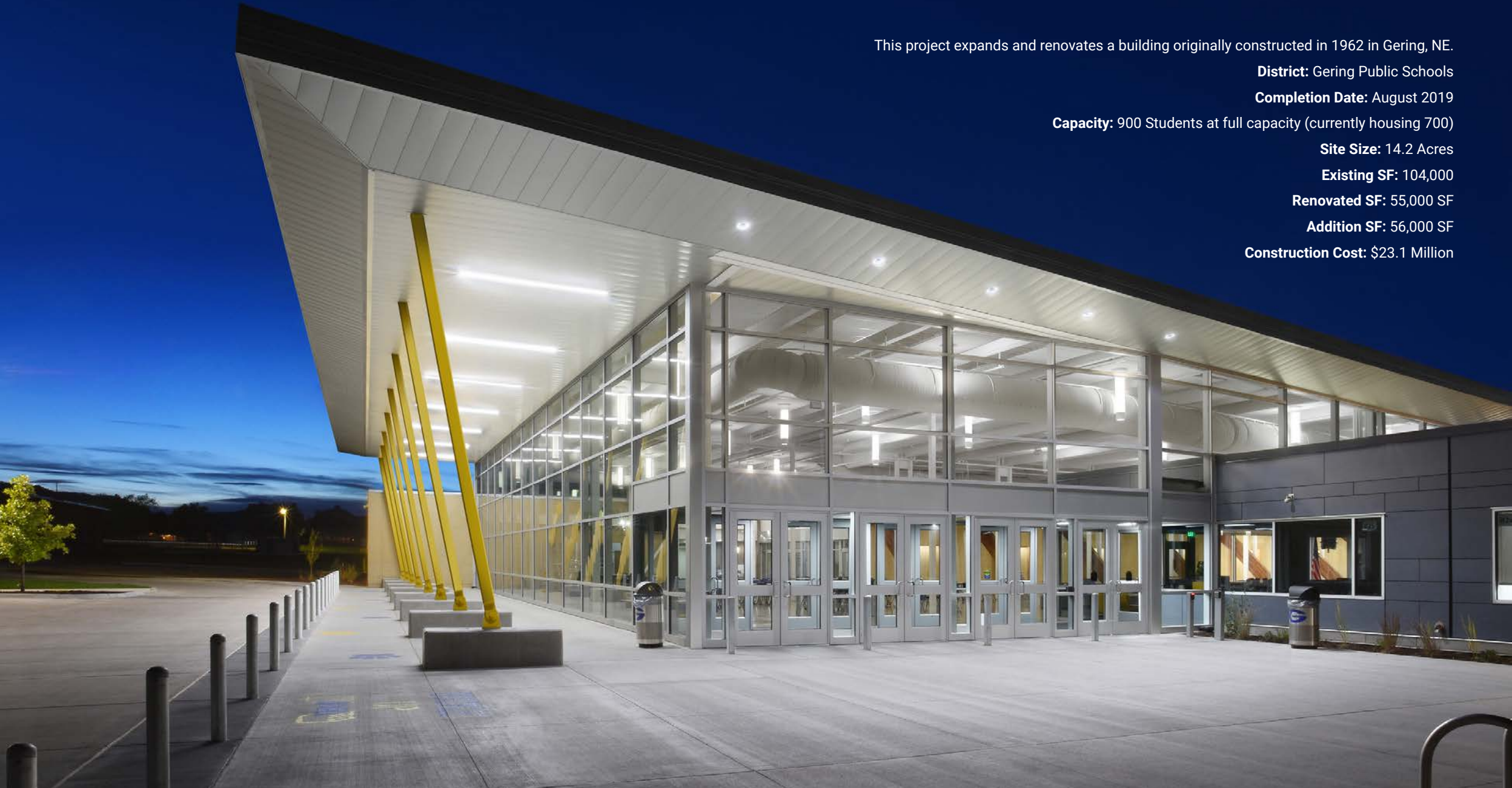
Site Size: 14.2 Acres

Existing SF: 104,000

Renovated SF: 55,000 SF

Addition SF: 56,000 SF

Construction Cost: \$23.1 Million



Gering High School Addition/Renovation

Gering, Nebraska

RENOVATION / ADDITION CATEGORY

Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

Built in 1962 in rural Gering, NE, the original Gering High School encompassed 104,000 SF and embraced a unique mid-Century style with an attractive gymnasium that accommodated students in grades 10-12. With so much character, the school was an important part of the Gering community but was no longer able to deliver the high quality of education the district desired due to (1) inefficiencies in the existing building configuration, and (2) issues resulting from the school's age. The problems with the existing building included:

Security: Two main entrances hindered security and were both disconnected from the administrative wing.

Lack of a 'heart' to the school: The existing main gathering space included a student commons but it was very small with low ceilings. The cafeteria was also undersized and located in the corner of the building. The library inhabited a third location and was not centralized to core learning spaces.

Inadequate athletics space: the gym—while attractive—was inadequate in size and there was no auxiliary gym to allow multiple practices to occur simultaneously. The wrestling room was in the mezzanine and only 30 feet in width—not wide enough to fit a full-size wrestling mat.

Freshmen would be moving to the high school campus: The existing building only accommodated grades 10-12 and there was the desire to move the Freshmen onto the high school campus.

Inadequate administrative offices: Because of the addition of Freshmen to Gering High School, administrative space would also need to expand.

The 56,000-square-foot Addition and 55,000-square-foot Renovation increased the overall square footage to 160,000 SF and gave the building a fresh look while embracing its original character. The result is a beautiful, functional, new facility that creatively addresses the original building's shortcomings, while paying homage to its past, and delivering a new learning environment that better supports its students. The new Gering High School elevates the educational experience within its community for every student in grades 9-12.



School & Community Research/Engagement

DAG OVERVIEW

While the project formally began in 2017, it was funded by a community bond and was initiated several years prior. During that initial planning for the bond, several ideas were explored with the district and goals for the new Gering High School were developed. The outcome of this bond planning work was a conceptual plan that illustrated locations of the additions, how the new would tie into the old, and the general organization of space within the building. These conceptual ideas were carried into the successful bond campaign, and, ultimately, served as direction for the project's design.

Once the project began, the Design Advisory Group (DAG) was comprised of an intimate handful of stakeholders, including the

Principal, Superintendent, Maintenance Personnel, and several School Board Members. To supplement this close-knit DAG team was an extensive process of engaging input and feedback from individual user groups. The design team met two to three times with each user group, with the most intensive input provided around administrative areas, the Freshman Academy, and PE/Athletics user groups.

CHALLENGES

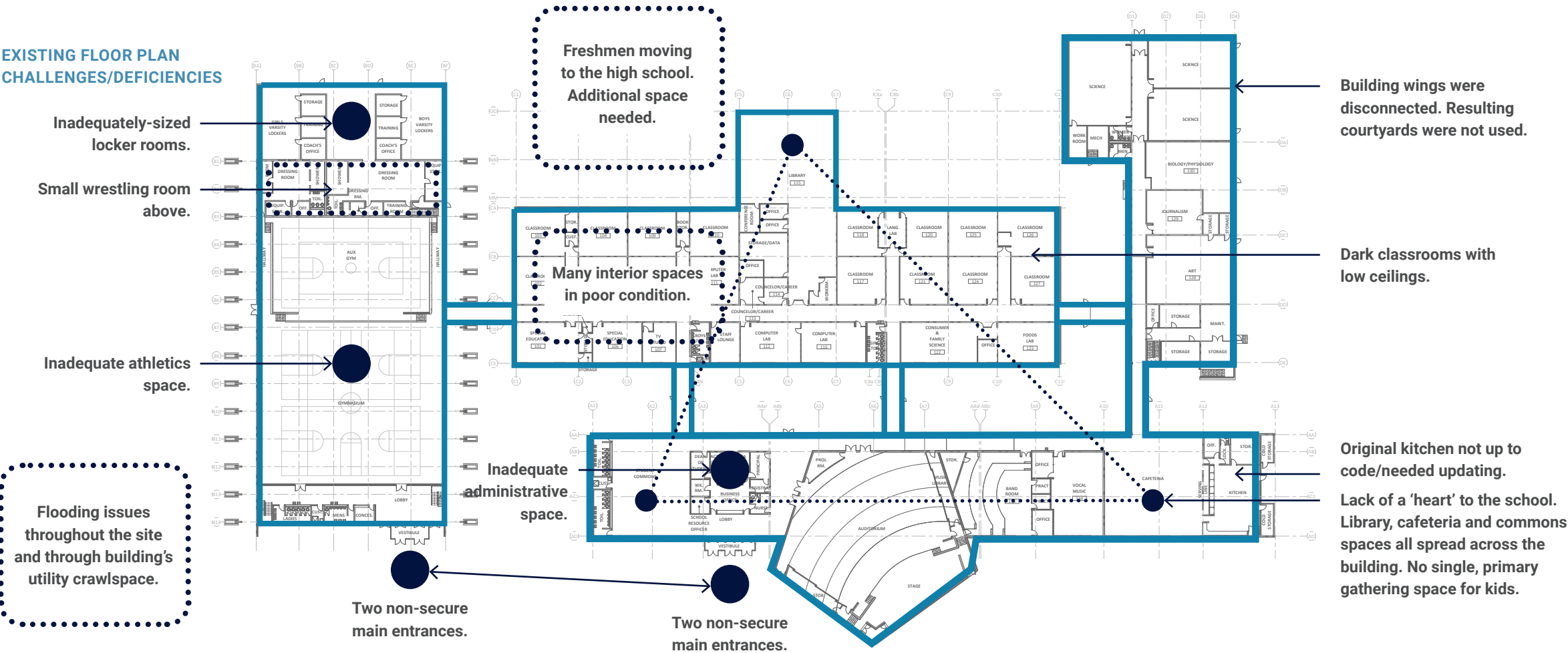
Challenges of the project hinged most heavily around the Freshman Academy and Administrative areas. The Freshman Academy was important because it was moving a new population onto the Gering High School campus, it was adding a significant amount of space, and the DAG was particularly sensitive to how the transition from the

junior high to high school campus would impact those ninth graders in the Freshman Academy. The Admin wing was challenging in that there was a great deal of square footage being reconfigured within the existing building, and topics like enhanced security were at the forefront of this user group's mind.

COMMUNITY INPUT

While community input most heavily took place during the initial bond planning process, the design team engaged with the community through Town Board and City Hall presentations. Students were involved throughout design using Virtual Reality sessions, allowing students and their peers to walk through their new school long before the first shovel of dirt was moved.

EXISTING FLOOR PLAN CHALLENGES/DEFICIENCIES



Educational Environment Design

This project was primarily focused on delivering an enhanced high school experience that supports the whole student. Spaces that were most lacking in the existing building were those located outside the traditional classroom environment: commons and gathering spaces, spaces for flexible use, dining space, media space, and athletics spaces.

OVERVIEW OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPACES

While Gering High School has a unique STEM, metals, and woodworking programs, the facility is generally organized to serve as a comprehensive high school. The building was most powerfully transformed in the following ways.

1. A new 'heart' of the building was infilled to create a student commons and cafeteria space with ample daylighting and interesting features highlighting the arched wood glulam gymnasium structure. This space doubles as a community pre-function space to accommodate spectator gathering for athletic events and after school events.

2. Admin expansion occurred at the front of the building to house additional staff, a larger nurse clinic, counselor offices, a career center, a School Resource Officer office, and secure the entry.

3. One of the building's original courtyards was infilled (while still maintaining views and daylight) to create a new media center in the academic core of the building and easily accessed by learning spaces. The ellipse shape of this space softens what was a very orthogonal corridor design and opens these corners to become flexible learning and impromptu meeting areas. The shape also helps to provide a wayfinding system along the orthogonal wall system. Once the dining commons was relocated, the existing cafeteria was then transformed into classrooms and culinary arts studios, a flex classroom, and a STEM space.

4. The Freshman Academy was added to the north, locating it somewhat centrally while still providing some separation from the remainder of the high school. This design helps to maintain the desired close-knit community for these ninth graders, provides a common space for them to gather as an entire grade, and yet still affords access to the main building for students taking higher level courses and special electives. All freshmen use the remainder of common spaces in the high school (cafeteria, gym, etc.). This addition includes six new classrooms and one special education room. The existing library was also transformed into a combination of spaces supporting the Freshman Academy (science classroom and conference space) as well as a dedicated computer classroom and school-wide television studio.

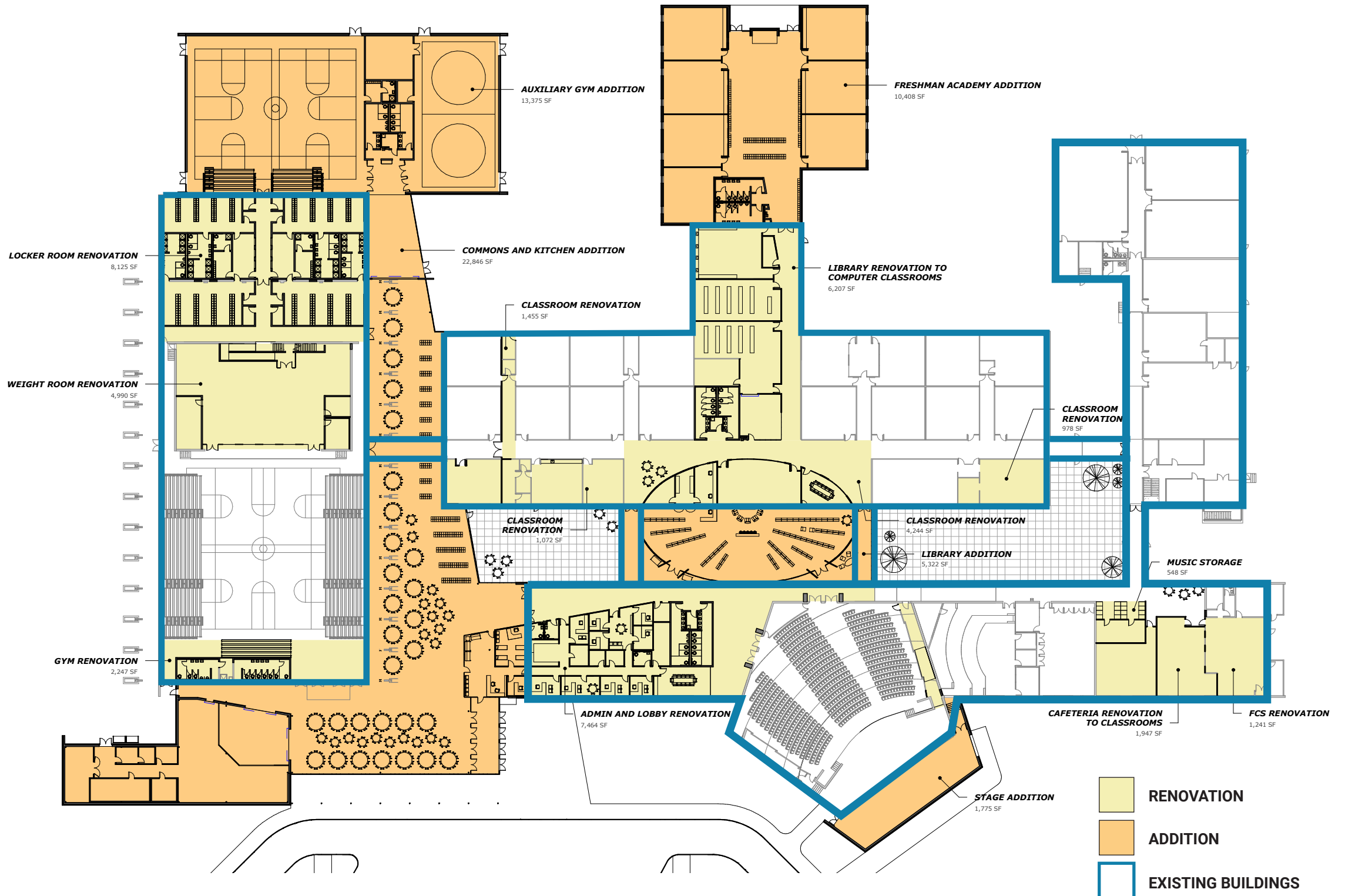
5. Athletics spaces were expanded in the following ways:

- Auxiliary gym and wrestling room were added to the north
- Old wrestling room was renovated and repurposed to accommodate new mechanical systems and AHUs.
- The old, raised portion of the gymnasium was modified to better serve as a weight room with appropriate flooring, access, and ADA compatibility, as well as visually opened to the main gym.

The new Gering High School delivers a wide range of space sizes and flexibility for multiple uses. Whereas the existing building was restrictive in how each space could be used (each space for a single purpose), the new Gering provides a variety of scales, furnishings, materials, square footage sizes, and varied volumes and environments for students and teachers to adapt their learning environments to the learning taking place. This flexibility allows each space to change uses throughout the day and over time as educational delivery models shift.

Lastly, adding the Freshman Academy brought 9th graders into the high school from the junior high building, adding additional curriculum and athletics opportunities previously unafforded to the school.







(Before)



New Main Entry

Physical Environment Design

SITE

Site Context

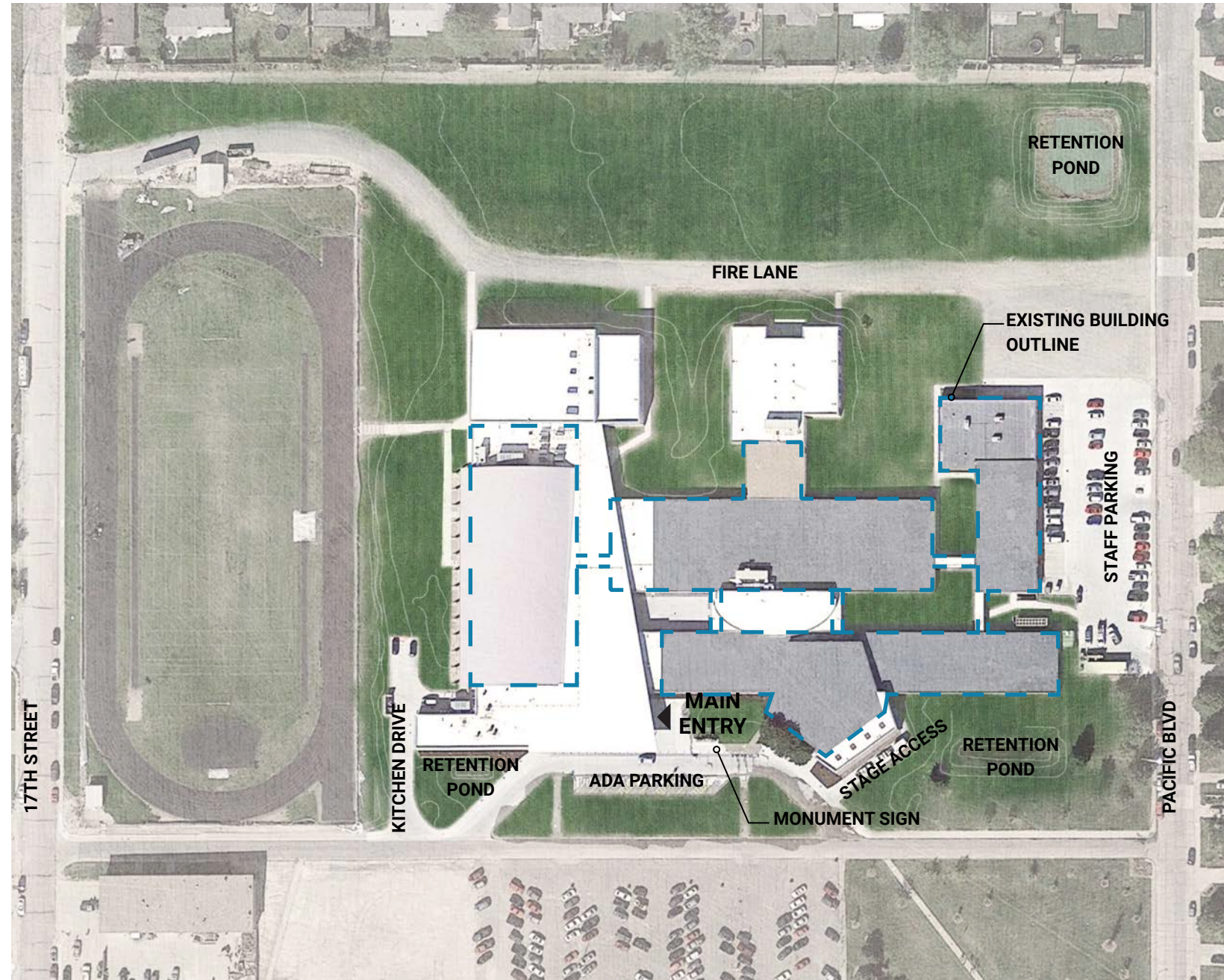
The Gering High School site is well-established, surrounded by a residential neighborhood and church. It is located along U Street, which borders the south side of the High School site and is the busiest street (while still being residential), and also one of the main east/west streets going through town.

Site Amenities

Several existing challenges were addressed through the project. Previous broken storm lines that leaked into the crawlspace were replaced. While storms often resulted in flooding of surrounding streets and pooling water, a new storm retention pond and connecting storm lines were all replaced to assist with drainage. The gravel staff parking area was paved. The parent drop-off in front of the school was re-paved. Additional visitor and handicapped spaces were provided, which previously did not exist. Relocating the kitchen to a new addition allowed a safer service area for food deliveries and trash pick-up by removing it from the staff parking area. A Fire Access Lane across the north side of the school improved safety and building access. A new entry plaza affords better administration supervision and allows staff to see visitors approaching the school. The new administrative wing is also better situated to supervise the student/visitor parking lot beyond the new entry plaza. A paved drive was also added to access the auditorium through an overhead door, allowing props/back stage access which was previously not available.

Significance in the Community

Gering High School is a beloved community building. Every community member is invested in this school; they either attended as a child, have taught or currently teach in this building, have children who attended, or have children that will attend in the future. Because of its community significance, the building was in need of renovation to stay current and fresh while also honoring the history of the existing building. The school serves as a hub for community events, sporting events, performing arts, music, and various gatherings of all types.

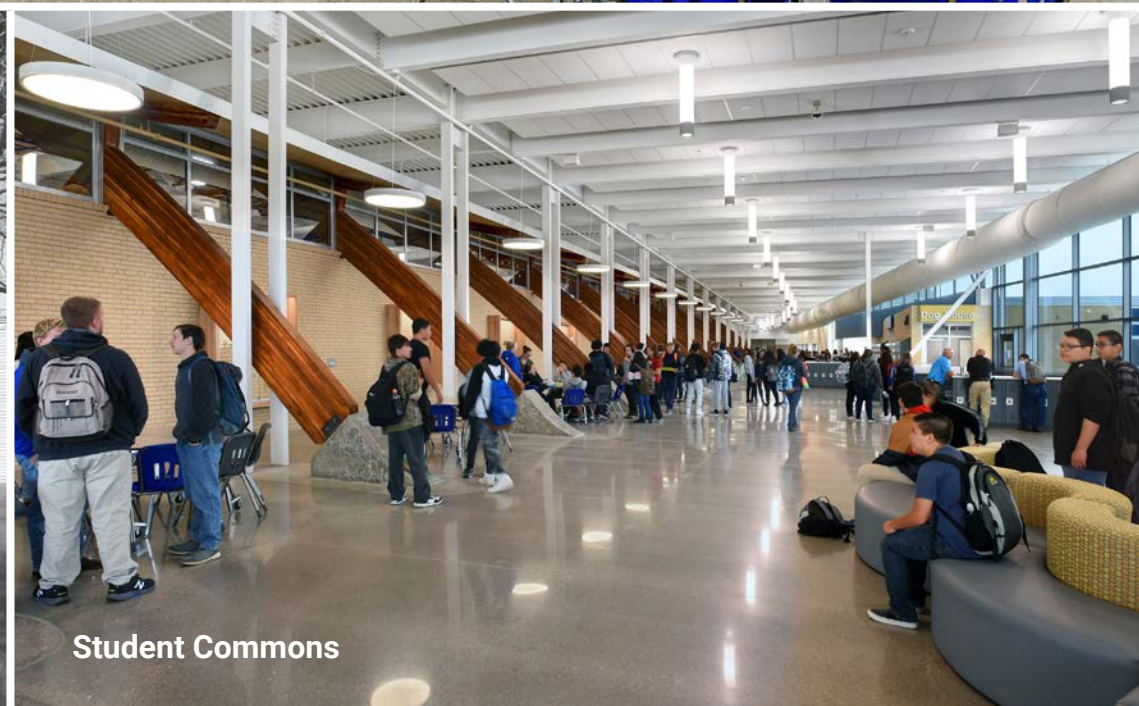


The new **'heart' of the building** drew the outside of the existing building in, and relocates dining commons, media, and administrative space front and center. In contrast with the solid forms from the existing structure, this space sought to create an airy and open feeling.

In the **dining commons**, exterior glulam beams from the adjacent gymnasium were integrated into the space, tying to the history of the building and showcasing a stunning feature of the original mid-Century design. Glass walls promote the visibility of the existing building from interior to exterior, and the glulam beams and concrete buttresses will be restored and brought back to life. This strategy naturally subdivides and softens the interior of the large common space into more intimate gathering spaces.



(Before)



Student Commons



(Before)



Student Commons



Freshman Academy Commons



(Before - courtyard view to new media center location)



The **media center**—academically centered—is shaped in the form of an ellipses, softening its edges and opening the space to its surroundings and contrasting with the existing right angles within the building. Clerestory lights will allow for natural light to enter the school as the existing courtyards do. Much of the original character will be preserved by using the existing masonry walls outside of the library's contrasting shape.



Media Center



Media Center



Safety and security were major priorities in the redesign. One secure entry was reconfigured for the building, allowing 'eyes on the street' for those administrative professionals in the office. An SRO office was added, as was the ability to lock off classroom wings after school hours and during events. An access control system enhances security, as well as new cameras, fire sprinklers, and a new fire alarm system.



Secure Entry



Secure Entry



Administrative WIng

The **site and environment** were most directly impacted due to the project being built on the existing site. Existing site parking, road, and drop-off were all reused. Several storm drainage issues were corrected in the new design, and the project extended the life of the building using the same site. It was important to keep the school on the existing site as it was such a prominent location and center to the Gering community.



Secure Entry from Front of Building

Results of Process & Project

Because Gering is a small town, Gering High School is the largest and most significant public building and serves as the town's community center. The entire town is connected to the school in some way. Most of Gering's population is not changing—most people who live in Gering have lived there for many years and will continue to do so for many years into the future. Many adults have kids in Gering schools, the parents very often grew up in Gering and went to Gering High School, and older generations are teachers or have taught at the schools in the past. Because of this, the connection one feels for the school and the reverence that is had for the school is significant. The new school enhances this feeling of pride.

The high school truly serves as the most important building in Gering and gives the community an identity that is unique and different from the nearby (and larger) town of Scottsbluff. The new Gering High School is a chance for the community to shine and really celebrate its identity.

With the athletic additions, they are now able to host tournaments they were previously unable to hold. Educationally, the increase in space allows students and staff to spread out as well as provide more class offerings such as culinary arts, a second family and consumer sciences class, a flex classroom, added instrument storage lockers for students, TV studio, and additional computer labs. Better circulation and increased safety and security enhance the building. There are clearer lines of sight for administration, and there is now the ability to lock down areas of the school, if needed. A new SRO office, card access, and new security cameras all make the new Gering High School safer.

From Bob Hastings (former superintendent) "Creating a warm and welcoming environment for staff and students was an extremely high priority for our design team. The transformation of our building has done that plus more. Gering High School is now a place with ample spaces that enhance a collaborative environment for both students and staff. Natural light, open and welcoming spaces, and quality acoustics have all made Gering High School a better place to teach and learn."



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*Bob Hastings
Former Superintendent, Gering Public Schools*

Sustainability & Wellness

Sustainability goals for the new Gering High School were centered around extending the life of the original Gering High School through a creative addition and renovation. Abundant daylighting fills the auxiliary gym, new classrooms, media center, and student commons area. Views to the outdoors are located throughout the building and a new kitchen boasts more efficient equipment. New HVAC, plumbing, and water features are more efficient and meet more stringent energy codes.

Materials, systems, and building elements were all selected respect the existing building while breathing new life and character into the school. The glass volume around the perimeter of the student commons connects all existing wings and the gymnasium into a space that feels somewhat 'exterior' while being in the building's interior. The materials were selected to give a quality to the space that makes it feel as if it is lightly touching the existing building elements, respecting them without overwhelming them. The design team added one new material to the school's exterior—a cement board rain screen—to help blend the old with the new. High performance glazing and spray foam insulation were also used.

ADDITIONAL WELLNESS FEATURES

- **Gathering space for students.** The project emphasizes whole student wellness, including developing plenty of spaces that can encourage social and emotional wellness.
- **Connection with history.** The new design was respectfully integrated with the old, and carried some of the more unique features of the existing building (like the glulam arches) into the new design.
- **Additional athletic spaces to support physical wellness.** A new training room, new auxiliary gymnasium, weight room, and wrestling room were all part of the project. New, improved, and properly-sized locker rooms for both PE and Athletics were added.



New Weight Facility



(Before)



(Before)



Revitalized Gymnasium

ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABLE FEATURES

- **Utilization of existing structure.** Keeping and reusing the existing building is always the most sustainable choice. The only demolition was minor and interior; the project maintained all roofs, foundations, structure and exterior walls.
- **Abundant daylighting.** Clerestory windows and abundant daylight fill interior spaces. A strong visual connection to the outdoors is found in the main commons. Solatubes draw daylighting deep within interior spaces.
- **Upgraded mechanical system.** Replaced all original AHUs, RTUs and unit ventilators in classrooms with much higher efficiency units. AHUs and RTUs were designed with economizer modes.
- **LED lighting.** All existing light fixtures were replaced throughout with new LED lighting. Exterior LED lighting was also added.
- **Materials selection.** Interior materials were selected for their durability and ease of maintenance.
- **Tackable surfaces.** Many surfaces are included throughout the building for display of student work.
- **Acoustical ceiling tiles.** These support noise reduction within classroom spaces.
- **Sustainable site aspects.** Concrete paving was used in lieu of asphalt, a storm retention pond was added to help the localized flooding and enhance appropriate drainage

