

OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL



"This first phase of a long-term capital improvement effort was a test for OPRF.... Would the new spaces support instruction, equity, current and future student needs — and be worthy of our community? We now know the answers: Yes, yes, and yes." Tim Brandhorst, IMAGINE Committee Member

IMAGINE OPRF - PROJECT 1

CELEBRATING A RICH HISTORY WHILE EMBRACING AN EQUITABLE FUTURE

IMAGINE OPRF: **Student-Centered, Needs-Driven, Equity-Focused**

IMAGINE OPRF is a multi-year transformation of Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRF) designed to create a more equitable 21st century learning environment for the diverse community of 3,400 students at this 115+ year old school.

IMAGINE OPRF embraces multiple dimensions of diversity including race/ethnicity, ability, gender identity and socio-economic differences. OPRF's focus on equity is a commitment to providing accessible programs, services, and opportunities for all students.

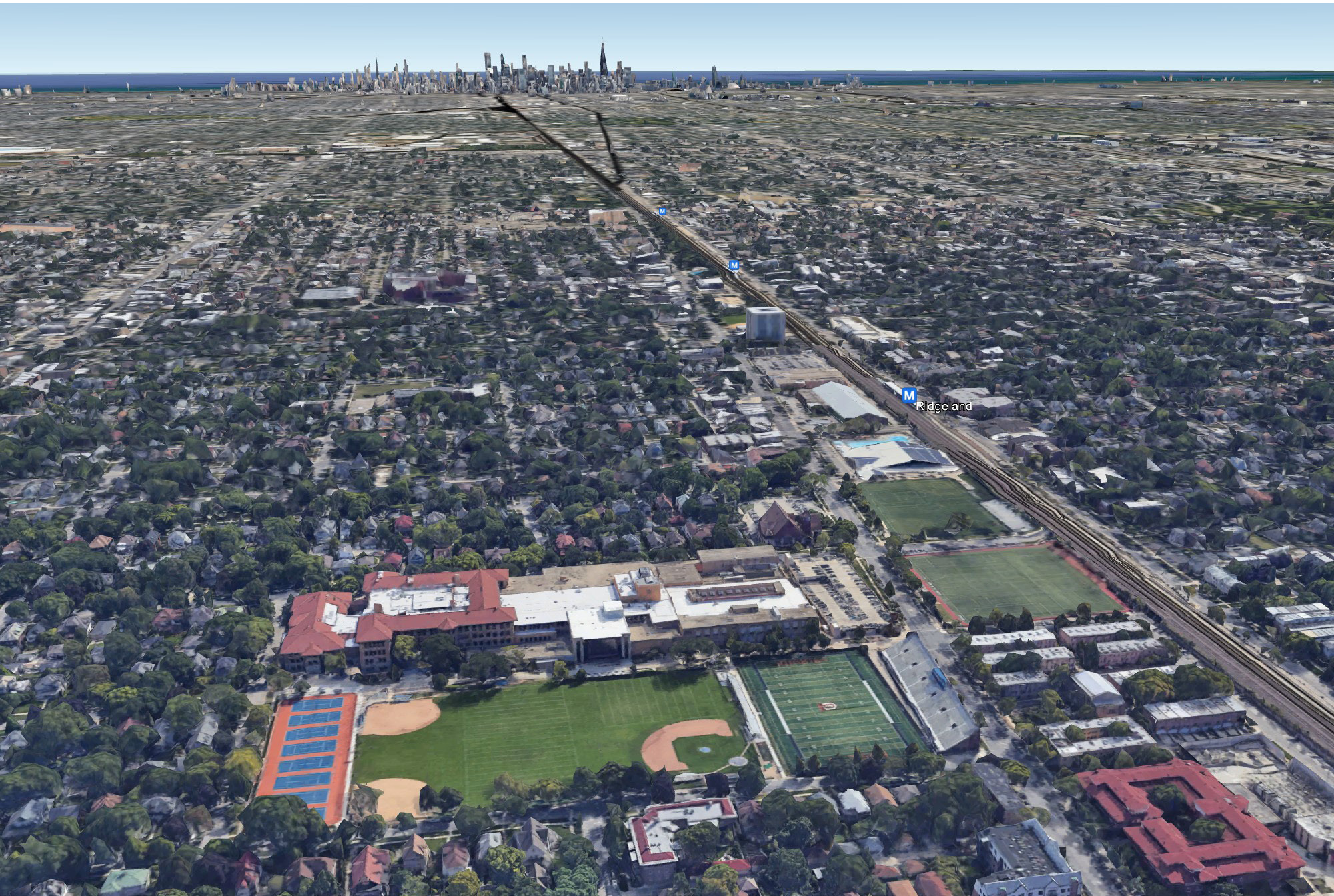
The *IMAGINE* master plan includes five student-centered projects that will ultimately result in a full-building transformation that provides new and renovated learning, social, athletic and support spaces. It was created through a planning process that engaged community members, school leaders, faculty, staff, parents, and students over several years. *IMAGINE OPRF*'s five projects are being executed in phases.

Project 1, largely completed, is the foundation of *IMAGINE OPRF*. Its key components are a 3-story addition housing the South Cafeteria and Student Resource Center (SRC); renovation of OPRF's main entrance, Welcome Center, and Student Commons; and the renovation/creation of 80+ classroom, laboratory, and extended learning spaces. The 3-story addition brings high-use student resource spaces to the center of OPRF where they are accessible before, during and after the school day, achieving a significant equity goal.

IMAGINE OPRF demonstrates that an architecturally significant but outmoded facility can be transformed, while still honoring its heritage, to offer a full range of flexible 21st century learning, collaborating, and connecting spaces where all students have the opportunity to succeed.



After: Exterior of the New 3-Story Cafeteria, Student Resource Center Addition and Renovated / Expanded Plaza



Aerial view of OPRF's urban site and its adjacency to Downtown Chicago

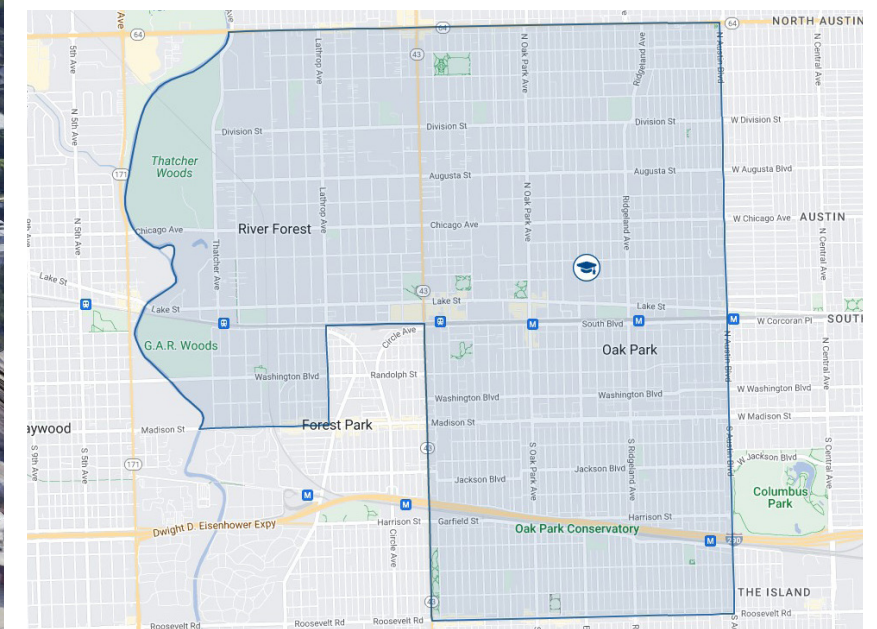
PROJECT SCOPE

The scope of work for *IMAGINE OPRF* Project 1 includes:

- Creation of a 3-story addition and outdoor plaza
- Renovation of OPRF main entrance, Welcome Center and 2-story Student Commons
- Creation and renovation of 80 classroom learning spaces
- Renovation and creation of support spaces
- Creation of ADA compliant elevator and eight gender neutral bathrooms

PROJECT COST

The cost of *IMAGINE OPRF* Project 1 was \$36,631,500 funded by the school's cash reserves.



Map of District boundaries

Scope of Work & Budget

ABOUT OAK PARK AND OPRF HIGH SCHOOL

Oak Park is a thriving community of about 54,500 people located immediately west of the City of Chicago and known for its architectural heritage and diverse population. Within its 4.5 square miles live one of the region's most diverse mixes of cultures, races, ethnicities, professions, lifestyles, religions, ages and incomes.

Oak Park and River Forest High School serves students from Oak Park and neighboring River Forest. It is the only school in Oak Park and River Forest District 200. The 3,400 students who attend OPRF are a mirror of today's society in terms of race/ ethnicity, ability, gender identity and socio-economic differences.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

OPRF was founded in 1871 and the present school opened in 1907. While the school was expanded/renovated in segments over the ensuing decades, no significant changes had been made since 1968.

By the early 2010s, OPRF was long overdue for facilities improvements. There was a dearth of modern learning and community spaces; the facilities were technologically outmoded and critical student services were scattered throughout the building.

In 2017, the OPRF Board of Education initiated *IMAGINE OPRF* with a 17-month planning process that engaged school leaders, faculty, staff, students, parents and community members.

Before: Welcome Center



After: Welcome Center

CHALLENGES

Oak Park is a community that prioritizes progressive ideals and is proud of its schools. The challenge in building support for *IMAGINE OPRF* was helping people understand that a major investment in facilities improvement was a strategic means of realizing the community's progressive goals for educational achievement and is just as important as investing in programs and educators.

Through persistent debate and discussion, the relationship between facility design and equitable opportunity was clarified and became the heart of the *IMAGINE OPRF* vision. The *IMAGINE* plan reflects balanced input from multiple stakeholders as well as evidence-based research on environmental design for 21st century learning pedagogy, youth development and safe, secure environments that promote health and well-being.

IMAGINE design challenges included:

- OPRF's location on a constrained site in a densely populated urban neighborhood;
- Transforming the facility's dark, enclosed interior feel to bring in natural light and a connection to nature; and
- Fusing the historic architectural quality of the existing school with current design and educational standards.

After: Visitor Waiting area within the Welcome Center features a historic image of the "Book of Knowledge" in its original location above the old entry to the school that was demolished in 1967. The artifact was reassembled and is now on display in the New Student Commons.



ASSETS

A significant asset which made both the planning process and the execution of Project 1 possible was OPRF's healthy fund balance which enabled the school to fund the entire project from its cash reserves.

The vision and persistence of OPRF school and community leaders ensured that the need, rationale, goals and benefits of investment in *IMAGINE OPRF* were effectively communicated to the larger community.

Finally, the OPRF community celebrates its rich heritage and the history of this storied high school whose famous alumni include Ernest Hemingway. Engaging the community in this planning process for *IMAGINE OPRF* was a unique opportunity for citizens to honor the past while making a major commitment to and investment in a better, equity-focused future for its youth.

At a time when our society is divided by endless debate, the citizen-led planning process of *IMAGINE OPRF* was of lasting value to this community. The challenges and complexity of educating adolescents and addressing historic inequities in today's world were made clear to everyone engaged in the process. Most importantly, the needs of students are at the heart of the *IMAGINE OPRF* vision and master plan.

After: The renovated Student Commons is a 2-Story space that connects the Main Entry and Welcome Center to the new 3-Story Student Resource Center. The Commons features a new extension of the balcony level that provides a large extended learning for individual or group use.

Before: Second Floor Student Commons



Before: Library



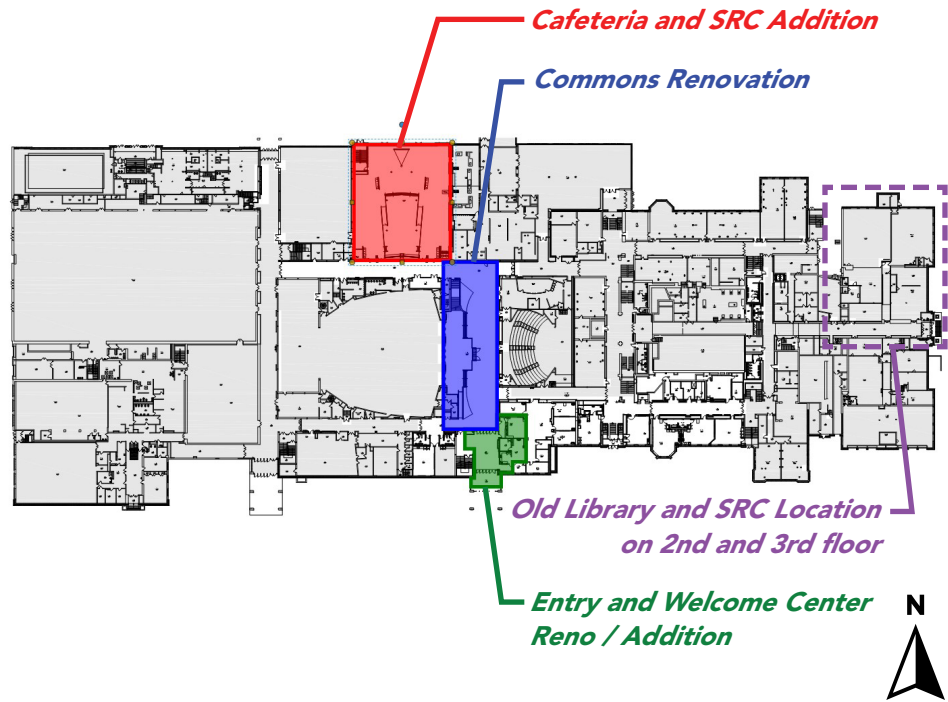
After: OPRF's new Library is located on the 3rd floor of the new Student Resource Center. The Library features multiple seating areas with a variety of furniture to foster student choice.

VISION

The vision of *IMAGINE OPRF* is that every student will have full and equitable access to the programs, services, resources and supports that will prepare them for future success. Every space in OPRF should foster learning, social engagement and a sense of community.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Equity is the overarching goal of *IMAGINE OPRF*. The 3-story addition which houses the South Cafeteria and Student Resource Center, in combination with the renovated Student Commons, is now the central hub of OPRF. Thus, critical gathering spaces, resources, and student support services are centrally located and available to students before, during and after the regular school day.



Adjacencies Diagram Plan



(Top Left) After: Small breakout collaboration space within the Student Resource Center.

(Bottom Left) After: Student social lounge at the entry of the second floor Student Commons featuring a large multi-monitor display.

After: First floor Student Commons at the now accessible Auditorium Theatre Lobby platform extension lounge. The back side of the “Book of Learning” can be used as a writable surface.



A central educational goal of *IMAGINE OPRF* is that all OPRF students are learning in spaces that are safe, accessible and conducive to their health and well-being. *IMAGINE OPRF*'s new and renovated spaces incorporate current trends in design for wellness, safety and security and trauma-informed support services.

Another educational goal of *IMAGINE OPRF* is that students will be learning in flexible, technology rich spaces that fully support the 21st century subject matter and skills they must master.

OPRF's curriculum goals are achieved through multiple components of Project 1 which includes 80 new and renovated classroom and labs in the existing building. The new learning spaces include:

Digital Arts Lab with state-of-art technology and space for student pin-up and portfolio critique



Before: Digital Arts Computer Lab



After: Digital Arts Suite including two digital labs and two breakout critique and portfolio review spaces.

Two new science classrooms designed for flexible use to accommodate both lab and lecture teaching



After (Top): Science Lab

Before (Below): Science Lab



After: ADA compliant Science Labs equipped to handle all science curriculum including Chemistry. Mobile lab tables allow for the flexibility of setup for lab work and lecture / collaboration

The Makerspace is filled with natural light from the glassy west facade of the Student Resource Center Addition. It is designed for a wide range of project based learning activities. It's a technology rich environment with flexible furniture and equipment on wheels. Electrical power is provided from reels that hang from ceiling.



Before: Makerspace



After: OPRF's new Makerspace is located on the 2nd floor of the Student Resource Center.

Special Education classrooms Life Skills Classroom/Lab

These classrooms are appropriately sized to meet unique space needs with flexible furniture and special equipment.



Before: Life Skills Room



After: One of three new Life Skills Classrooms located within the now localized Special Ed Wing on the first floor of the building.

Renovated and new classrooms are designed for flexible learning through the use of mobile furniture. The spaces also include LED lighting and appropriate technology, multiple teaching walls and finish upgrades.

In renovated classrooms, vintage design elements such as arched windows and original custom casework have been retained honoring OPRF's heritage.



Before: General Education classroom



After: One of 80 new and renovated more functional classrooms featuring flexible ergonomic furniture, better lighting, and acoustics while preserving elements of the historic design.

The 2-floor Student Resource Center provides a wealth of learning spaces that can accommodate both individual and small group activities. One floor houses the Makerspace, designed for flexible, project-based learning; the Tutoring Center with dedicated space for the Motivational Mentoring Program; the Technology Help Desk; Classrooms and flexible Collaboration Spaces that can be used for individual or small group activities.

A Grand Learning Stair connects the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Student Resource Center, providing a presentation space large enough to accommodate multiple classroom groups at the same time with natural light, enhanced by textures and finishes.

OPRF's 3rd floor Library includes glass-walled meeting areas and comfortable furniture that provides ample space for individual and small group learning.



Before: (Top) Library, (Bottom) Student Resource Center



After: A Grand Learning Stair connects the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Student Resource Center with large skylights that draw natural light in to both floors.

Results of the Process & Project

IMAGINE OPRF's overall design concept focuses on flexible spaces that provide students with a wealth of options for individual or group activity. Students now enjoy and have a mix of appropriate spaces for both formal and informal extracurricular activities.

Overall, the color and finishes palette emphasizes a sophisticated ambiance enhanced by tasteful application of the school's spirit colors of blue and orange. Within the Student Resource Center, furniture and materials were chosen to emphasize variety and flexibility. Comfortable furniture that provides options for individual or collaborative work is a significant departure from the wooden carrels, tables, and chairs of the past.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTIONS

OPRF and its community share the goal of fostering the social engagement of young learners and helping them develop strong connections with one another as well as the larger community and world they inhabit. OPRF's new South Cafeteria and Student Commons advance this goal.



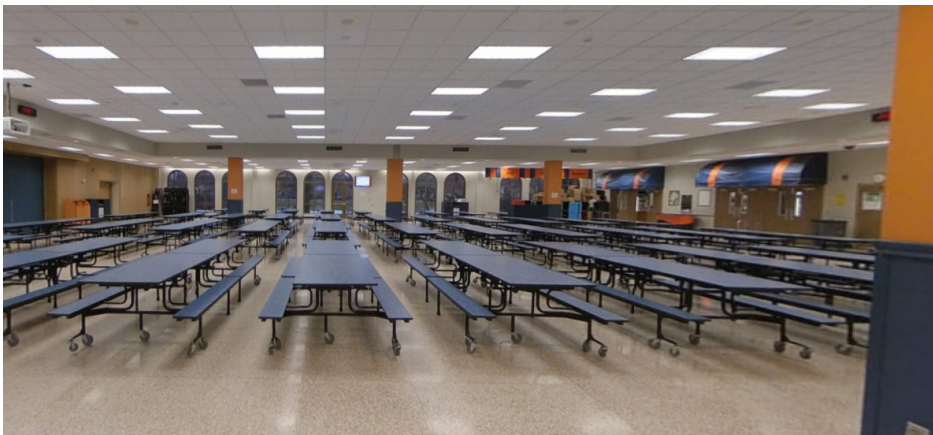
Before: The old Library Circulation desk



After: The Circulation desk in OPRF's new library provides a visual focus point. The finishes palette provides a sophisticated aesthetic that thoughtfully incorporates the school's "spirit colors".

The South Cafeteria incorporates a variety of café table heights and sizes along with traditional cafeteria tables to offer students options for social engagement as well as individual focus.

With a raised platform, this expansive space is also available for large gatherings, including school presentations and community meetings. The space features a variety of high-performance acoustic ceiling systems, including wood slat and felt baffles for high-quality audibility.



(Top) After: South Cafeteria Looking out towards the renovated Plaza

(Bottom) Before: South Cafeteria



After: New South Cafeteria features a variety of seating options that foster student choice.

In OPRF’s transformed Student Commons, the raised entry to the auditorium was expanded to provide an ADA accessible ramp, a gathering space for students and theater attendees as well as informal student seating areas. The design integrates bench seating that provides students additional choices for areas to gather and socialize.

Above the platform, a 2nd floor balcony extension provides an extended learning area that features framed glass walls on two sides overlooking the Commons below and opens to the 2nd floor space that includes an art gallery. The balcony extension space can be booked for instruction during the school day and is also used for informal gathering throughout and after the school day.



(Top) After: Second Floor Student Commons Balcony Extension and Art Gallery

(Bottom) Before: First Floor Student Commons



After: First Floor Student Commons

Another shared OPRF/community goal is that the school be a safe, secure welcoming presence in its residential setting. Prior to its renovation, the OPRF entrance and lobby were dark, deeply recessed, and uninviting. Today, the school's entrance offers a robust and welcoming sense of place while still ensuring the safety and security of the OPRF community.

The Welcome Center is designed to be both inviting and unobtrusively secure. The entire entry sequence, and all new/renovated hallways include cameras linked to the security center that houses automatic lockdown controls. All building entry doors, and all doors adjacent to the Welcome Center, are secured with access control.

The renovated main entry and secure vestibule features bullet-resistant film on the glass at the entry, the glass doors leading into the Commons and on the glass enclosing the security desk in the Welcome Center. The main fire alarm control is also located in this area.



Before: Dark, deeply recessed entry with no secure vestibule. Ernest Hemingway Memorial on the left.



After: New Entry and Secure Vestibule

IMAGINE OPRF embraces the school's and community's commitment to celebrating its rich history. The Welcome Center and Student Commons spaces integrate historic elements of the original school with modern features that enrich an inviting, open communal environment.

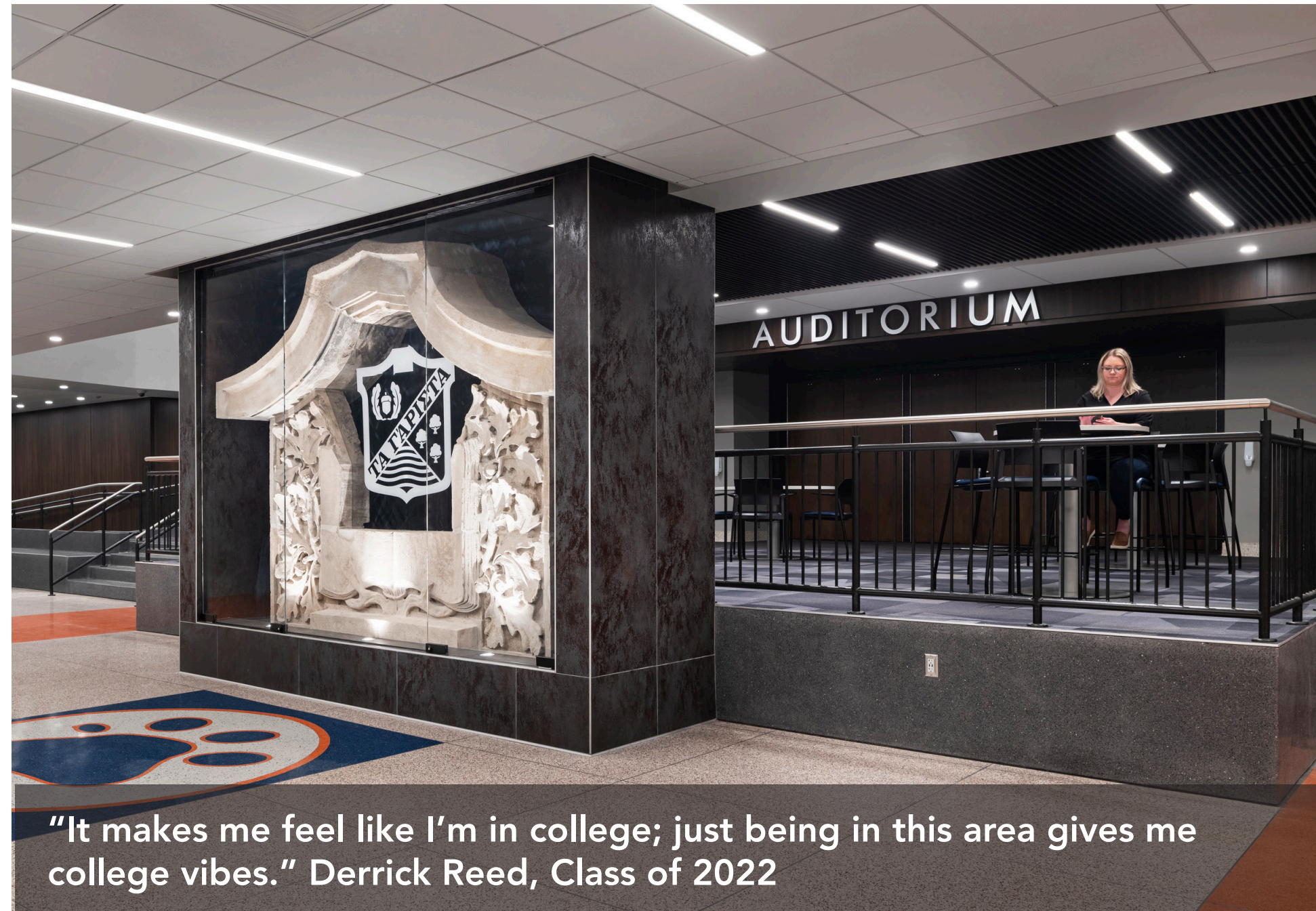
The Student Commons features a massive stone artifact known as the "Book of Knowledge." Originally located above OPRF's main entrance, it was removed during a 1960s renovation and languished in a basement storage area.

Today, it is reassembled as an iconic display and powerful reminder of the District's history as well as the lasting value of learning. The Commons also includes a "Tradition of Excellence" display honoring distinguished OPRF alumni, including Ernest Hemingway.

PROJECT 1 SUCCESS AND IMPACT

The success of Project 1 is apparent to students, OPRF leaders and the community. Faculty and staff report that the transformed spaces have inspired students' sense of ownership, independence, and motivation.

After: "The Book of Knowledge" weighs approx. 3 tons and was resurrected from OPRF's basement in pieces, reconstructed and now has a pride of place in the Student Commons.



"It makes me feel like I'm in college; just being in this area gives me college vibes." Derrick Reed, Class of 2022

Rendering: Future Project 2 - A new 4-Story Fitness and Wellness Center Addition / Renovation. Funding approved, currently in Design Phase.

LOOKING AHEAD: FUTURE PROJECTS

In April 2023, the OPRF Board of Education unanimously approved funding for Project 2. Specifically, the OPRF Board approved a budget of \$102 million that will be funded with a combination of cash reserves, philanthropic donations and debt certificates that will be repaid over time from the OPRF operating budget.

Based on the success of Project 1, OPRF created the *IMAGINE* Foundation as a vehicle to raise private contributions to support project 2, the Track and Field Project, and future IMAGINE OPRF projects. In a few short months, the Foundation has secured commitments of over \$12M with additional donations anticipated.

In its materials for prospective donors, the Foundation states: ***“Construction of IMAGINE Plan Project 1 is largely complete... The results are stunning. The new and renovated spaces are excellent examples of how modern school facilities can support today’s learning, make students feel welcome, use space flexibly and efficiently, and create spaces for the full range of offerings at OPRF.”***

Project 2 will focus on construction of a new Physical Education facility to replace the southeast corner of the existing building. Construction of a new outdoor track and renovation of the softball/baseball fields is already underway.



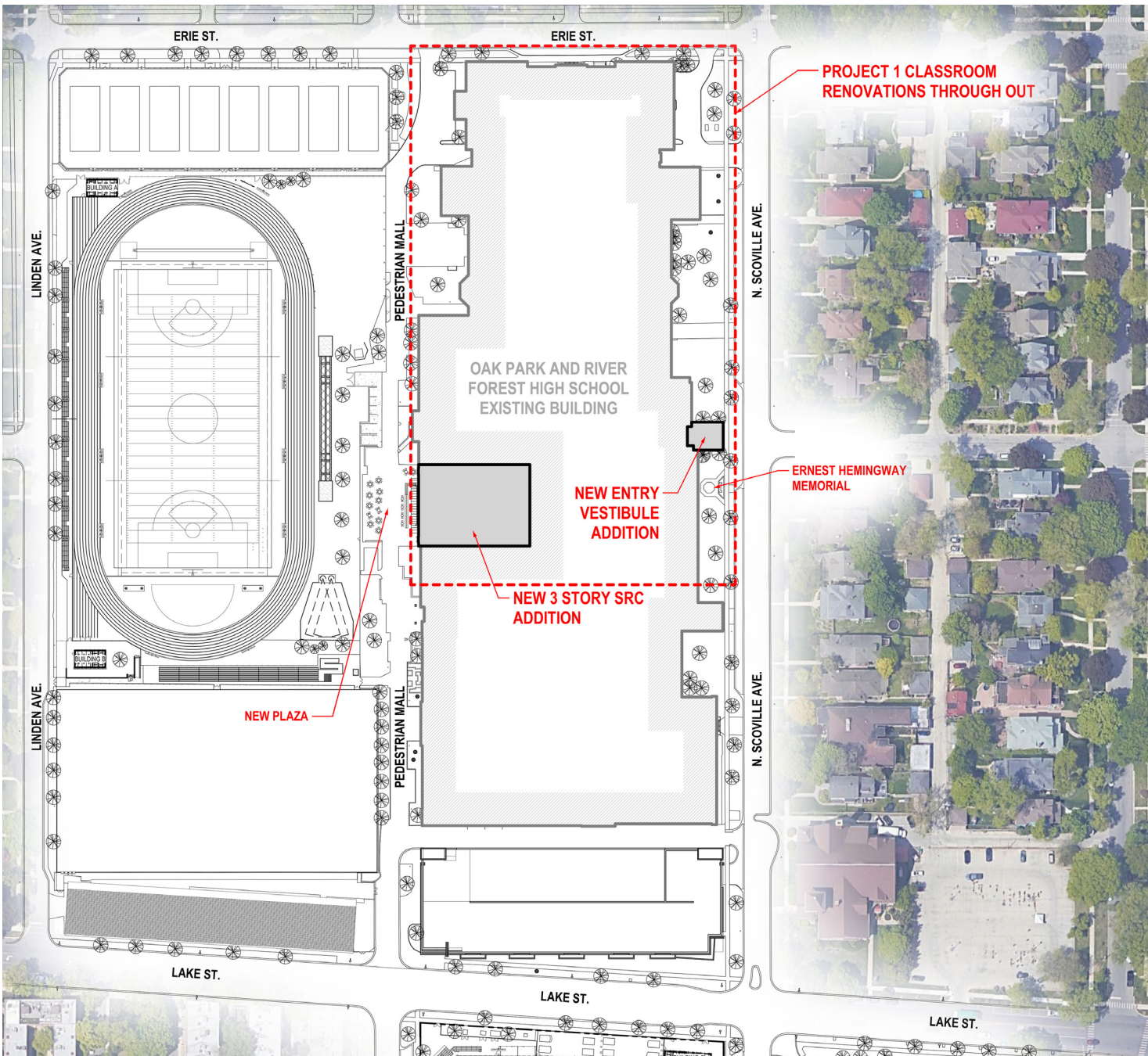
Rendering: New Track and Fields project (currently in construction)

OPRF is located on a constrained site in a densely populated urban neighborhood. To build the 3-story addition, the existing cafeteria, a one-story structure, was demolished. Because the addition was surrounded on three sides by the existing school, construction involved excavating down one floor to create a new basement and then constructing the remaining three floors above ground.

Today, the 3-story addition with its glass-enclosed exterior looks over the open space of the pedestrian mall and OPRF’s athletic fields and into the adjacent residential neighborhood, providing a rare opportunity for visual connection with nature in an urban environment.



After: Third floor reading lounge overlooking the Athletic Fields.



Site Plan

A new outdoor plaza outside the South Cafeteria provides a gathering space for individuals and small groups that significantly enhances the pedestrian mall that runs the length of the school between the OPRF building and athletic fields. The plaza is used for outdoor learning activities and fosters a greater connection between the building's interior and exterior.

OPRF's renovated main entry strengthens the school's presence in its neighborhood and revitalizes the visual appeal of the Ernest Hemingway Memorial Garden adjacent to the entrance.



Before: The old single story Cafeteria facade connecting out to the smaller, less inviting plaza.



After: Exterior of the New 3-Story Cafeteria and SRC Addition and Renovated / Expanded Plaza.

In support of OPRF’s larger sustainability initiatives, the new South Cafeteria incorporates custom-made refuse station that separates liquids, compost, landfill, and recyclable items.

The composting efforts initiated by the school’s Environmental Club are supported by the addition of dedicated compost waste receptacles, ensuring the lasting impact of the students’ efforts.



Enlarged Image: Custom Waste Stations



After: New South Cafeteria featuring high performance glazing with expansive views to the outside, LED lighting throughout, and sustainable, durable finishes.

OPRF's 3-story addition features a metal panel and glass wall which provides full-height, high-performance solar control Solarban 70 glazing on each floor that pulls an abundance of light deep into the building's interior spaces. The four large skylights above the Grand Learning Stair bring additional natural light into the interior areas of the 2nd and 3rd floors of the SRC.

All new and renovated spaces feature LED lighting and occupancy sensors. Where appropriate, more sustainable linoleum flooring replaces the use of vinyl flooring.

In addition to shade control on each floor's windows, an overhang on the third floor provides additional shading which mitigates energy costs. The 3rd story Library's Reading Room features clerestory windows and a light shelf which allows light to reach more deeply into the space. The addition's roof is structurally designed (including the electrical infrastructure) to accommodate a future PV array system which is "plug and go" ready.



After: Third Floor Student Resource Center reading lounge with light shelf.



After: The New 3-Story Student Resource Center Addition and Renovated Plaza over looking the Pedestrian Mall.

After: The New 3-Story SRC Addition and Renovated Plaza provide a refreshing connection to the existing Pedestrian Mall that runs north and south between the existing building and the Athletic Fields.



Before: The old single story Cafeteria facade connecting out to the smaller, less inviting plaza.

School & Community Research and Engagement