

**A4LE Project Awards - Transformation**

20  
24



**GRCC**  
Grand Rapids Community College  
**Lakeshore Campus**

# “Come in as a visitor; leave as a student.”

These are the words of former Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) president, Bill Pink, at the grand opening of the college’s new Lakeshore Campus. Opened Fall 2021, the consolidated campus creates synergy and collaboration across programs that are physically co-located and provides opportunities for operational efficiencies. The move also provides partnerships with 4-year universities in the region, such as Grand Valley State University and Hope College, as well as business partners, K12 districts and community agencies. Inspired by the Highland Campus at Austin Community College in Texas, this project sought to infuse activity, business, and opportunity in an underserved area of West Michigan.

## Guiding Principles

1. Create a welcoming student experience
2. Encourage agile education and provide a full campus experience
3. Reveal & promote the GRCC identity within the Lakeshore community
4. Sustainable

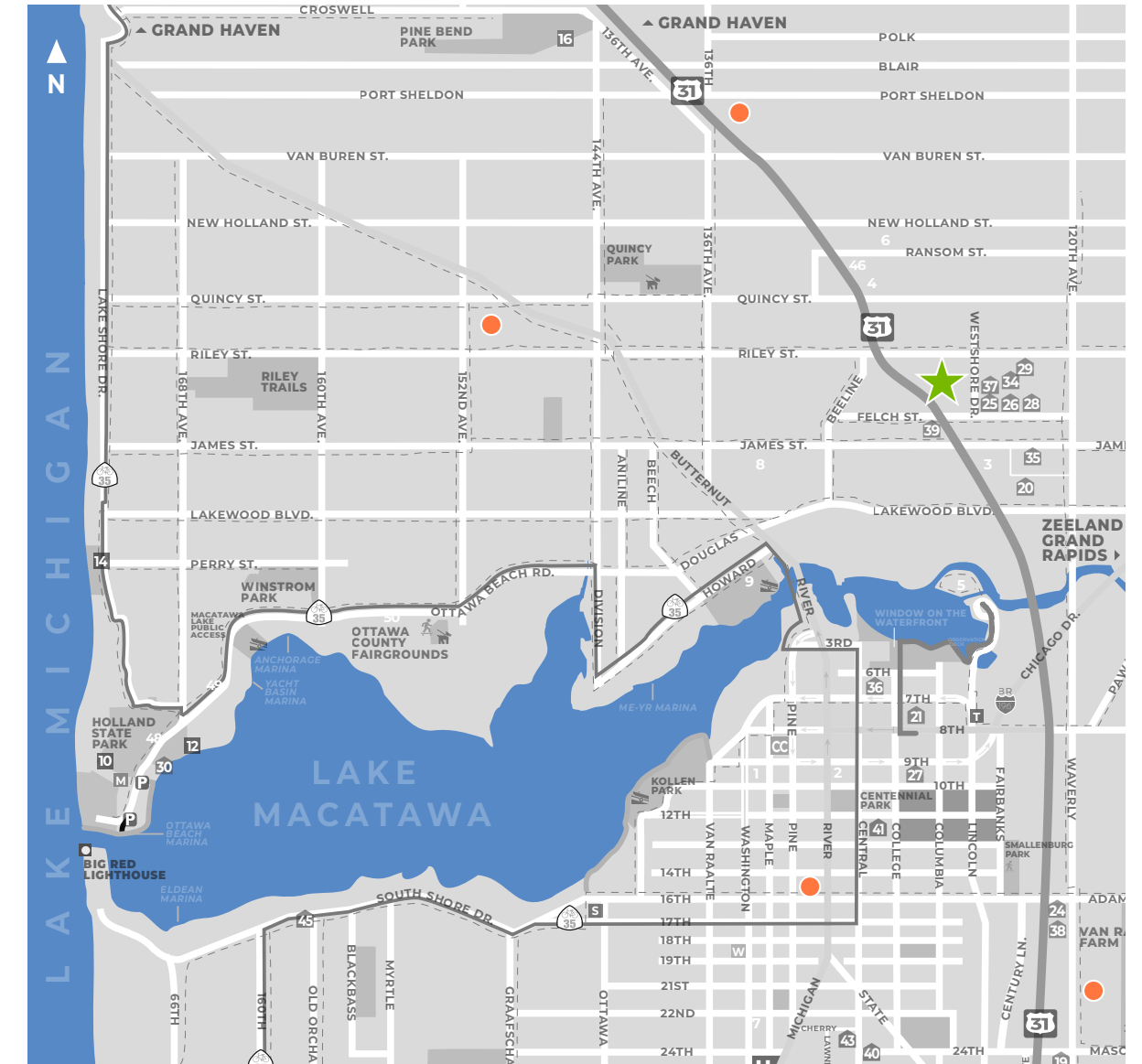
## Scope of Work and Budget

- Owner: Grand Rapids Community College
- Location: Holland, Michigan
- Project Type: Adaptive Reuse
- Project Size: 52,000 SF
- Student Capacity: 500 students
- Project Cost: \$12,000,000
- Site Area: 4.4 acres
- Year Completed: 2021
- Grades Served: Post-Secondary
- Sustainability Certificate: LEED v4 Interior design and Construction: Commercial Interiors



GRCC had previously offered classes on the Lakeshore, spread out over four locations, for more than 20 years. With programs in disparate locations and in small, leased available spaces in buildings throughout the area, serving students and maintaining fiscal responsibility was a challenge on top of restricted growth. The college purchased the former JCPenney in The Shops at Westshore Mall in the heart of Holland Township to become a consolidated GRCC Lakeshore Campus, committed to serving Lakeshore learners of all ages. The project required transforming a shuttered department store into a vibrant and modern learning hub. One of the challenges presented to the design team was to take the existing anchor space in a mall building and create a new GRCC identity that would shed any association with the old retail presence. The vast interior space was not only converted into labs and classrooms, but the exterior of the building was completely transformed, establishing a modern, welcoming presence while saving as much of the existing building shell as possible to keep the project in budget. A key part of the college’s approach was to design a campus that met GRCC’s sustainability goals as well.

The completed 52,000 square-foot campus facility gives GRCC flexibility to grow into the much-larger space and establishes a strong presence, truly embedding the college – and education – in a community.

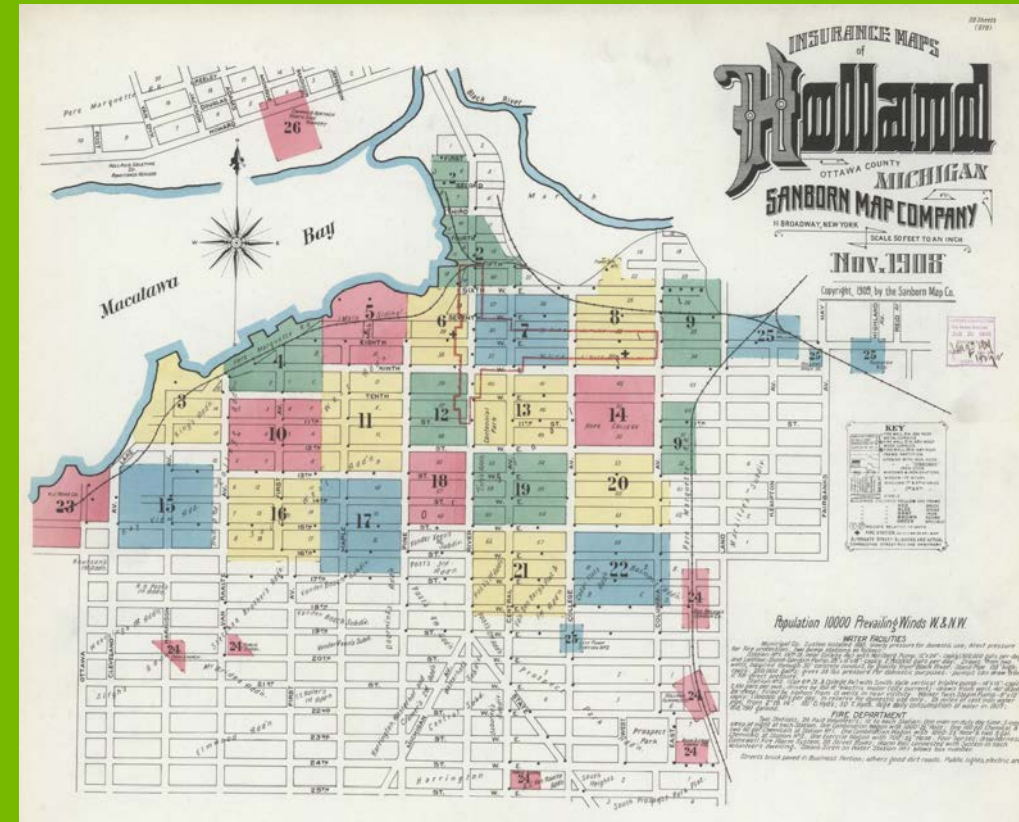


## Location Comparisons

- Old Locations
- ★ New Lakeshore Campus building

# Michigan's First Community College

Grand Rapids Junior College was established in 1914 and was the first community college in the state of Michigan. In partnership with the University of Michigan, the college offered seven courses of study including mathematics, history, and physics. In 1990, Grand Rapids residents voted to separate the Junior College from the public school system and in 1991 became Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). The college offers traditional liberal arts and occupational pathways, adult education courses, and skilled training courses and apprenticeships.



GRCC has operated on the West Michigan Lakeshore for more than 20 years in Holland, Michigan. Holland is located on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan and Lake Macatawa and home to more than 33,000 people. Holland is known for its rich Dutch heritage which is celebrated at an annual Tulip Time Festival. Located about 30 miles away from the main downtown campus, the Lakeshore courses were offered in disparate locations with no campus to call home. Inspired by the Highland Campus at Austin Community College in Austin, Texas, GRCC made the decision to purchase the former JCPenney in The Shops at Westshore Mall, located in the heart of Holland Charter Township, to become a consolidated GRCC Lakeshore Campus.

The Lakeshore Campus is located in Ottawa County, further supporting GRCC's presence in the area and directly impacting local economics. This campus is the only community college serving K12 district students in Ottawa County. At the time of the facility opening, Grand Rapids Community College had enrolled more than 800 students from Ottawa County and the Holland area to study at the new campus. Local nonprofit economic group, The Lakeshore Advantage, and the West Coast Chamber of Commerce played significant roles in connecting GRCC

with The Shops at Westshore mall. Lakeshore Advantage connects businesses to the resources they need to grow in Ottawa County. After years of planning through a Lakeshore feasibility study that evaluated their programs, it was decided that consolidation was the best solution. Funding strategies were at the core of determining the right approach that ultimately led the College to purchase a vacant department store and build a student-centered campus. The College demonstrated a high level of **RESPECT through the recognition and acceptance of ideas, thoughts of, and perspectives of many stakeholder groups and were receptive to new ideas and perspectives that were embraced and welcomed.**

## Community Stakeholders

Creating one consolidated campus also created synergy and collaboration across programs that are physically co-located and provides opportunities for operational efficiencies and partnerships with 4-year universities in the region, including Grand Valley State University and Hope College as well as K12 districts and community agencies. Business organizations including LG Energy Solution, JR Automation and Gentex are some of GRCC's many partners located in Ottawa County. In fact, GRCC partners with more than 450 employers in the region to best stay on top of trends and needs in evolving and emerging fields.



The Skilled Trades Manufacturing Lab, located at the Lakeshore Campus, is sponsored by Gentex Corporation, an industry-leading global automotive supplier headquartered in Ottawa County.

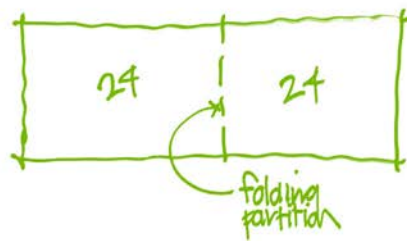
# Challenges and Opportunities

GRCC originally offered classes spread out over four locations in leased buildings throughout the Lakeshore area. This strategy proved to be operationally inefficient and expensive for the college and created a disjointed experience for students and staff. With classes located in separate locations, students and staff would have to plan their schedules around travel time which limited their ability to attend or teach certain classes.

The project required transforming a shuttered department store into a vibrant learning hub for students of all ages and making education more accessible to all residents in the Lakeshore community of Holland. One of the challenges presented to the design team was to take the existing JCPenney anchor space in a mall building and create a new GRCC identity that would shed any association with the old retail presence.

**Classrooms:**

- 24 students: majority
- 30 : some
- 300 : few



**Testing Area:**



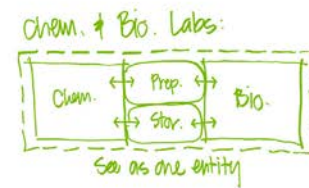
## Programming Workshop / Marker Board Notes

**Computer Labs:**

- Classroom labs higher priority (2 x 24 seats) + instructor
- Open labs secondary
- Offer security/locking

**Machining Shop:**

- Adjacent to loading
- Noise: be conscious of neighbors



**Welding:**

- Exterior face - short distance to exhaust

One large high bay space - stripe use on floor  
 Seek opportunities to add transparency  
 Visual connection between classroom & lab  
 Not physical connection (safety gear)

EXTENSION OF MAIN CAMPUS  
 "FULL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE"  
 ACCESS  
 EMBEDDED IN A COMMUNITY

# Available Assets

The Shops at Westshore, formerly known as Westshore Mall, is an open-air shopping center that first opened its doors in 1988. Once a vibrant shopping center, several anchor store closures and a general shift to online shopping led to a decline in revenue. The JCPenney storefront had been closed since 2017 and needed significant renovations to become an operational college campus. Adapting the purpose of the existing building also served GRCC's goals for sustainability.

The existing building sits near a bus line, making it more accessible for students. Proximity to existing restaurants, housing and transportation was desirable to the college and added to the bustling campus feel the College wanted to create.



South Entrance



Loading Dock



Northbound US-31



Southbound US-31



# A

# PROCESS

## Creating a Full Campus Experience

The team conducted several early studies to understand the existing facility, site, and programs that would shape the organization of the floor plan. Working within the existing structural grid and the heavy demand for machine tool lab and support spaces, the interior layout provides a strategic distribution of open and shared amenities to balance both efficiency and experience. The building core focuses on the student and enhances the way GRCC works to provide a full campus experience for all students. **GRCC was keenly focused on creating a LEARNERS FIRST environment and puts the needs of students first.**

### Notes

- Adaptable/Nimble/Flexible
- Classrooms: Currently no more than 9 used at once, 10=growth
- Faculty Offices
- Secure Storage: Adjacent/Visitors
- Computer Labs: carts, not fixed?
- Lobby/Reception
- Work Room(s): supplies/mailboxes
- Automation space. (future/new)
- CAD/CAM lab
- Faculty consult space (private)
- Faculty touch-down (separate from workroom)
- Health program-Med. Assisting (future/new)
  - o Exam tables/sinks "wet lab"

*Generator - life safety*  
*"MODULES": Welding, ...*

*What is special about a space? NIMBLE*  
 Prep for future specialization/functions

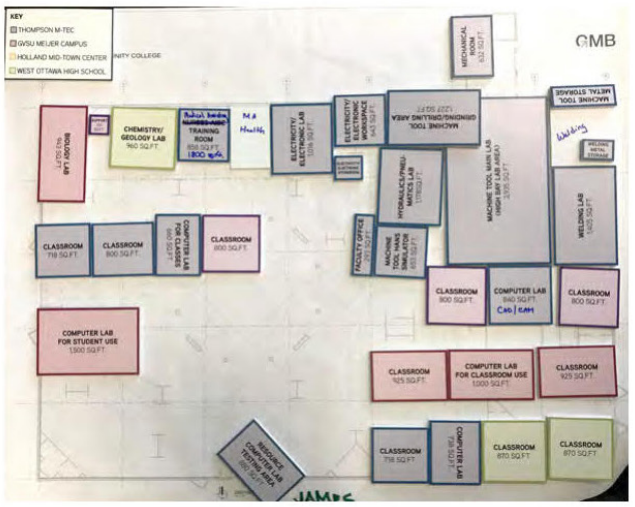
*GRCC LAKESHORE*  
 ADAPTABLE/NIMBLE/FLEXIBLE

*CLASSROOMS: Currently no more than 9 used at once, 10=growth*

*Faculty Offices*  
 secure storage: Adjacent/visitors  
 (Computer Labs: Carts, not fixed?)  
 Lobby/Reception  
 Work room(s): supplies/mailboxes.  
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 Faculty consult space (private)  
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 Exam tables/sinks "wet lab"

### What is special about a space? (Nimble)

- Prep for future specialization/functions
- Testing: Academic services/student services
  - o Improvements-more intentional
  - o Teams working together
  - o DSS: Disability support services
  - o Advising: Private office(s)
  - o Tutoring support-more consistent (dedicated)
- Library Services
  - o Reference Desk
  - o Textbook Lending
  - o Laptop rental
  - o ACC: Accelerator Lab
- Electronic Storage: Decentralized/Point of use
  - o GRCC data available
- Operations:
  - o Office Storage
  - o Custodial Safe's (Admin)
  - o Public Safety Office I.T. Office MPF/IDF Work
- Generator-Life Safety
- "Modules"
  - o Welding
  - o Electronics
  - o Pneumatics/Hydraulics
- Student Experience/Faculty
  - o Coffee Shop -kitchenette
  - o Vending
  - o Microwaves
  - o Refrigerator (faculty)
  - o Cook Hall (example)
  - o Gender neutral/family restroom
  - o Mother's room: sink, refrigerator
  - o Math/Writing Lab: Larger group
    - Not 1:1 tutoring
  - o Study Rooms
    - 4 to 5 students-mitigate distractions
  - o Executive Conference Room/touch. Down
    - Bus./GRCC Exec. visits



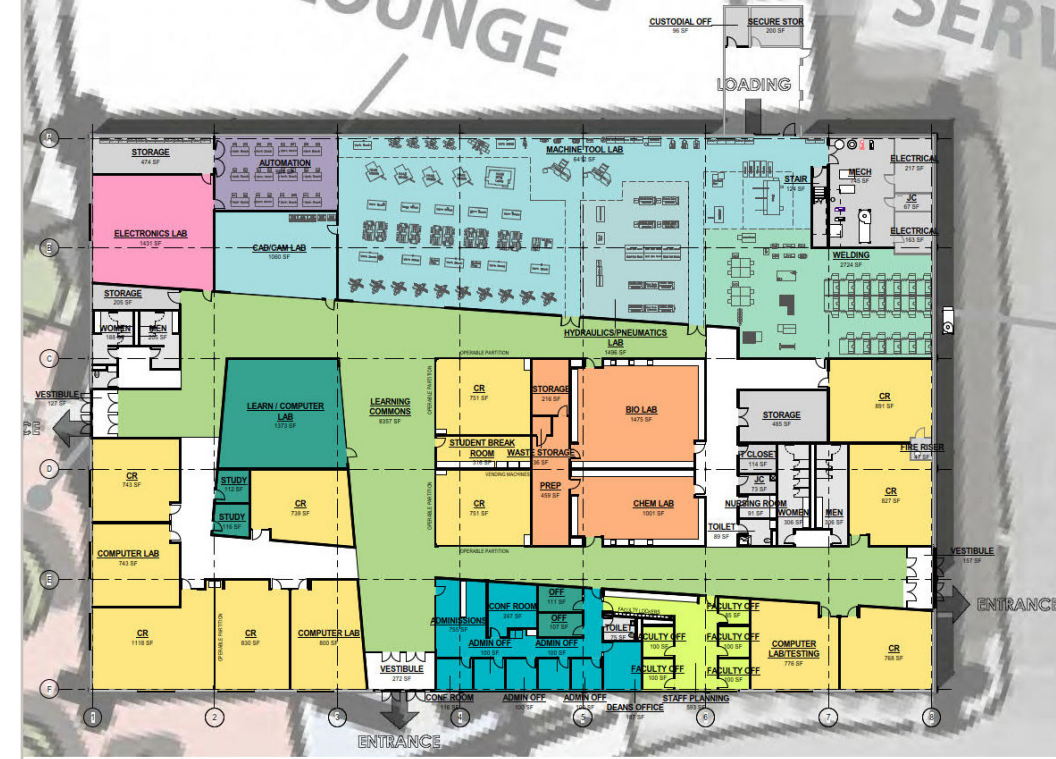
Mapping 01



Mapping 02

School & Community Research and/or Engagement

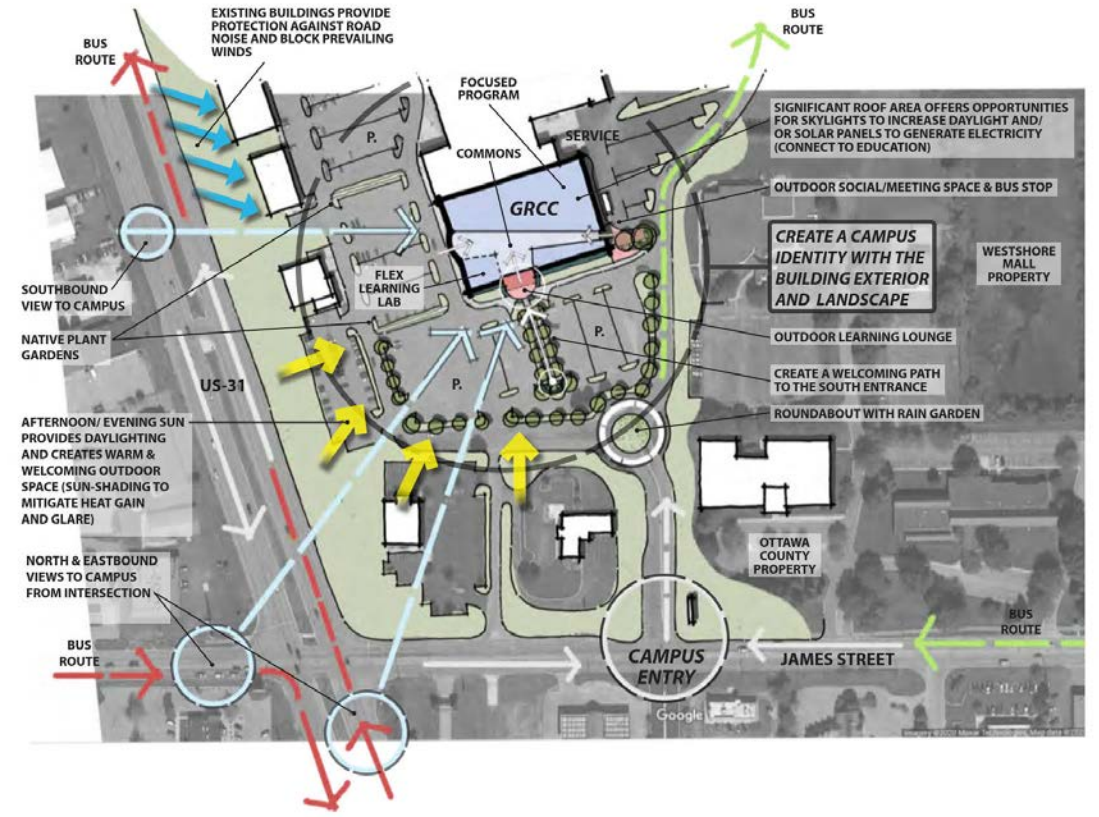
Programming Workshop / Marker Board Notes



Floor Plan

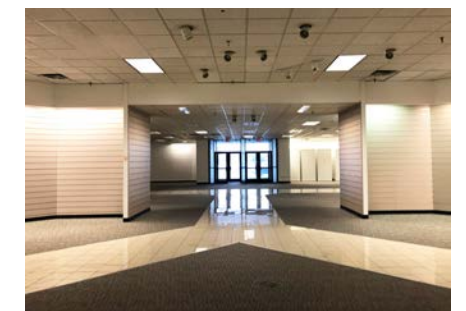
### LEGEND

- MACHINE TOOL
- HYDRAULICS / PNEUMATICS
- WELDING
- ELECTRONICS
- AUTOMATION
- SCIENCE
- STUDENT
- LEARNING COMMONS
- FACULTY
- ADMINISTRATION
- ADVISORY
- MECH / ELEC / STORAGE
- TOILET



Site Concept

Even before the project received full funding, GRCC and the design team hosted a Design Workshop to test fit the four existing GRCC Lakeshore facilities needs into a single location. Once the project received funding, the team met to review the concept and establish Guiding Principles for the project. These Guiding Principles are used as the first test to validate decisions made by the design team during the project development. The team regularly met throughout the design process to ensure the College's vision was accurately represented in the design of this consolidated campus. The design firm engaged students, faculty, administration, facilities, and community (mall) members in a series of in-person, and then virtual meetings. The team was able to smoothly transition to a remote method and still keep the stakeholders engaged.



Before



After

# B

## Driving Economic Growth for Ottawa County

A study conducted by Lightcast titled "The Economic Value of the Grand Rapids Community College" broke down the college's value and impact in the region. Specifically, an executive summary shows the College's economic impact on Ottawa County reports a total of \$726.6 million, which represents 3.9 percent of Ottawa County's total gross regional product. Further, Lightcast's report also found "social benefits from GRCC, in the forms of added student income, added business income, added income from college activities and social savings related to health, justice and income assistance, valued at \$2.8 billion." The GRCC Lakeshore Campus does not include a cafeteria or food service within the facility and instead opted to support local off-campus restaurants and businesses with the increased student traffic. The Lakeshore Campus, located in Ottawa County, further supports GRCC's presence in the area and directly impacts local economics.

Grand Rapids Community College offers learners of all ages opportunities to gain credits for degrees or transfer and in-demand career skills leading to rewarding careers. Students can complete an associates degree program at the GRCC Lakeshore Campus or earn credits that will transfer to other schools for higher degrees. Many students pursue training in specific skills through the college's active workforce programs. Students who earn certificates in studies like welding are able to enter the workforce with desirable skills and contribute further to the local economy.



School & Community Research and/or Engagement

**"GRCC's new Lakeshore Campus gives us the unique opportunity to create meaningful partnerships right in our own backyard. By actively seeking out collaborations with local businesses and organizations, we're able to tailor our program and course offerings to directly reflect the needs of the communities we serve and expand their access to education."**

*- Cameron Buck, GRCC Lakeshore Campus Executive Director*

*Machine Shop:*

- Adjacent to loading
- Noise: be conscious of neighbors

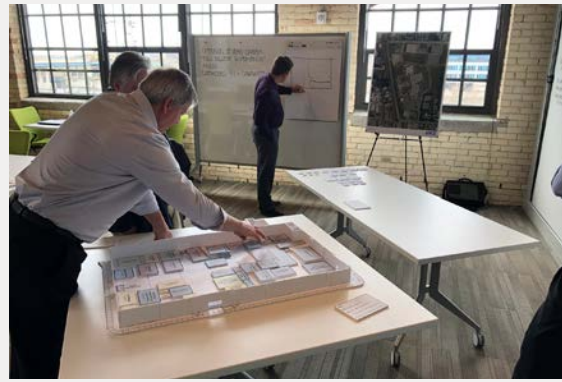
*Welding:*

- Exterior face - short distance to exhaust

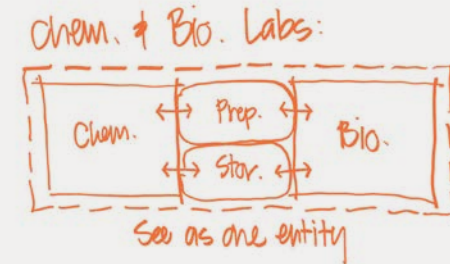
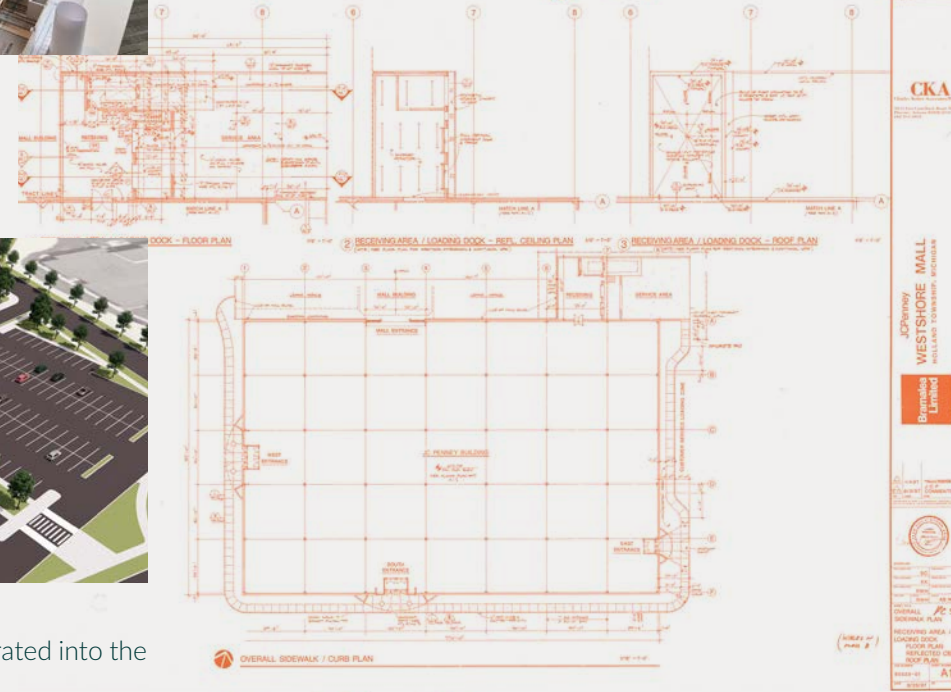
# C

## Equality of Opportunity

GRCC is committed to fostering partnerships that are responsive to the needs of GRCC stakeholders and the community. One of the College's values is centered on the creation of inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environments that recognize the value, diversity, and dignity of each person. The College intentionally wanted to create a campus that offered the same innovative spaces and access to resources for students as the main campus in Grand Rapids.



PROGRAM + SPACES FROM EXISTING BLDGS FITS?  
 Student Experience: Intake →  
 Show off: the Learning/Work (transparency)  
 (recruitment)  
 Sunlight  
 Brand: "LAKE SHORE CAMPUS"  
 Learning ↔ Event/Reception (accommodate both w/ easy change over)  
 Sustainability: LEED Silver goal.  
 Carry thru the GRCC Identity (signature standards)



## No Longer a JCPenney's

When envisioning for the Lakeshore program began, it was important to the College that this new location would act as an extension of the main campus and create a "full college experience" for students. The consolidated campus is strategically located off U.S. Route 31 which had established bus routes that students, faculty, and community members are able to utilize to access the campus. More than 50,000 SF could be repurposed into education space with ample parking and proximity to shops, restaurants, and housing. Extended greenways were also intentionally incorporated into the existing parking lots to provide outdoor student and learning areas.

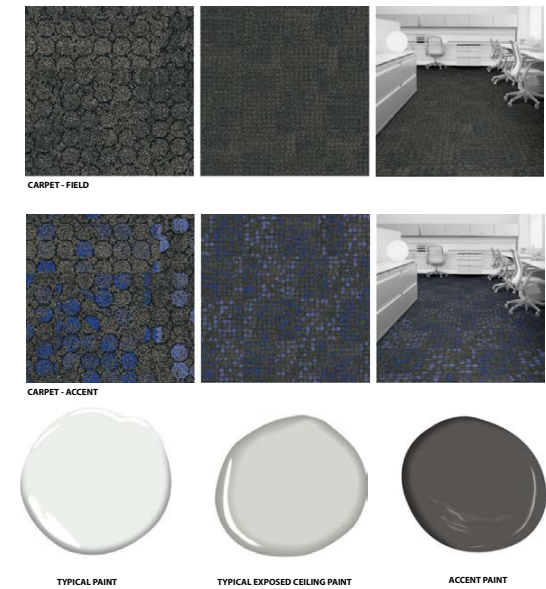


Members of the design workshop focused on key words like adaptable, nimble, flexible to describe the facilities learning spaces. The team was also focused on growth potential for future classrooms and program expansions. **This project displays INNOVATION by exploring an opportunity at the intersection of learning and place and giving students a unique environment to further their studies.**

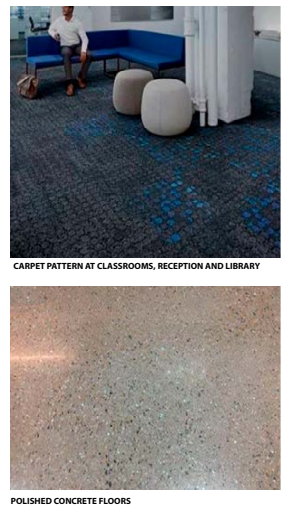


## A New GRCC Identity

The architectural vernacular of the building looks to emulate the curriculum it houses. The exterior brick was carved away to allow for natural daylight and industrial materials to be applied. The space plan is organized around the machine tool area to the north with perimeter classrooms ringing the exterior. Student support spaces and science labs act as islands within the floor plan, so that views from the main entrance focus on the machine tool lab. Enlarged corridors act as extensions of the classroom, allowing small groups to work or study before and after class while also opening into some of the classroom spaces for a larger lecture when needed. A ring of classrooms around the perimeter provides natural daylight into each classroom while large skylights help carry daylight into the core of the facility. The facility has nine classrooms, four computer labs, and five unique labs for biology, chemistry, electronics, automation, welding and machine tooling, housing programs for students working toward an associate degree or a career-focused certificate. The project also has spaces for advising, counseling and other student support services, and a satellite library, as well as areas for use by community groups.



## Finishes



## Community Colleges Matter

Community colleges are vital for educating the future workforce and nearly one-third of all undergraduate students attend a public two-year college. They are the primary educators of nursing and other healthcare professionals – among many other professions – and are vital engines in a community for highly-skilled and trained employees for in-demand careers. Public community colleges provide advanced learning to students with the fewest resources and the greatest obstacles, and often serve the most demographically and socioeconomically diverse students. Evidence suggests that the presence of a college in a local community increases the likelihood of enrollment in that institution by local students. About 1 in 6 high school seniors lack a nearby college, making geographic location an important factor in determining not just where, but whether, a high school senior goes on to college. In 2000, GRCC first opened the Patrick A. Thompson Michigan Technical Education Center in Holland. Since then, the college had grown to four locations spread throughout Ottawa County, making education more accessible to residents in the Lakeshore community of Holland. The completed campus establishes a strong presence for GRCC, truly embedding the college – and education – in the surrounding community.

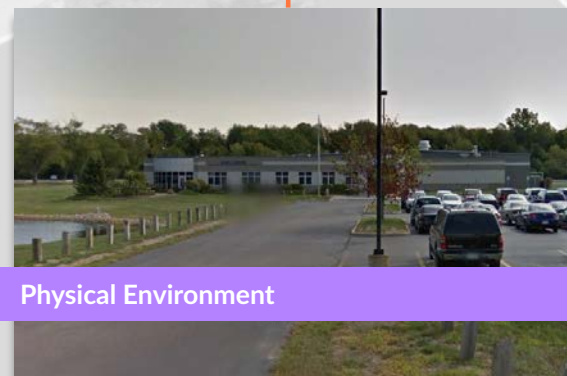
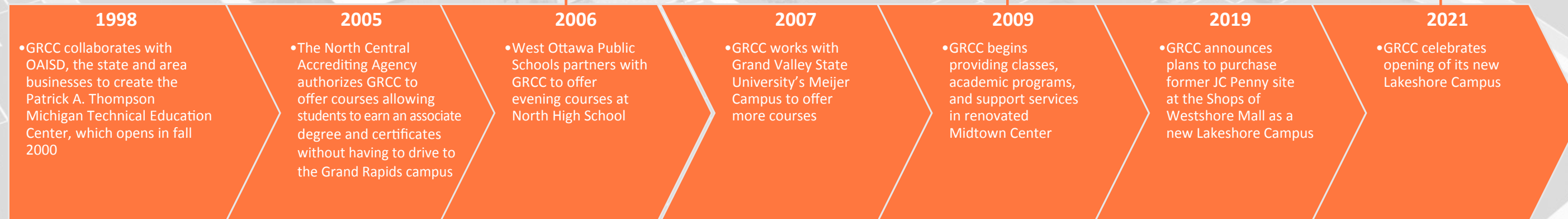
Increased access to programs at the consolidated campus expands opportunities for students to explore exciting career paths and learn new skills. Large glass openings throughout the facility allow for visibility within machine tool labs and classrooms, creating experiences for ALL students to connect and be inspired.

The Lakeshore Campus has also been recognized as an award-winning project that will inspire other education leaders by the following organizations:

- American School & University 2022 Outstanding Design Award
- Learning by Design 2022 Outstanding Project Award

The project has also been featured in Architect Magazine and Education Snapshots online publications.

# History of GRCC On The Lakeshore



Physical Environment





## Physical Environment

Transforming a big box retail building into a dynamic and state-of-the-art education space required incredible forward-thinking and vision. Choosing to pursue an adaptive reuse project demonstrated the College's ability to think innovatively and their commitment to sustainable practices.

The Lakeshore building itself has a variety of inventive learning environments to accommodate a diverse group of learners, including areas for group collaboration and individual study spaces. Partition walls can be opened or closed to create open dynamic spaces, classrooms, or gathering spaces for seminars depending on daily schedules and campus needs. Technically, there are no corridors in the facility as everything is considered an extended learning area with gathering and workshop spaces throughout.

GRCC wanted to create a site that would mimic their main campus in Grand Rapids and give all students access to resources, programs, and above all else, an affordable education. Through targeted workshops with many stakeholders, the College achieved **COLLABORATION, COLLEGIALITY, and CONNECTION** by sharing ideas, resources, and values with community partners, local colleges and K12 districts, and mall leadership to create an inclusive environment.

One physical environment feature is adapted to meet the needs of deaf or hearing-impaired students. A sound loop in the floor allows those with t-coil hearing aids to enjoy sound reinforcement in several building spaces. The facility also meets all ADA accessibility guidelines.



## Designed with LEED in Mind

The team developed a list of key features that would help transform the former JCPenney into a distinct GRCC campus, with a main focus on creating a LEED certified project. To achieve this award, the team adopted many sustainability practices including:

- Retained most of the existing concrete floor for reuse and polished it.
- Reused as much of the existing exterior skin as possible, making vertical swaths instead of punched openings to create a dynamic facade with lots of large window openings to bring the outside in.
- Increased daylighting in the classrooms with sunshades on the outside to shade the high summer sun, but let the low winter sun in.
- Added a light shelf on the inside to reflect daylight up onto the ceiling, lowering the need for lighting power consumption.
- Retained skylights and added more for increased natural light.

Other items contributing to the sustainability of the new campus that allows the College to be better stewards to the community:

- Convenient urban setting that is connected to public transportation access
- Electric car recharging stations
- Dedicated outdoor air (DOAS) HVAC system with:
  - o Energy recovery
  - o Demand Control Ventilation
  - o Needlepoint bi-polar ionization air cleaners
- High efficiency condensing boiler heating plant that recirculates to capture energy and reuse it
- High efficiency, high temperature chilled water plant
- Variable flow, recirculating welding fume extraction system
- High output and low energy consumption LED lighting throughout



Section A-A



Section A-A

Harvesting Daylight  
Classroom Light Well

GRCC's vision is to provide relevant educational opportunities that are responsive to the needs of the community and inspire students to meet economic, social, and environmental challenges to become active participants in shaping the world of the future. As part of upholding the College's vision, the stakeholder and design teams crafted guiding principles to help lead the project.



Photo courtesy of GRCC

These principles included creating a welcoming student experience; encouraging agile education and provide a full campus experience; reveal and promote the GRCC identity within the Lakeshore community; and promote sustainability.

In an article with the [local newspaper](#) detailing the College's first year of operation in the new campus, the former GRCC president spoke of their success in reaching that same vision. "More so than what he sees at the campus, Pink said he values the input from stakeholders in regard to the effect GRCC Lakeshore had in Year 1. That feedback has been glowing and Pink said with

**“an emphatic yes”  
that the campus is  
meeting the vision  
GRCC had for it.”**

## 21st Century Learning

The 52,000 square foot renovated GRCC Lakeshore building opened in fall 2021 and includes classrooms and labs for workforce development and arts and sciences, as well as multiple student services such as testing, counseling, placement, and a satellite library. The footprint of the building emphasizes a broad, expansive foundation with minimal vertical height. The design team created classroom spaces at the perimeter to capture daylight, while the tool lab become the anchor to the north providing visibility from the main entrance and access to the delivery area. The space plan is organized around the machine tool area to the north with perimeter classrooms ringing the exterior. The commitment to make technical learning visible and transparent to everyone who enters the college demonstrates that **PLACE MATTERS and shows students that the value of place in learning is recognized and the design strengthens learning for all through better environments.** Student support spaces and science labs act as islands within the floor plan, so that views from the main entrance focus on the machine tool lab.



Current Lakeshore students can enroll in classes that can lead to an Associate of Arts, Associate of General Studies, and Associate of Applied Arts and Sciences-Industrial Maintenance Technology, as well as certificates in Industrial Maintenance, Industrial Technology, Tooling and Manufacturing, and Welding. Beyond degrees, students can partake in workforce training programs that include Welding Bootcamp, Certified Production Technician, Pharmacy Technician and other offerings.

**The whole facility embodies 21st century learning and encourages critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.**





This building and program are 100% focused on education, and not only for traditional learners, but excels at fostering a love for lifelong learning for all students. By offering a diverse range of academic programs and support services, the campus caters to the unique needs and aspirations of its growing student body. The finished campus encourages an agile education and provides a full campus experience while achieving the College's sustainability goals.

**“Many people think about community college and the first thing you think about is education and training...but it goes further than just that. It goes beyond associate’s degrees and certificates. It truly reaches the community.”**

- Former GRCC President, Dr. Bill Pink



#### Project Statistics

- 12 classrooms
- 5 specialty labs including welding, automation, machine tool, electronics, chemistry and biology
- 52,000 SF of repurposed space

GRCC’s vision is to provide relevant educational opportunities that are responsive to the needs of the community and inspire students. To help achieve this vision, GRCC focused its attention on consolidating their operations around the West Michigan Lakeshore to offer their students improved learning spaces with a whole campus experience. Following the consolidation, enrollment at the Lakeshore Campus increased by more than 20 percent after its first functional year, from 1,025 students in fall 2021 to 1,243 in fall 2022.

## Reaching More Students

**“GRCC’s new Lakeshore Campus represents a significant investment in our educational mission. It allows us to extend our reach to a broader demographic of students and give them the ability to pursue their educational goals close to home. It also presents the opportunity for us to engage with and learn from the unique perspectives of the Lakeshore community and tailor our educational offerings to what they need.”**

- GRCC President, Dr. Charles Lepper

Combining four separate locations into one campus provided the college with better tools for scheduling classes, utilizing staff resources, and was still able to offer the same programs to students. All labs and learning spaces fit the GRCC Grand Rapids campus model to ensure that there is an equitable learning experience for GRCC’s students regardless of location.



This project is a great example of a successful adaptive reuse. The transformation of the mall building into a high-quality educational facility not only benefits the students and educators who use the space but extends to the broader city of Holland as they seek to rejuvenate a previously underutilized space. The design is respectful of the existing property while breathing brand new life into the area and demonstrates GRCC’s commitment to the Holland, Zeeland, and West Ottawa area. Previously, there were no community college options available to this community that offered a full, immersive campus feel. Now, the centralized facility promotes community engagement with multiple spaces for community use, creating a hub that encourages relationship building and promotes a sense of community pride.

