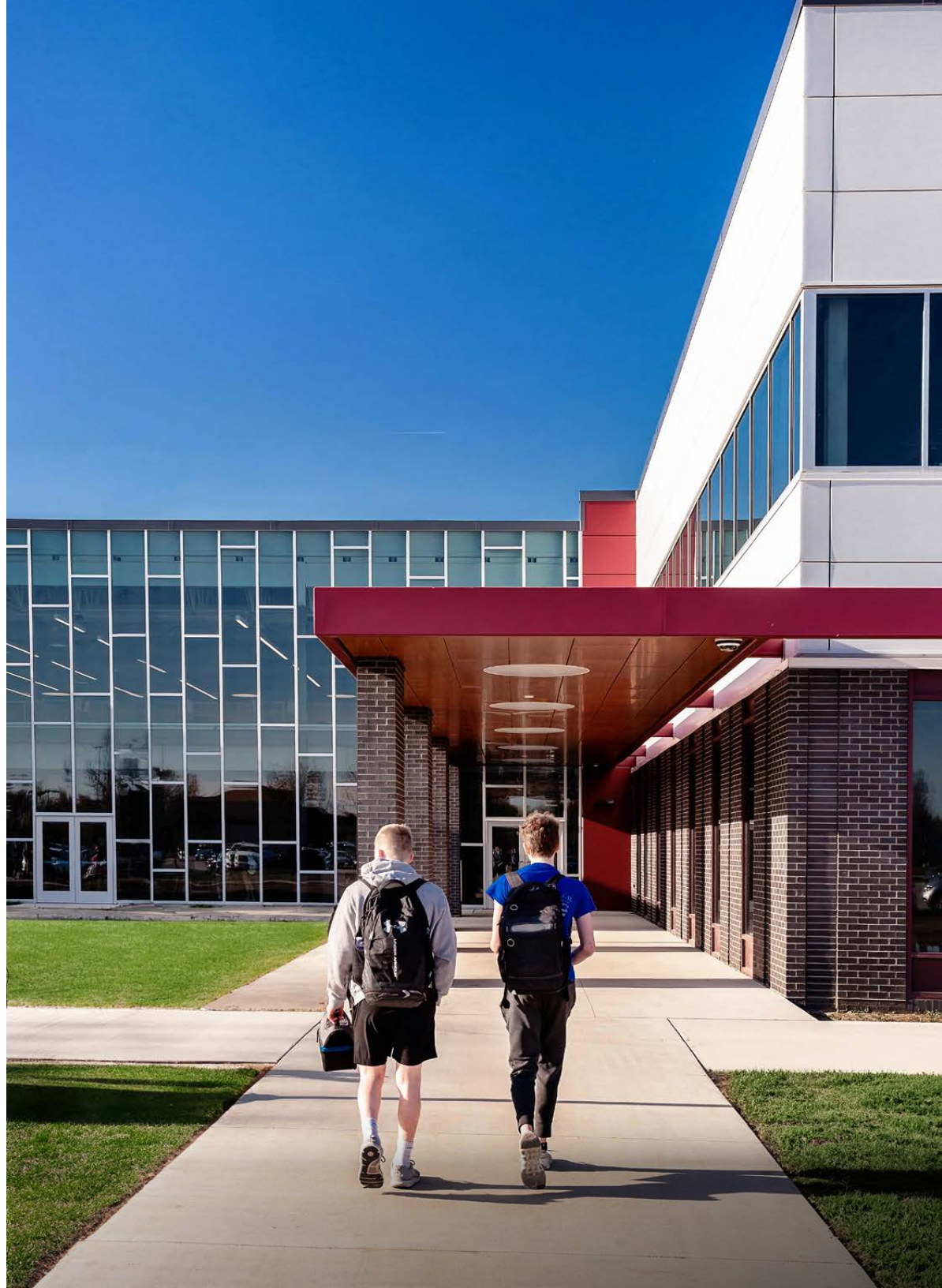


Denver Community School District  
**MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ADDITION**  
Denver, Iowa

**EMERGENT**  
ARCHITECTURE



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **A COMMUNITY-CENTERED VISION FOR 21ST-CENTURY LEARNING**

The Denver Community School District responded to the dual challenge of sustained enrollment growth and a shifting educational paradigm by reimagining its learning environments for the future. With its former K–12 facility reaching capacity, the district envisioned a new kind of space, one that not only expands physical capacity, but also cultivates collaboration, wellness, and adaptability for 21st-century learners. The result is a 56,000-square-foot Middle/High School addition designed to serve as a flexible, inclusive, and student-centered environment.

Anchored by the existing Cyclone Center, a former gymnasium and auditorium, the addition is an integral component of the district's long-range vision. The facility

unifies academic, athletic, and performance spaces into a cohesive, community-centered campus. Its strategic placement near existing infrastructure and residential areas enhances accessibility and strengthens the school's role as a visible and welcoming hub for learning and connection.

Community voice was fundamental throughout the process. The district engaged educators, facilities leaders, and local residents through a series of visioning workshops, planning sessions, and public forums. These conversations informed every decision, grounding the design in shared priorities of flexibility, equity, safety, and innovation.

This addition delivers more than additional square footage; it offers a responsive and dynamic learning environment where students of all abilities can thrive. Classrooms, breakout zones, and shared commons support a range of learning styles and instructional strategies, while integrated technology and daylighting promote comfort, engagement, and sustainability.

The project reflects the district's deep commitment to educational excellence, fiscal stewardship, and the belief that strong schools emerge through strong communities.





*“We like their ability to take our vision for what we wanted and ... then combine this with their knowledge and creativity to create the project we have today.”*

*– Brad Laures  
Superintendent*

Denver Community School District

## SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET

### BUDGET/PROJECT DATA

The Denver Community School District's Middle/High School addition expanded the district's capacity and created a modern learning environment for grades 6–12. Key aspects of the project include:

- **Size: 56,000 square feet** of new construction added to the existing Cyclone Center (formerly a gymnasium and auditorium).
- Dual learning communities designed with flexible classrooms, breakout spaces, and collaborative areas.
- 25-foot planning grid used to optimize efficiency while allowing for future adaptability.
- Integrated with existing athletic fields and the football complex, addressing site challenges like limited space and poor soil conditions.
- **Capacity:** 600 students with option to add on an wing for 300 additional students
- **Enrollment:** 516 students (24-25 school year)

#### The project was funded by:

- \$7.75 million GO bond, passed in March 2020 with over 85% community support.
- Total construction cost of \$16.4 million, covered through bond funds and district reserves.

The addition was completed for the **2022–2023 school year**, delivering a flexible, sustainable, and community-focused learning space.



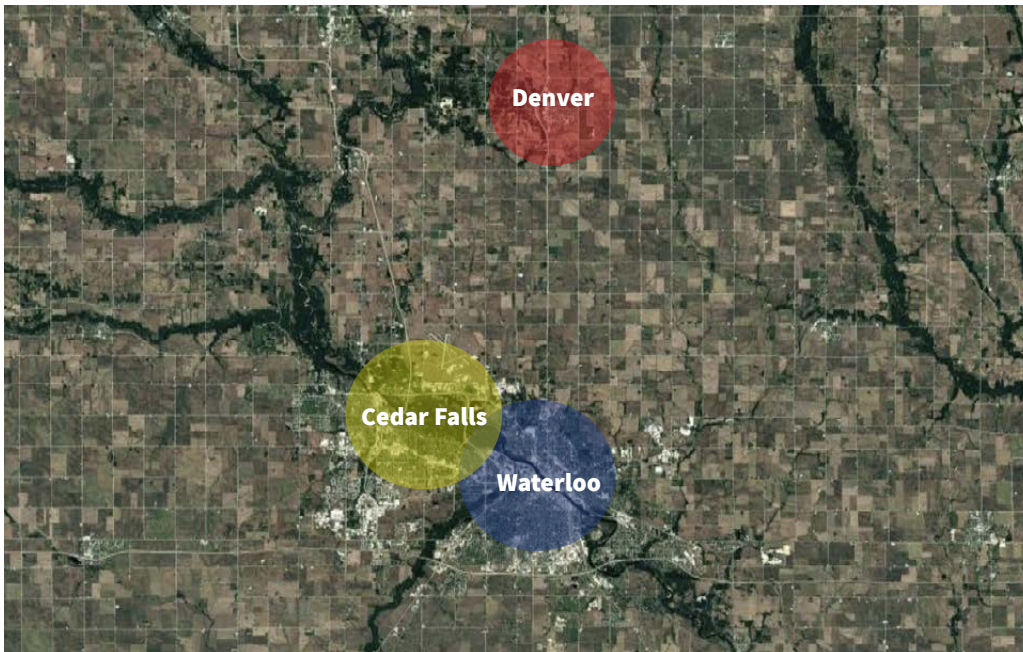
## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS ROOTED IN COMMUNITY VALUES

#### Context

The Denver Middle/High School addition was shaped by a strong commitment to community engagement and thoughtful planning. As the district's enrollment steadily grew, it quickly became clear that the existing facilities were no longer sufficient. The school had outgrown its space, and the district needed a solution that could accommodate future student growth. A successful bond referendum was crucial, and the district was determined to pass it on the first round to avoid delays and meet the immediate needs of the students.

The Denver community, a small but growing rural town where many residents commute to nearby Waterloo and Cedar Falls, was central to this project. The site for the new addition leveraged several important assets: available land, the existing athletic complex, and the Cyclone Center—an auditorium and gymnasium that had served as a hub for district activities. The visibility of the campus from the highway gave the school a prominent presence, reinforcing its role as a community landmark.



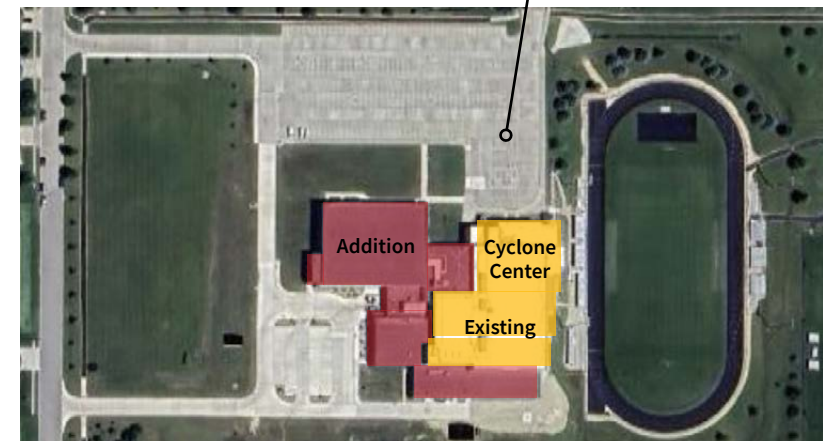
Denver Community School District



Former K-12 Site, before separating out grades 6-12

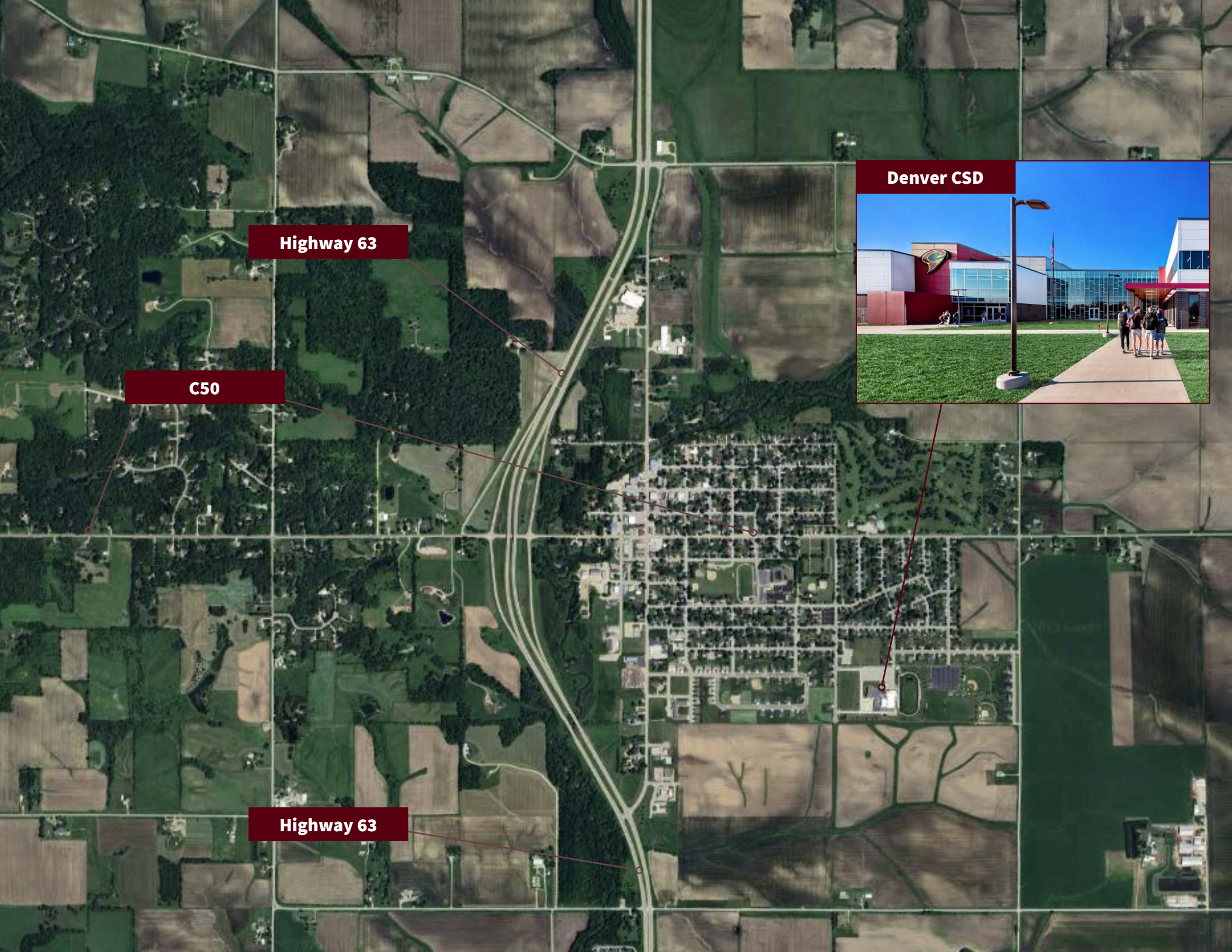


Denver, Iowa



New location for Middle/High School, existing Cyclone Center





Highway 63

C50

Highway 63

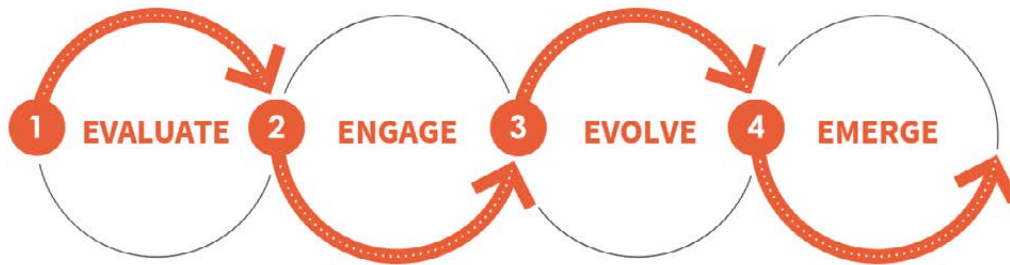
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## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS ROOTED IN COMMUNITY VALUES



#### Engagement Process

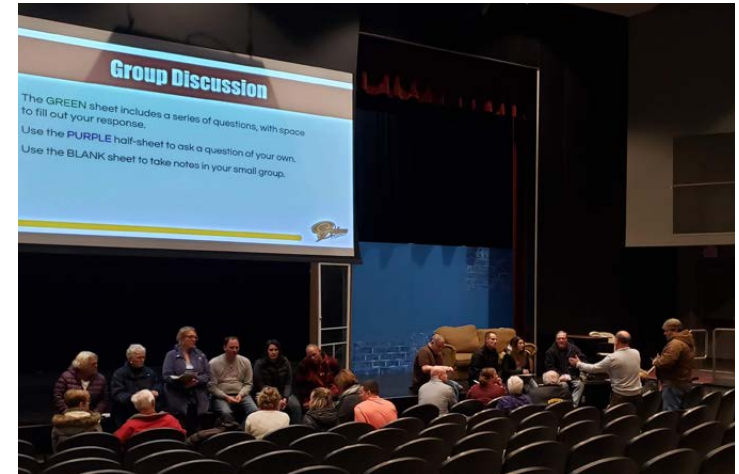
The Denver Middle/High School addition was shaped through Emergent Architecture's Four E's process, **Evaluate**, **Engage**, **Evolve**, and **Emerge**, a methodical, human-centered approach that mirrors the Association for Learning Environments' belief that great schools emerge through meaningful collaboration, thoughtful planning, and design innovation rooted in community values.

In the **Evaluate** phase, the team assessed the existing facilities for safety, accessibility, and future-ready potential, including daylighting, technology, and flexibility. This data laid the groundwork for informed planning. During **Engage**, the district worked closely with educators, a facilities committee, and the broader community to imagine the future of learning in Denver. Early collaboration with stakeholders ensured alignment with local values and educational priorities.

The **Evolve** phase translated these ideas into programmatic strategies, designing flexible, inclusive, and sustainable learning spaces through hands-on workshops with users. In the **Emerge** phase, the vision became reality. Ongoing collaboration throughout construction ensured that the final product honored the community's voice and supported 21st-century teaching and learning.

#### Outcomes

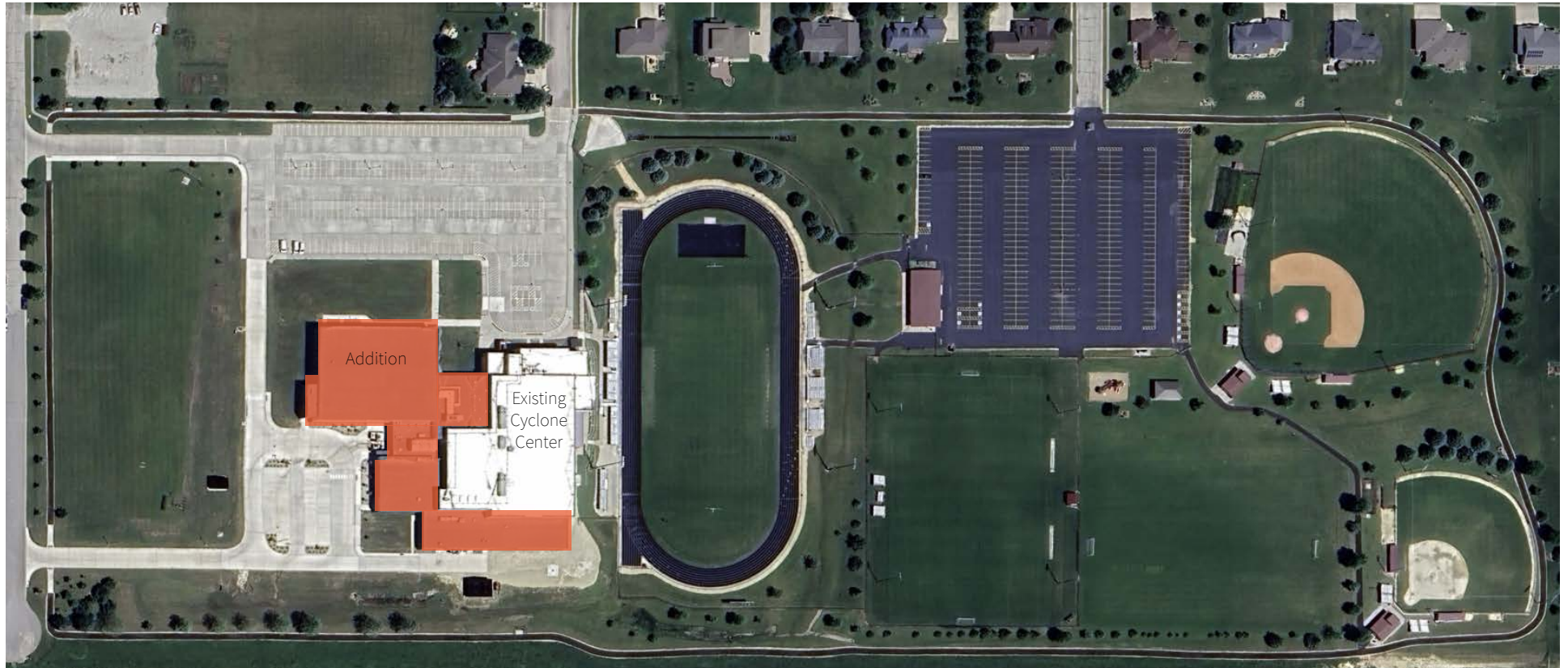
This process fostered broad ownership and trust. The \$7.75 million bond passed with over 85% voter approval, affirming public confidence in the shared vision. Today, the new campus reflects both the educational goals and the community spirit that shaped it, designed to support innovation, connection, and student wellness for years to come.



STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

### A CAMPUS DESIGNED FOR FLEXIBILITY, INCLUSION, AND WELLNESS



Strategically located on the south side of Denver, Iowa, the building reinforces walkability and wellness by placing students within a safe and comfortable walking distance from nearby residential neighborhoods. The site strengthens equitable access while reducing reliance on transportation, supporting both physical activity and environmental sustainability. Integrated with existing athletic and performance facilities, the campus now forms a holistic learning environment, an academic, artistic, and physical development hub that serves as a visible and accessible community landmark.

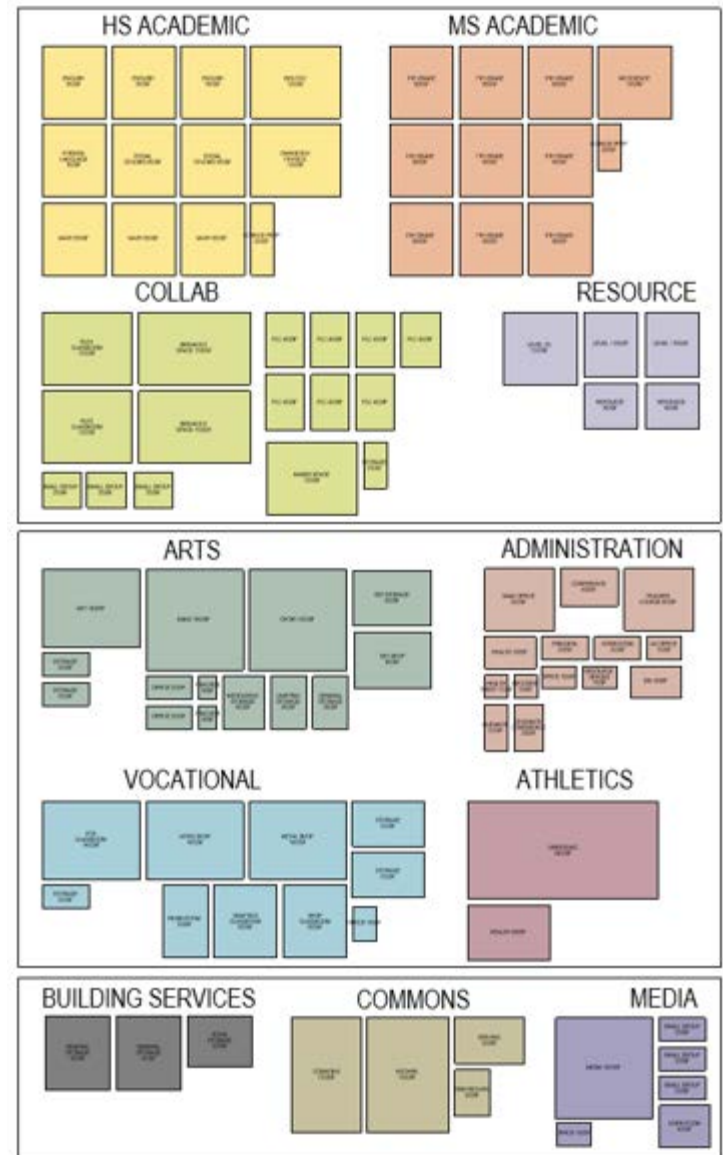


## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

### A CAMPUS DESIGNED FOR FLEXIBILITY, INCLUSION, AND WELLNESS

The Denver Middle/High School addition fulfills the district's vision of a unified, student-centered 6–12 academic campus, anchored by the existing Cyclone Center. Designed to nurture a diverse range of learners, the facility offers flexible learning environments including general education classrooms, science labs, vocational shops, fine arts spaces, special education rooms, and a central media center. At its core is a large, collaborative commons—an open and inclusive hub that fosters connection, interaction, and belonging among students and educators. This arrangement supports varied instructional strategies and cultivates a sense of shared ownership in the learning process.

MIDDLE SCHOOL / HIGH SCHOOL (6-12)					
	Ideal Program: 600 Students				
	Qty	Sq. Ft.	Total Area	Occ.	Total Occ.
<b>Classrooms:</b>					
6th Grade	3	850	2,550	25	75
LA/SS/Math	3	850	2,550	25	75
7th Grade	3	850	2,550	25	75
LA/SS/Math	3	850	2,550	25	75
8th Grade	3	850	2,550	25	75
LA/SS/Math	3	850	2,550	25	75
Middle School Shared					
Science	1	1,000	1,000	25	25
Science Prep/Storage	1	200	200		
High School Academic					
English	3	850	2,550	25	75
Foreign Language	1	850	850	25	25
Social Studies	2	850	1,700	25	50
Math	3	850	2,550	25	75
Science:					
Biology	1	1,200	1,200	25	25
Chemistry/Physics	1	1,200	1,200	25	25
Prep. Rooms	1	300	300		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>21</b>		<b>19,200</b>		<b>525</b>
<b>Collaborative Areas</b>					
Project / Flex Classroom	2	1,200	2,400	25	50
Maker Space	1	1,200	1,200	20	20
Storage	1	200	200		
Breakout Space	2	1,500	3,000		
Small Group	3	250	750		
Teacher PLC	7	400	2,800		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>10,350</b>		<b>70</b>



## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

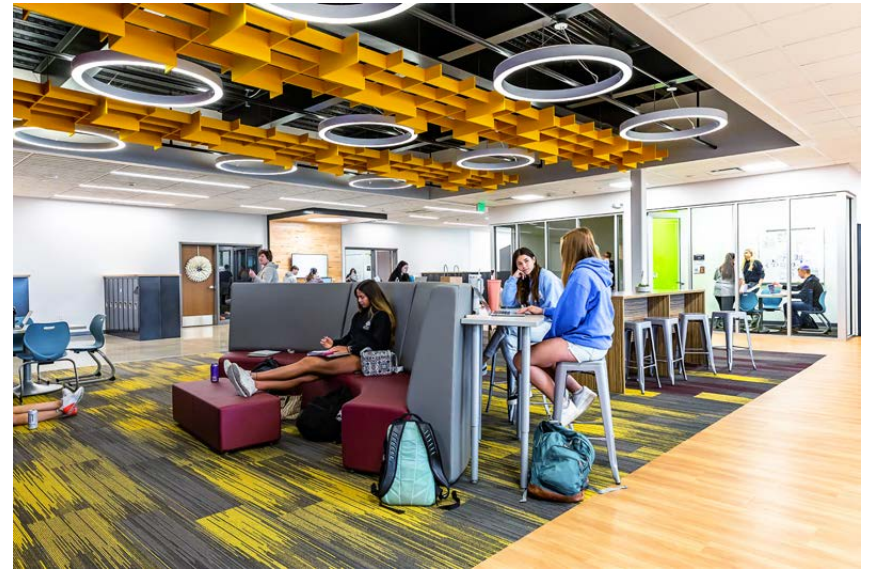
### **A CAMPUS DESIGNED FOR FLEXIBILITY, INCLUSION, AND WELLNESS**

The design of the school's physical environment emphasizes connection, creativity, and student well-being. Learning spaces are intentionally flexible, allowing teachers and students to shift easily between direct instruction, small group activities, and hands-on, project-based work. A central, light-filled commons serves as the heart of the school, encouraging collaboration and movement while maintaining clear sightlines across academic areas.

Innovation is thoughtfully integrated throughout. Classrooms and breakout zones include modern instructional technology that supports a range of teaching strategies. Furniture is adaptable, allowing students to shape their environment to fit the task or group. Access to natural light and views outside creates a calm and focused atmosphere that helps students stay grounded in their learning.

The building's layout promotes equity and inclusion by ensuring that all students can access and participate in shared spaces. Collaborative zones and commons are centrally located and designed to welcome everyone. Varied furniture options support different physical needs and learning preferences, helping every student feel comfortable and empowered.

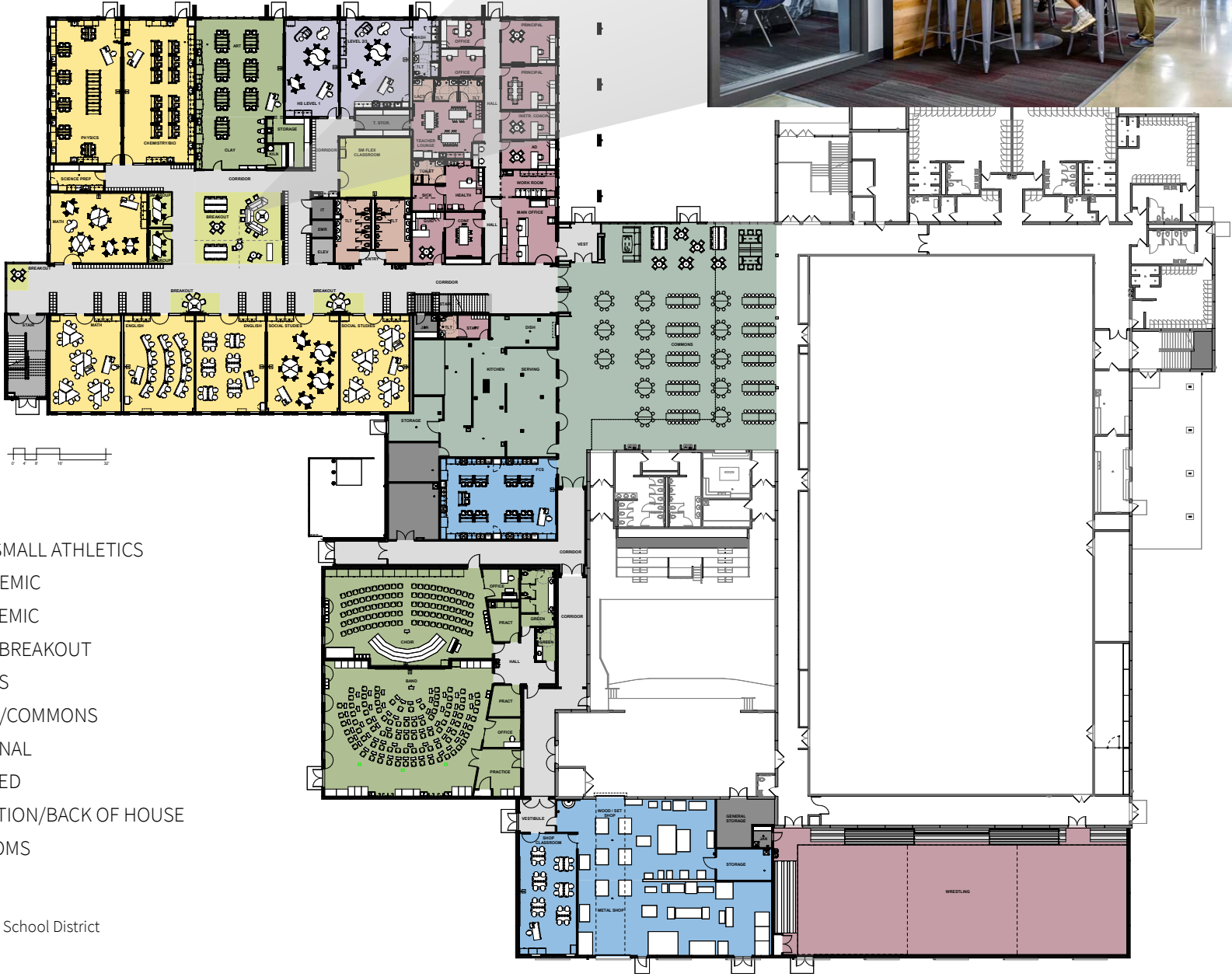
Sustainability and wellness were major drivers of the design. The school features LED lighting with responsive controls to reduce energy use. Natural materials and biophilic elements reinforce a sense of calm and connection. Air quality was a top priority during the HVAC selection process, resulting in a system that supports efficient, healthy air circulation and is prepared for future upgrades.





PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

# FLOOR PLAN - FIRST FLOOR



- ADMIN/ SMALL ATHLETICS
- MS ACADEMIC
- HS ACADEMIC
- COLLAB/BREAKOUT
- FINE ARTS
- KITCHEN/COMMONS
- VOCATIONAL
- SPECIAL ED
- CIRCULATION/BACK OF HOUSE
- RESTROOMS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

# FLOOR PLAN - SECOND FLOOR



Centralized Media center

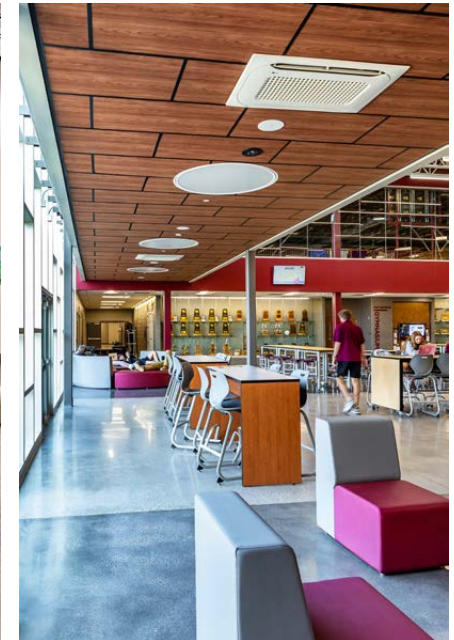
- ADMIN/ SMALL ATHLETICS
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- RESTROOMS



## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

### CAMPUS BRAND IDENTITY

Every element of the building was intentionally designed to reflect the identity and spirit of the Denver Community School District. The architecture, interior finishes, graphics, and color palette all reinforce the Cyclone brand, creating a cohesive and recognizable environment that instills a sense of pride in students, staff, and the broader community. From the prominent display of school colors in the commons and athletic areas to subtle branding integrated into signage and furnishings, the building serves as a daily reminder of shared values and school culture. This attention to identity has helped strengthen student belonging and community connection, making the facility not just a place for learning, but a source of inspiration and pride.





## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### A LEARNING ECOSYSTEM BUILT FOR FLEXIBILITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND GROWTH

The educational vision for the Denver Middle/High School addition was rooted in a desire to move beyond traditional classroom models and create an environment that supports collaboration, project-based learning, and flexibility. District leadership set out to design spaces that would reflect and elevate modern teaching methods while preparing students for success in both college and careers. The goal was not only to meet today's educational standards, but to inspire curiosity, independence, and engagement.

The planning process included visioning workshops with educators, where shared goals were defined and prioritized. These included creating spaces that allow for multiple instructional strategies, promote collaboration between students and teachers, and encourage ownership of learning. The result is a school that actively supports a wide range of teaching and learning approaches, both structured and informal.

The layout of the building supports a highly adaptable and student-focused experience. Classrooms are arranged in dual learning communities, each anchored by flexible breakout and collaboration zones. These shared spaces are used for small group instruction, independent work, peer collaboration, and teacher planning—often simultaneously. The transparent and open layout invites movement and connection while allowing supervision and flexibility.





## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### **A LEARNING ECOSYSTEM BUILT FOR FLEXIBILITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND GROWTH**



The environment is designed to accommodate a wide variety of teaching styles. From direct instruction to inquiry-based learning, teachers have the tools and space to adjust their approach throughout the day. Every classroom is equipped with integrated A/V systems, allowing educators to seamlessly shift between presentations, digital collaboration, and hands-on work. Writable surfaces and moveable furniture allow students to reconfigure their learning spaces to match the activity or group size.

## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### **A LEARNING ECOSYSTEM BUILT FOR FLEXIBILITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND GROWTH**



Inclusivity is supported by the variety of learning settings provided throughout the building. Special education classrooms are fully integrated into the academic wings, and learning zones offer multiple types of seating, various furniture heights, and opportunities for both quiet focus and social interaction. Collaborative areas and commons are centrally located and accessible to all students, promoting a culture of equity and shared ownership.



## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### A LEARNING ECOSYSTEM BUILT FOR FLEXIBILITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND GROWTH



Family Consumer Science Room



Wood Shop

The building design also supports interdisciplinary learning. Career and technical education spaces, fine arts rooms, and science labs are situated adjacent to core academic areas, encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration and real-world learning connections.



Centralized Media Center



Fine Arts Room

The central media center functions not only as a resource hub, but as a place for group work, exploration, and creative thinking.

## RESULTS

### A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION WITH MEASURABLE IMPACT



The Denver Middle/High School addition stands as a powerful testament to what is possible when a community dreams boldly and works together. What began as a response to growth became something much more: a flexible, future-ready environment that has transformed how students learn, connect, and thrive.

Every day, the building comes alive with collaboration and curiosity. Breakout spaces and shared learning zones are used constantly, supporting hands-on, project-based learning and allowing educators to meet students where they are. Teachers report deeper engagement, stronger participation, and a renewed sense of purpose in how the building supports their work. The design also creates a seamless bridge between middle and high school, nurturing continuity and supporting students as they grow.

This project delivered on every promise made to the community. By consolidating grades 6 through 12 into a single, cohesive campus, the district strengthened its programs and created new opportunities for shared resources and mentorship. The school's presence, visible, accessible, and unmistakably proud, has become a beacon in the town of Denver. It reflects not only educational excellence, but local identity and shared values.

The overwhelming support for the \$7.75 million bond, approved by more than 85% of voters, speaks volumes. So does the fact that the project was completed within its \$16.4 million budget, meeting ambitious sustainability and wellness goals along the way. From efficient systems to biophilic design, every detail was chosen with care, for the planet, for student health, and for long-term stewardship.

And the impact has extended far beyond the metrics. Students feel ownership of their school in ways they hadn't before. Teachers describe a noticeable shift in behavior, energy, and connection. The branded environment reinforces a deep sense of pride and belonging. This is more than a building. It's a reflection of what happens when people come together to create something lasting, for students, for the community, and for the future.

