Executive Summary
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In 2007, flooding in the City of Rushford caused extensive damage to the public school. After lengthy discussion regarding project scope and the mechanisms of funding, in 2015, Rushford-Peterson Schools passed a $38 million referendum to replace the destroyed school with a new PreK-12 school. The school was built on a site already owned by the school district, adjacent to their athletic fields. Only nine of the 16 acres were suitable for construction, so design efficiency was essential.

An additional challenge was to design four distinct schools into one, compact 175,000 square foot building that consists of early childhood, elementary, middle and high school. It was therefore important to create functional common spaces that work for all age groups: the student dining commons, circulation, gymnasium, and auditorium. Building Zoning access was also implemented for common areas to be open for community and evening events while securing other parts of the school.
Scope of Work & Budget/
School & Community Engagement
Rushford is located in southern Minnesota. The city’s total area is 1.73 square miles and the city itself has a population just shy of 2,000. The city is located in Minnesota’s ‘bluff county’ and the breathtaking landscape can be seen from the continuous flow of large windows throughout the school.

In 2007, flooding in the City of Rushford caused extensive damage to the public school. After extensive discussion between the community and the school district regarding the project scope, and funding mechanisms, in 2015, Rushford-Peterson Schools passed a $38 million referendum to replace the destroyed school with a new PreK-12 School. The state of Minnesota supplied an additional $20 million to the project due to the flood damage. The school was built on a 16 acres site that was already owned by the school district. 9 of that 16 acres was suitable for construction.

The new school serves nearly 700 students in the Rushford-Peterson area. The perseverance of the community proved to be the catalyst that allowed this new building to be realized. 10 years to the day of the regional flood, the school opened its doors for their open house, welcoming students, teachers, alumni and community members alike. Ten years before the flooding had brought this community together and the new school will continue to do so for generations to come.
Educational Environment
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Flexibility is key for creating learning environments that work for multiple age groups as well as each individual student, and it was a vital component of the design at Rushford-Peterson. A variety of furniture was provided in and beyond the classroom to fit the unique learning needs of each student. Classrooms include movable tables and chairs of various heights and sizes. This flexibility also enables adaptability of spaces for many uses.

Furniture in the classroom moves easily to accommodate the needs of each teacher and student based on the day’s tasks. A variety of seating was also provided to give students the ability to have an individualized experience even in a classroom setting.

Breakout spaces adjacent to classrooms provide a variety of different-sized spaces for various learning settings including large spaces for presentation and group work, and small niches and conference spaces for a quieter setting for individual and small group work. These spaces are utilized throughout the day by students and staff.

Common spaces throughout the school have flexibility, offering each age level comfortable seating and space to dine, socialize and study. They also provide spaces that the community can utilize as well. Building zoning was implemented for common areas to be open for the community for events while still being able to secure the other parts of the school.
Physical Environment
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Rushford is located in southern Minnesota. The city’s total area is 1.73 square miles and the city itself has a population just shy of 2,000. The city is located in Minnesota’s ‘bluff county’ and the breathtaking landscape can be seen from the continuous flow of large windows throughout the school.

The school sits on a 16 acres site that was already owned by the school district. 9 of that 16 acres was suitable for construction. Windows bring in natural light throughout the school into nearly every teaching station and central breakout/collaboration area. Natural materials including wood and local stone are incorporated into the design to create warmth and reflect the beauty of the region.

The school is a source of pride for the residents and students alike and serves as a community center for all to learn and enjoy.
Results of the Project
RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Just over a decade ago the land the new school overlooks was underwater due to flooding. The new school stands as a reminder of the resilience and pride of this community. Retired Superintendent Chuck Ehler said, “The new school is a reflection of the ‘can do’ attitude that was embraced during the time we were rebuilding out community. The building is a testament to the ‘never give up’ motto embraced by Rushford-Peterson that has assisted you throughout the process.”

This new school brings ‘new life’ to the Rushford-Peterson area, providing a bright future for its students and community. It is truly a community center for all to enjoy.