

*Cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students...
One child at a time.*

Building On Tradition – A Vision For The Future: The *New* Sunset Ridge School



A Dynamic Learning Environment...to help each child reach their fullest potential.





Dear Community Members,

We are thrilled to unveil the visual plans for the new Sunset Ridge School, which will be a one-of-a-kind educational facility. Like Dorothy Clark, who brought the much-needed, first school to Northfield in 1930, we too are building a school for our Village that is a pioneering, state-of-the art-facility where children can learn, thrive and dream.

As part of this process, we met with and listened to the dreams that the District 29 community had for this new facility. They imagined a safe, timeless school, with adequate space for inventive curriculum, athletics, performing and visual arts. Stakeholders voiced that the building itself should be an educational tool, one where students can learn about their environment and green energy. After reviewing the latest educational research, we agreed that this school should further facilitate student growth, curiosity and innovation. Most important, the new school should honor our great history while keeping an eye towards the future. After almost two years of planning, we are delighted that our dream school will soon become a reality.

With ample space dedicated to the academic, artistic, athletic and emotional needs of our students, the new building has been designed to retain a small school feel and be easy to navigate. Quickly understood as one enters the building, students walk through the Village Square, an initial gathering space for the entire community, before walking to their academic neighborhoods. The neighborhoods are designed in a manner that promotes a crescendo of awareness, recognizing the diverse developmental needs of our 4th through 8th graders.

Classrooms are warm, welcoming spaces for students to practice innovation and creative thinking. Stemming off of the Village Square are the wellness and music program spaces with an adjacent performing arts theater. All spaces will be flexible and adaptable to changes in curriculum, pedagogy and student enrollment.

The dedicated art, music and physical education facilities demonstrate the District's ongoing commitment to educating the "whole child." Unique learning spaces such as the maker space, broadcast room, outdoor "green" veranda, commons area and learning center provide environments for students to explore and discover in ways never before possible. Gathering spaces to support collaboration, in small and large groups are evident throughout. We are also proud to be developing an environmentally conscious building that will serve as a teaching tool, directly connecting students to the larger ecosystem. The new school pays homage to the District's storied history, with connections to the past weaved throughout the facility.

It has been an honor to be involved in the design and creation of this incredible new school. We are grateful to the many staff, students and community members who have shared their time, talents, gifts and resources to ensure that the dream becomes a reality!

Debbie Papas
President,
Board of Education

Edward J. Stange, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

WHY BUILD A NEW SCHOOL?

In 2014, the Board of Education initiated a comprehensive review of repairs and improvements needed to ensure that Sunset Ridge School would continue to accommodate the current student body while enhancing the environment for generations to come.

The School's original structure is 85-years-old and surrounded by four additions constructed at various points in its history. A comprehensive assessment of the existing facility indicated the need to replace all domestic water pipes, roofs, windows, boilers, drain tiles and sewers, as well as the need to abate existing asbestos in the floor and in the walls. In addition, the facility lacks sufficient instructional space for the performing arts (band, orchestra, choir) and indoor athletics.

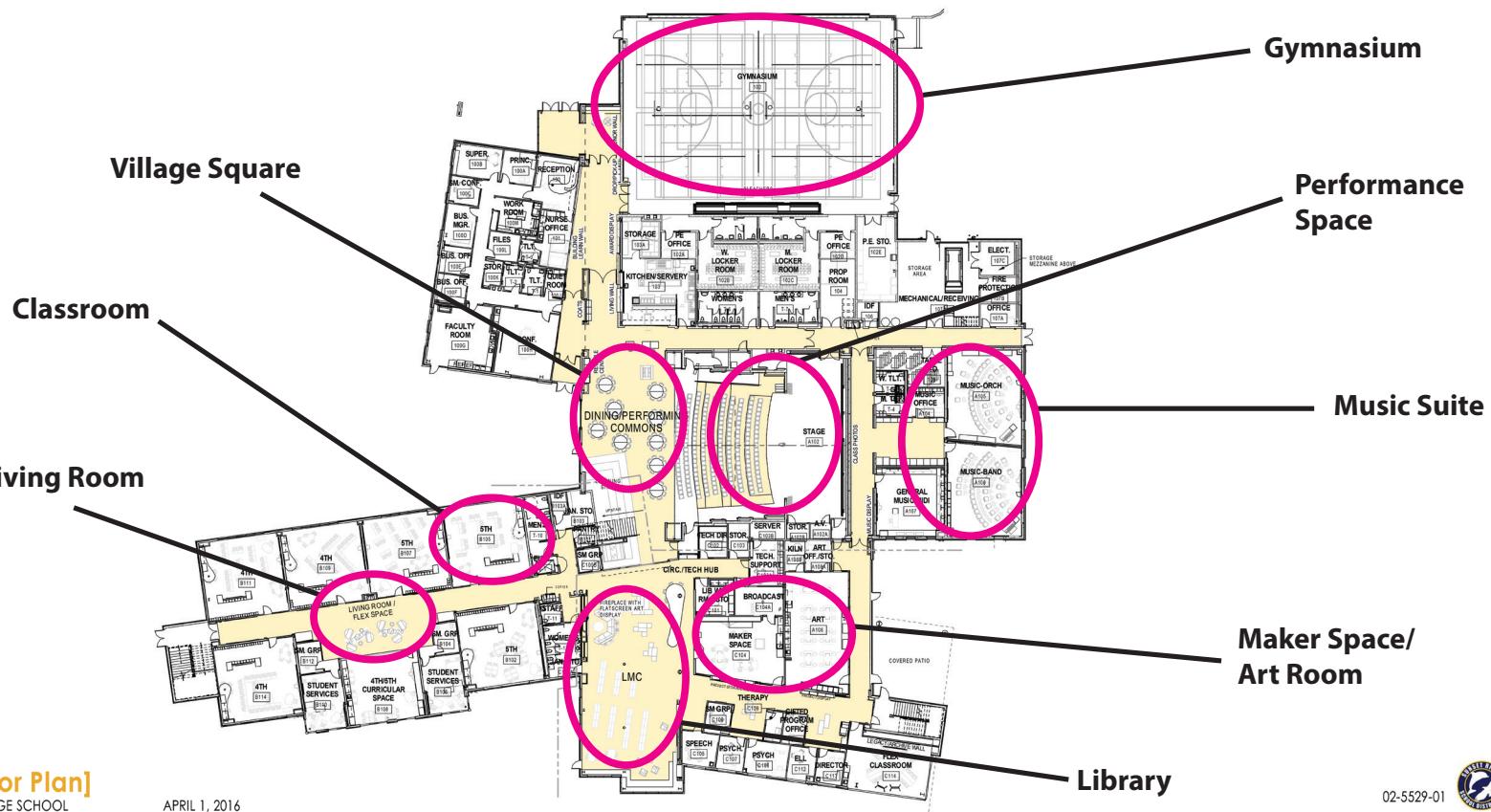
A financial analysis indicated that the cost to address these issues would be approximately \$20 million. In contrast, constructing a state-of-the-art replacement school was estimated to cost \$25-\$28 million. After extensive review and community input, the District 29 Board of Education voted to pursue the construction of a new school.

The 70,000-square-foot new facility is designed to serve approximately 400 children in grades 4 through 8 and is expected to open in August 2017. The expansive new facility is designed to enhance our students' educational, social, emotional and character development. Spacious common areas promote a sense of community and provide modernized space for students and teachers to share enriching experiences.



THE ENVIRONMENT IN MIND

The new school is designed with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (or LEED) in mind, actively promoting environmental education and responsibility throughout the building. Targeting LEED Gold, highlights of the project include a Learning About the Building (LAB) wall designed to educate visitors about the building, a living wall with live filtrating plant material, a rain garden, an indoor fish tank and a second floor green patio for outdoor instruction and leisure.



LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS

District 29 has managed its finances conservatively and effectively for several decades. During this time, the District also accrued a favorable fund balance that allowed the Board to consider a significant investment in the school facilities, without sacrificing its financial security. Specifically, the project is being funded with approximately \$25 million from lease certificates and \$2 million in fund balance from the District's operating funds. In addition to accessing some fund balance reserves, the District is utilizing a capital lease option to finance the construction of the new school over a 20-year period. In the future, a portion of the lease certificates could be refunded with "funding bonds" and paid from the District's Debt Service Extension Base. Importantly, the District will not be seeking a referendum to increase taxes to pay for the construction of the new school.

While District 29 continues to maintain a healthy percentage of reserve funds to safeguard against future uncertainties, the Board remains fiscally conservative and is dedicated to continued long-term financial stability. Recently, members of the District Administration participated in a rating's call with Moody's Investors Service and received an Aa1 rating for the debt issuances and they reaffirmed the Aaa rating on the District's General Obligation Limited Tax Debt Service Extension Base. These high ratings reflect many important financial factors including healthy operating reserves, strong operating history demonstrated by strong fiscal management and moderate levels of slowly amortized debt. The tradition of financial excellence remains strong at District 29. The District is also seeking private donations to assist in financing certain aspects of the project.

“VILLAGE SQUARE” UNITES ALL

The Student Commons is the central gathering spot in the school and is referred to as the “Village Square.” This multi-functional room provides a fully equipped stage, assembly area and dining space. Adjoining the music and instrumental programs, it creates a dynamic social and community center. A movable wall, when closed, can allow for simultaneous activities to occur, such as a lunch spot for students, staff trainings and awards banquets. When the wall is open, the space seats close to 500 for large performances and full school events.



THE ARTS TAKE THE SPOTLIGHT

The new school will highlight the District's commitment to the performing arts through a multi-purpose auditorium/performance space. With movable seating, capable of supporting a variety of functions, this space will be the central hub for a variety of instructional, entertainment and performance activities. Adjacent to the auditorium will be the dedicated and centralized band, orchestra and choir instructional rooms. The visual arts are equally honored with the inclusion of an expansive art room and "maker space" room, connected to an open, yet protected, outdoor art patio.



A COMMUNITY AT HEART

The District's long-time belief in the value of community is symbolized by the centerpiece of the new design – the “Village Square.” The square will be surrounded by distinct “academic neighborhoods” that are organized by grade level. The school's youngest students in 4th and 5th grades will attend classes in a cluster of learning spaces on the main floor. The academic neighborhood for 6th graders will be built on the second floor. A third cluster for 7th and 8th grade students will also be located on the second floor.

Gathering places for small and large groups are interspersed throughout the facility to support collaboration, innovation and enrichment. Expansive grade level centers allow the facility to function as three “mini-schools” within a school. Classrooms are organized around larger team spaces or “living rooms” (pictured below) that provide for variation of group size, differentiation of instruction and potentially larger projects.





21ST CENTURY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE

The new school is designed to include a number of state-of-the-art instructional spaces with technology incorporated into every classroom. Large classrooms are showered with an abundance of natural light and modulated by individual temperature control systems. Classrooms are designed to be flexible spaces that can be repurposed based on changing needs and enrollment.



INNOVATION, INTEGRATION, COLLABORATION

The school will host a library within the academic wing – a forward-thinking learning center designed to accommodate the current process of learning, which is more collaborative, interactive and technology-based than ever before. The new space can seamlessly adapt to changing curriculum and provides convenient access to information and expanded teaching and learning materials with space for large classes or small groups.

WHERE HISTORY AND PROGRESS MEET

While looking towards the future, the District leadership remained mindful of the past. Many historical aspects of Sunset Ridge School will be integrated into the new school to actively teach students about our rich past as well as our architectural and cultural heritage. Highlighting the list are the inclusion of the main lobby fireplace and 1930's casework, trim (pictured above) and chalkboards from the original two classrooms, the integration of student murals and the inclusion of photos of past graduating classes.

THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE

Students will also enjoy the benefits of state-of-the-art science and language laboratories, a special “maker’s space” (pictured below) area for students to build, explore and create hands-on three-dimensional projects. The art studio is adjacent to the maker space room to not only encourage integrated project-based learning (STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math), but also provide a seamless flow between educational activities. There will also be a broadcast/AV Production space

with a staffed technology “help” desk support area. A central “gathering stair” connects the village square with the second level classrooms and library with a reading loft. This element provides nested areas for small group or student community interactions that overlook the village square activities. In addition, the reading loft opens to an outdoor rooftop patio learning space, which will include a living green roof and rainwater collection system to use for watering patio plants.



MUSIC ABOUNDS

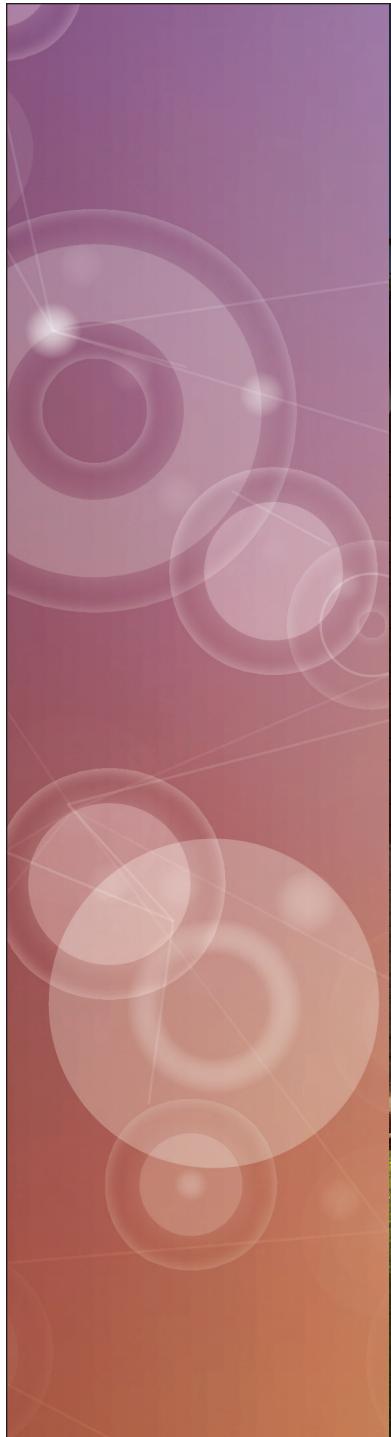
The music and instrumental programs are located with close access to performance spaces, creating opportunities for students to learn, practice and perform. The music suite showcases a performance stage, rehearsal hall and ample instrument and equipment storage.





ROOM TO PLAY..AND SPECTATE!

Students and spectators will get to experience athletics in a manner never before seen in the District. The new high school regulation size gym will almost double the size of the existing gymnasium, providing sufficient room to accommodate simultaneous activities and to house tournament sports with comfortable seating for spectators. The gymnasium facilities provide a range of fitness and wellness opportunities.

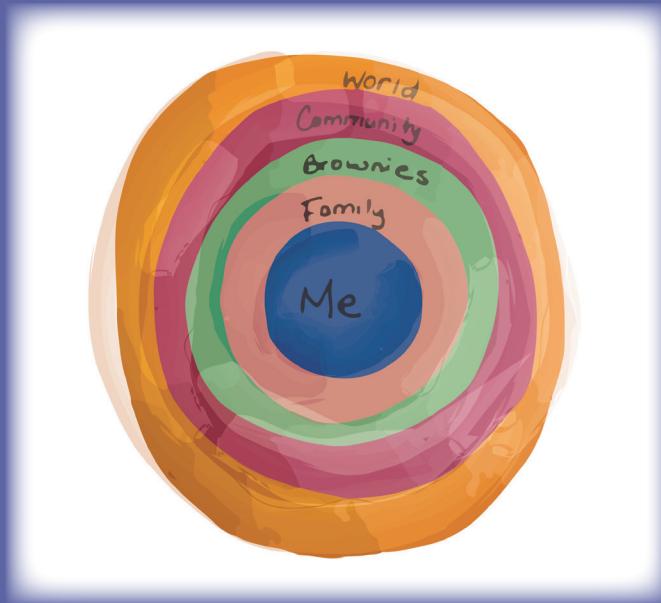




“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

~ William Butler Yates





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