# GRANT HIGH SCHOOL | PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS | PORTLAND, OREGON



### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

For this \$138 million 1,800-student modernization of a 1920's historically significant school set within prestigious Grant Park, a highly successful yearlong public engagement process critically uncovered how Grant students were experiencing social injustices that persisted solely because of the building's architecture and organization, despite the school's progressive commitment to equity. The historically significant structure disadvantaged students by color, lower socio-economic status, and gender identity. The design team's work focused on leading the initiative for 100% allaccess, inclusive restrooms; fluid internal connectivity between all levels and all spaces; excavating 5 disconnected, fully submerged basements; healing the relationship to Grant Park; and marrying yesterday's historical character with tomorrow's best-practice teaching spaces. Grant's redesign offers a study in how bold spatial solutions can overcome; creating learning environments that intentionally address legacies of disadvantage through design; and how, by designing for all, Grant has realized a more physical, racial, socioeconomic and gender-inclusive community in which all students feel welcome, accepted, and connected. Now a revitalized, equitable home for learning, Grant's modernization (of building stock ubiquitous in the American school experience) demonstrates that restoratively addressing hidden bias will empower students to build inclusive communities; uplifting the next generation through the power of architecture.

SCOPE OF	OWNER	SITE	BUILDING	GRADES	STUDENT	SQUARE FEET	OCCUPANCY	CONSTRUCTION	COST PER
WORK AND	Portland	AREA	AREA		CAPACITY	PER PUPIL		COST	SQUARE FOOT
RUDGET	Public Schools	10.2 acres	293,360 SF	9-12	1,800+	163 SF	Fall 2019	\$138M	\$470

# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### **COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

Portland Public School's historic Grant High School is fully nestled into Portland's beloved Grant Park and is immediately surrounded by highly-desirable neighborhoods like Irvington and Laurelhurst, that are characterized by historic single-family homes, quiet residential streets and large mature trees in inner Northeast Portland. Equally within Grant's boundary are culturally vibrant neighborhoods at the heart of The Soul District. In this creative center, Portland's African American community has fostered business development, artistic expression, multicultural preservation and community advocacy.

Grant High School, together with Grant Park, has been considered the center of the neighborhood since the early twentieth century. With Grant's shared fields and open green space, an entry portico referred to as the "front porch" of the neighborhood, and a broad front lawn where the community has gathered for decades, it is no wonder that early in the design process there was a community-wide call to eradicate the boundary and buildings that had, over time, infilled the campus and severed the connection between the two public institutions. Ideally, this project would erase the line between where the park stops and the school begins.

#### **ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS**

Stakeholders included not only the Design Advisory Group (DAG) made up of 20+ members including the principal, students, teachers, parents, neighbors, local businesses, alumni, and a school board member, but also neighborhood activists, alumni, Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), local neighborhood



associations, and the general communityat-large.

Also included were school partners such as Head Start, Providence Health System, and other wrap-around support service providers.

The year-long public engagement process consistently drew community participation of well over 100 people, and was followed by in-depth stakeholder engagement, over 100+ user group meetings and countless student outreach sessions. The inclusive and transparent process ensured that all voices were heard and considered in the outcome. The resulting collaborative co-creation of the design outcome developed strong relationships between the students, the school, the School District and the design team that are based on trust, respect and mutual support.

#### **AVAILABLE ASSETS**

While the environmental footprint of new construction dominates the discussion about sustainability goals, the successful reuse of existing facilities provides the biggest impact in regard to resource preservation. Grant's modernization exemplifies how the reuse of an existing structure dominated by double-loaded corridor traditions can result in an effective, modern, collaborative high school learning environment that is not compromised, but instead enriched by its historic structure and character. Additional assets included:

- Grant Park
- An Historic Building
- An Activated Community and Student Body
- An Engaged School Leadership Team
- A Strong Social Justice Curriculum & Focus
- · A Desire to Re-imagine with the Rebuild

#### **PROJECT CHALLENGES**

Although the original 1920's Grant High School buildings were beautiful, prominent historic structures, the student experience was rife with challenges, including:

- A Campus Without a Heart
- 5 Disparate, Disconnected, Daylight-lacking Basements (30% of the learning spaces-as well as the cafeteria-occupied 5 basements in sub-par condition and void of daylight, creating legacy socio-economic and racial division)
- A Large, Comprehensive High School Program Overflowing a Tiny 10-Acre Site
- Accessibility and Equity Challenges
- Double-loaded, Highly Irregular Structure
- Significant Lack of Maintenance
- Environmental Material Concerns, Seismic Challenges, Failing Brick and the Inherent "Unknowns" of an Historic Structure
- Challenged Budget

#### A LEGACY OF RACIAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC DIVIDE

The original Grant High School cafeteria was located in the basement and carried decades-old, unwanted legacies of social inequity as students on free or reduced meals were sent to the dark and dreary basement, while students that could afford it were eating upstairs, outside or off-campus at will.





The Best High School In America... How Does It Compare With Yours?

PHOTOGRAPHED FOR PAGEANT BY FRED LYON

BY CHARLOTTE and ED GROSHELL

IN THE SEARCH for the nation's best high school, PAGEANT consulted with dozens of top educators. None would award any that accolade. But Portland, Oregon's Grant invariably appeared high on their Ten Best lists, so we went to Grant to find out why. This is our report. The dean of boys at Grant High School is a very busy man. Part of his job is to take charge of discipline and attendance, and since there are some 1.200 boys at Grant "The lowest levels were taught in the basement and the higher levels were taught in the upper floors...one of the things you see between those two classes is a huge socioeconomic rift."

DYLAN LEEMAN, GRANT HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER



The Moment You Hear It

**UNDERSERVED** 

**STUDENTS** 

(2016-17)

Nembers of the Grant community recall how he N-word has affected their lives

ranke Triplett. 46, counselor (below) grow up with a do to doal conciousness, as well as price for who i as as a back person. The first first responses of the personal attack the new datase when I was aband 15 i awa d att over mix looker and consequent it, I helt pretty violated, honesty, that the person or group people mould taget the (boker, and in the hars the gates board to people mould taget the (boker, and in the hars the gates board to the new data was more in the form of part when we were as body, and to physical needed. Dot back found of part when we were as body, and to optical and the second of the second of the second of the second physical needed. The found of part when we were as body, and to optical in elements that black the second of parts of the methods the second of the second second of the second

> "I'm always the one bringing it up, and I've asked people... 'Why don't you eat in the cafeteria?'...we all know the real reason... it's an ugly truth that people don't want to really think about."

## VALUE OF PROCESS AND PROJECT TO COMMUNITY AT LARGE

Grant High School's community is passionate, involved, and working towards educational justice. With the school mission " Every Student Matters, Every Student Succeeds," Grant's community called for the rebuild to address legacy inadequacies in the building for the students furthest from educational justice.

The Grant High School modernization will result in an **inclusive learning environment that fosters strong, productive relationships among students, teachers, and the community** through inspiring, flexible spaces that honor the history while supporting students' success in college, career, and life.

DESIGN ADVISORY GROUP'S COMMUNITY CHARTER



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## **CONTRIBUTING VOICES:**

DESIGN ADVISORY GROUP	PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOI				
GRANT PARK	BOARD OF EDUCATION				
COMMUNITY	PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION CITY OF PORTLAND STATE HISTORIC				
STUDENTS					
PARENTS					
TEACHERS & STAFF	PRESERVATION OFFICE				



#### < LEGACY

Grant High School was originally built on a tight 10.2 acres site in 1923, and then endured eight additions and renovations over the next 47 years; until it was left to languish unimproved for another 49 years. Parking, portables and ill-placed 50s, 60s, & 70s additions congested the center of campus, pushed students to the perimeter, and created an unsupervised barrier between the school & the adjacent Grant Park.

## CONTEXT

Grant's 10-acre site is co-located with Grant Park, a separate but co-joined 20-acre treasure in a residential neighborhood near a busy, business district and several key cross-town thoroughfares.









# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



#### **EDUCATIONAL VISION AND GOALS**

By drawing on individual strengths of all participants, the community of practice surrounding Grant kindled designing for equity, inclusion and social justice from initiation to completion, in support of Grant's goal to see improved learning outcomes and a positive school climate. As a school, Grant believes that Generals should LEAD – Live to learn, Engage with purpose, Advocate for self and others, Demonstrate with passion; and they hold all members of their school community, as well as their building, to these expectations. Further project goals included:

Sustain a student-centered approach, where all learners feel connected by celebrating diversity and inclusion.

Design a building to inspire learning; to serve as a place of possibility.

Support the educational mission of Grant with a variety of flexible study and project spaces.

Accommodate diverse teaching and learning styles to facilitate strong relationships.

Create state-of-the-art facilities for all disciplines.

Focus on college and career readiness, preparing students to enter the workforce as positive contributors of society.

Blend indoor and outdoor spaces to enhance quality of learning environment and deepen our connection to nature.

Rebuild the school as the heart of the community through services, opportunities, and recreation.

Provide a variety of spaces to gather, eat and hangout throughout the campus.

Honor the history of Grant by preserving architecturally and culturally significant features, without continuing legacies that should end.

#### HOW THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS THE CURRICULUM

Originally designed in the typology of a double-loaded corridor, a simple 30-foot, three-story bay to the west side of the existing structure was added, basements were either removed all together or connected, and the ground plane was sculpted to reveal new exterior courtyards that allow Grant Park to flow seamlessly onto campus. When these elements combine, the resulting design fluidly connects all spaces and places, removes isolation and reduces student anxiety, and replaces the existing double loaded corridor arrangement with a central core of modern learning spaces that are varied, day-lit, open, or acoustically enclosed, single, and multi-story and have become collaborative resources for every learner and educator.

In addition, the design intentionally responded to the legacy of division. The once dis-jointed inter-connectivity between the upper floors and a separate, fear-inducing stairway to the submerged lower level has been replaced with a 3-story open central stair, dramatically carved out of the center of the existing building. Tiered, multi-story gathering spaces flank the stair, and rise into forums at either end, further connecting all levels. This has transformed a school that had struggled with 30% of its learning environments in five disparate basement levels, into a unified, collaborative, cohesive , light-filled environment that serves all, with equity.

Not one, but two commons now serve food; further reducing the need for students accessing reduced-fare food to be limited to any one location. Campus is now filled at lunch, full of life, laughter, and has successfully brought students of all socioeconomic means back to the heart of campus, to eat and learn together.

Further, CTE programs are not isolated but are integrated and distributed throughout campus. This creates opportunities for both curriculum and program expansion with better programmatic integration, while elevating and equalizing new, exciting pathways to career.

#### HOW THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING STYLES; HOW THE ENVIRONMENT IS ADAPTABLE AND FLEXIBLE

Descriptions and illustrations are represented on the following pages.

#### **GRANT AS THE REVITALIZED CENTER OF COMMUNITY**

There was a community-wide call to eradicate the boundary and buildings that had, over time, infilled the space between Grant High School and Grant Park and severed the connection between the two public institutions. The new campus design erases the line between where the park stops and the school begins. Replaced instead with new cross-park connectivity, the design creates a new outdoor experiential framework; path, pool, sport, field, event space, art, public recreation, amphitheater, education and green space have become the new heart of the "park" and gem of the neighborhood. While cues and ground-plane changes create clear definitions of what is public versus private during the school day, there are no fences or lockable gates to discourage activation, use, cultural events or community gathering.





#### FLOOR PLAN LEGEND





ILLUSTRATING THE RANGE, VARIATION, ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY IN LEARNING SPACES ALL ALONG THE COLLABORATION CORE







LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

FIRST LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

SECOND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN



INTENTIONALLY RESPONDING TO THE LEGACY OF DIVISION

The once dis-jointed, complete lack of connectivity between the upper floors and a separate, fear-inducing stairway to the submerged lower level has been replaced with a 3-story open central stair, dramatically carved out of the center of the existing building. Students and visitors enter the main door and immediately see the grand stair, which has become a much beloved circulation route and hangout space between classes. While division is now replaced with inter-connectivity, the design team is working to develop an interactive tour of the building before; allowing these physical moments to remain powerful learning opportunities for educational justice curriculum.







#### COMMONS

The original cafeteria was buried. It was a dark and dreary basement room located under the theater; void of daylight and isolated, it carried unwanted legacies of social inequity. Now, not just one, but two new commons provide students with choice. The lower level now connects to the vibrant social heart of campus. Created by sculpting the land, a once dreary experience has been replaced with a bright, daylit space to eat, socialize and study that is directly connected to the outdoors. The upper commons looks over the courtyard to the heart of Grant Park beyond, and is connected by way of an elevated walk.



EXISTING EXPERIENCE









#### LEARNING SPACES

While the existing building was stately, it had fallen into disrepair and lacked natural light in learning spaces. While 30% of the classrooms at Grant High School were taught in the basement, in teaching spaces without natural light, even those spaces that were located on the upper floors were lacking. The original double hung windows had been replaced, and a decision had been made to install new windows and opaque panels that blocked off nearly half of the light. Natural light was a very high priority for the students and staff who learned here everyday. The design team brought back the original grandeur, height and operability with energy-efficient replicas of the original design, and daylight now pours deep into the space. Energy-efficient light fixtures that harken back to round "school house" fixtures, and new systems, equipment, and technology throughout create comfortable modern day learning environments.





#### COLLABORATION CORE FORUMS

Enclosed stairways and solid hallways with minimal transparency contributed to a dark, enclosed, isolating, and disorienting environment. There was no sense of connectivity between floors of the original 3-story school, and little connection to the outdoors from the hallways. Acoustically isolated "forums" were created at either end of the school by cutting out the existing floor plate to created a transparent doubleheight learning environment in the collaborative core. Highly adaptive, and a popular feature for students and community groups, they are designed to flex easily between large group learning space, social hangout space, and presentation space, while also providing a visual connection between floors, cross corridor, and to the outdoors.







#### COMMUNITY THEATER

Grant's historic auditorium was both beloved and famous, but was severely lacking in stage height, depth, proscenium width, technical support, lighting and suffered from poor acoustics. Recognizable as the set for Hollywood's blockbuster film "Mr Holland's Opus," the community campaigned to restore and improve the space, as one of the largest performing arts venues in Northeast Portland. State-of-the-art improvements for the restored and seismically upgraded 900+ seat theater were done with surgical precision. Now home to a bustling performing arts scene, Grant's Theater supports both community driven performances and school events like their annual celebration of the arts, "Grantasia!" This year, the new space drew thousands of audience members to sold out shows and rave reviews, making Grant's Theater a valuable asset to the community.



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#### **RE-PURPOSED GYMNASIUM TRANSFORMS**

Hidden from view for decades after a larger gymnasium was constructed mere feet from the historic colonnade, the community can now see and enjoy the facade of the original 1923 gymnasium, which is now home to the heart of Grant's thriving fine and visual arts programs. Too small to be used as an auxiliary gym, the original light filled building has been completely re-purposed into an arts complex. Visual and digital arts studios flank a double-height gallery space at the heart of the building that serves as a living laboratory to showcase the impressive student artwork and facilitate larger group activities, and becomes rent-able public event space after-hours. Flooded with natural light, the design team restored an impressive rooftop skylight and windows were added in the previously solid masonry gym walls so art labs are now bathed in ample northern light with views to Grant Park. Inward transparency was maximized and ideal program adjacencies were created by floating a new floor around the central gallery, encouraging cross-disciplinary exploration and art programs that spans material, type and size. In addition, the historic entrance colonnade forms a stunning backdrop for a new amphitheater, supporting public community events, like Grant Park's annual "Concerts in the Park" series.





## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



#### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES: HOW THE ENVIRONMENT INSPIRES AND MOTIVATES

**Inclusion!** Grant inspires students to be themselves regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, etc.

On the first day of school in August, as students entered the building, there was a definite sense of surprise, awe, and gratefulness. Students were smiling and Grant's Principal, Carol Campbell, reported hearing many students comment that they "couldn't believe this was their school." She also heard students say "it looks like a community college." And most critically, in an interview with the local media, a previously disenfranchised student commented, "I feel like someone really cares about us."

The remodel created teaching spaces that promote collaboration and allow students and

teachers to access modern technology. The Arts Complex highlights the emphasis on electives and creativity that has always existed at Grant, and students who saw all the new CTE spaces for the first time signed up for classes they otherwise would not have considered.

So many students are now choosing to eat together on campus that the commons, upper and lower, are now packed with students, and students are unable to tell who is getting the free/reduced lunch.

The all-user restrooms have eliminated the safety concerns related to having large restroom areas behind closed doors. Students and adults are saying that the restrooms are private and safe. Other schools and businesses who are remodeling have visited to see the restroom design and many are carrying the idea forward. Teachers once skeptical have embraced spaces like the small instructional spaces and are finding ways to enhance instruction through group work and project-based activities. The flex spaces provide "break out" space for classes, wall space for gallery walks and spaces for students to socialize and study together.

The two forums are used almost everyday for guest speakers, student presentations, guitar performances, club meetings, and other gatherings.

The building design provides a variety of spaces that appeal to the diversity that exists in a large comprehensive high school. Students are finding their niche and finding new ways to use the spaces for learning (academically and socially).

## HOW THE FACILITY FITS WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNITY

Grant High School models what social justice in educational buildings can look like for the larger Portland community. In addition, the graceful way the project now seamlessly knits together park and school grounds as a wholly integrated, vibrant and safe public-use facility, challenges building walls and fences between schools and their neighborhoods.

Grant is now the beating heart of the Grant Park community, enrollment continues to increase dramatically, students are transferring in from private schools, graduation rate is 94%, the highest in PPS and in the top 10 in the state, and this year's school forecasting numbers indicate students are very excited to be learning in the new space.

#### LEARNING AND FITNESS COURTYARD

A previous subsurface teaching space was been removed and a learning and fitness courtyard was created by digging out the site to provide connectivity and natural light to the lowest level. This, the south courtyard, is bound to the west by a solar panel covered bike shelter edging Grant Park; to the south by the new gymnasium and weight room, which connects directly to an all-weather turf surface; and on the north by the new Maker Space and Fabrication Lab that now occupies the space below the Theater and capitalizes on adjacent paving for large construction build projects to occur outside. The new library addition looks out over this courtyard with views to Grant Park.









#### MAKING GRANT'S HEART THE HEART OF THE PARK

Several poorly considered 1950 and 1960's additions to Grant High School both literally and figuratively blocked students from accessing the adjacent 20-acre park. A rabbit warren of pass-through spaces and blind corners, this, the north courtyard is now the primary point of connection between Grant High School and Grant Park. The 1950's gym, portable and library additions were removed. All but for the large concrete basement below the gym building, which was inventively re-purposed into the new underground storm water infiltration gallery and topped with a grassy amphitheater. From the new multi-level commons, the view and physical connection to Grant Park has been restored. Previously suffering in the middle of an asphalt parking lot, an exceptional heritage tree in the center of campus has been saved in a careful effort affectionately coined "Operation Free the Tree!"

FUN FACT: Grant Park is also home to the Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden; the author of the same name made nearby Klickitat Street the fictional home of Ramona Quimby in her famous series of children's novels.







#### ALL-USER INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Early in the engagement process, staff and students asked the design team to address the inequity of bathrooms that were segregated by male and female. Grant was home to more than a dozen students who openly identified as transgender. To help combat bullying and the real risk of drop-out due to a perceived lack of safety, the design replaced existing "gang-style" bathrooms with 100% individual toilet rooms. Full walls and full doors open to a shared space for wash basins and drinking fountains, and as a pass-through space with multiple ways in and out, the design limits entrapment and allows passive supervision. Students have stated the bathrooms have been a success in their first year of operation.



"I did not drink liquids from the hours of 6:00am and 3:30pm...I would rather feel kind of unpleasant than terrified in the mens bathroom." ANONYMOUS STUDENT ON BATHROOMS BEFORE MODERNIZATION

"The all-user restrooms have eliminated the safety concerns related to having large restroom areas behind closed doors. Students and adults are saying that the restrooms are private and safe. Other schools and businesses who are remodeling have visited to see the restroom design."

CAROL CAMPBELL, PRINCIPAL GRANT HIGH SCHOOL

### HONORING THE PAST

A school steeped in tradition, the wood floor of the 1950's gymnasium, with its bold GRANT letters was salvaged and repurposed in the new gymnasium as a prominent wall graphic, along with the old reclaimed wood bleachers used throughout the building as ceiling and wall panels to create a warm and welcoming environment reflecting the spirit of Grant. The new gym, sized to fit every member of the student community, is sunken into the site to respect the surrounding neighborhood scale while allowing views and connection out to the adjacent Grant Park.







# RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

""We're welcoming over 1,800 students to a newly modernized school, with incredible teaching and learning environments, very tech enabled classrooms, safety and security features, brand new athletic facilities."

GUADALUPE GUERRERO, SUPERINTENDENT PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS



"My whole team broke down in tears when they first walked in. We just couldn't believe that we get to teach here. It is powerful design for social justice, and we are grateful!"

CAROL CAMPBELL, PRINCIPAL GRANT HIGH SCHOOL

## "It's completely brand new, and even the outside, the bricks are clean... it's beautiful!"

RUBY PAUSTIAN, CLASS OF 2020 GRANT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

"High school rebuild transforms not just the architecture, but its occupants. It's lunchtime at the renovated and expanded Grant High School in Northeast Portland, and the place is buzzing....every table is taken and the soundtrack is enthusiastic laughter. Around the corner, a new entry atrium with built-in terraced seating is full of students too, playing chess and rehearsing dance moves.... lunch breaks were not always like this at Grant."

**BRIAN LIBBY, JOURNALIST** 



"The impact this has had on our students.... I really didn't anticipate or think about that. I knew it was a great thing we were getting, but to see the students' faces and have them say things like "I really want to be here" and "I can't believe that we have this!" It really struck me. I believe that all students should have this experience in school, it's really cool and really changes the learning environment."

CAROL CAMPBELL, PRINCIPAL GRANT HIGH SCHOOL

"I feel like someone really cares about me!" grant high school student