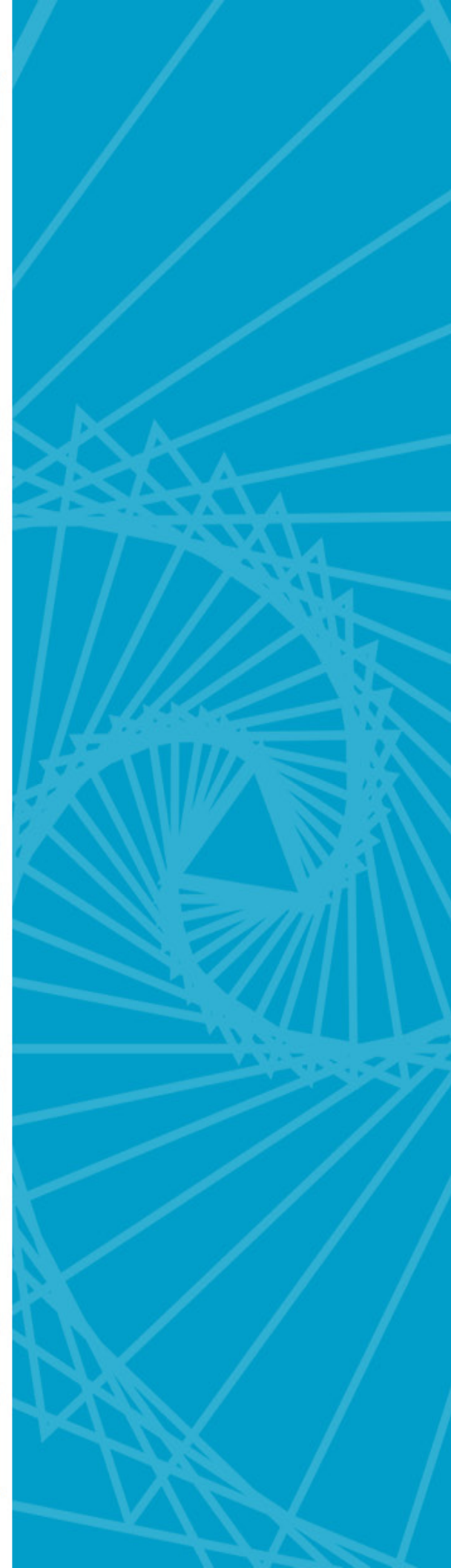


April 24, 2026

Unlocking Potential:

Transforming Aging Schools into
High-Performance Learning
Environments

A4LE Southern Region
Conference



PRESENTERS



Melissa Fleming, AIA
Principal, VLK



Bennie Mayes
Superintendent, Waller ISD



Monika Castillo
Principal, VLK

FEATURED CAMPUSES




WALLER JUNIOR HIGH
WALLER ISD



AUSTIN ELEMENTARY
PECOS -BARSTOW-TOYAH ISD



GRAEBNER ELEMENTARY
SAN ANTONIO ISD





Identify adaptive reuse design strategies that improve student safety, supervision, and secure circulation in existing K-12 facilities.



Evaluate how daylighting, spatial reorganization, and improved circulation **support student and staff health and overall campus welfare**

Apply renovation approaches that align aging school facilities with **district mission, instructional goals, and long-term adaptability.**



Analyze how targeted design interventions can eliminate unsafe conditions and support equitable, **high-performing learning environments** with utilizing an existing district asset & providing district with further use of facilities.



**LEARNING
OBJECTIVES**

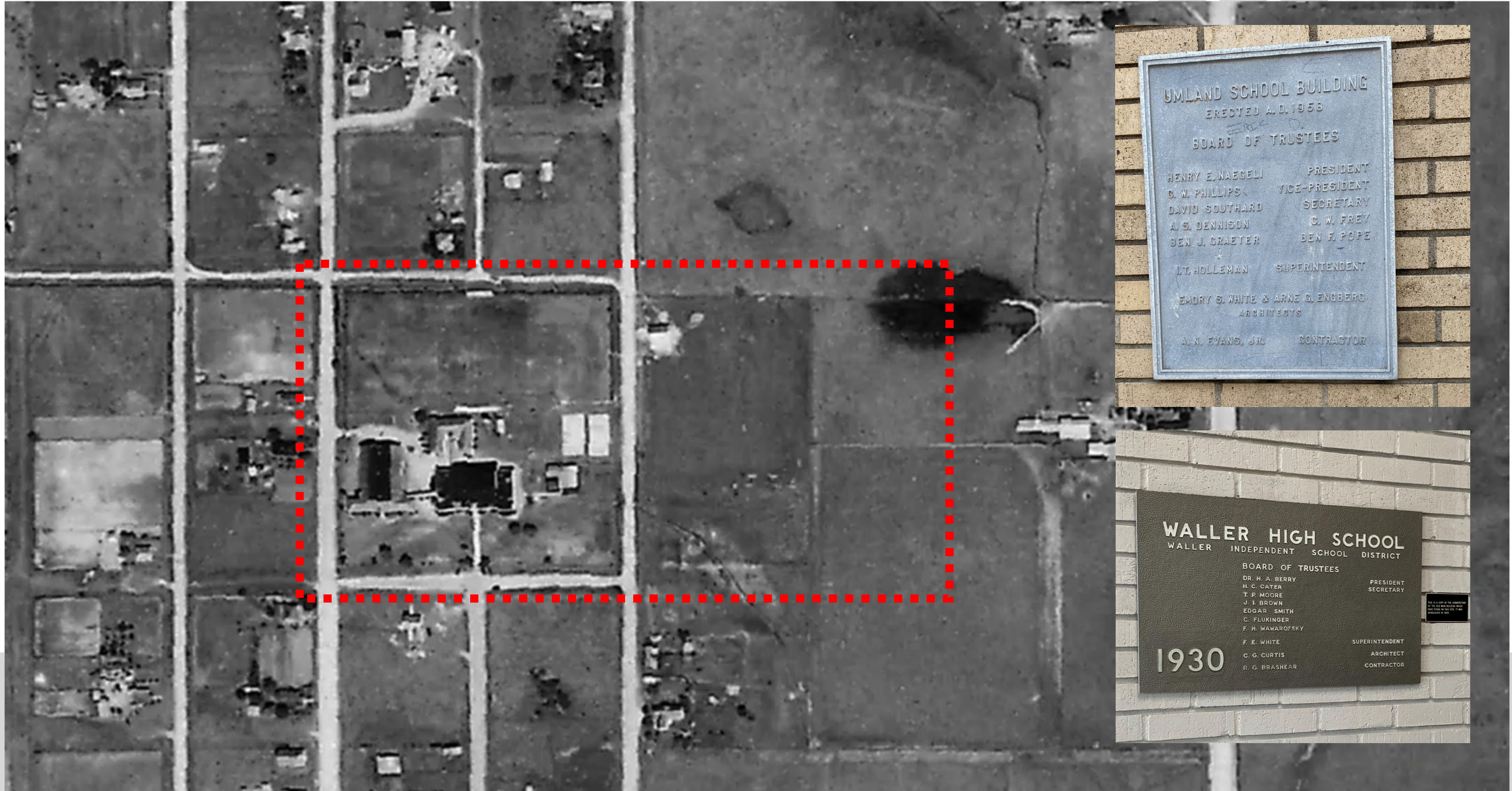


The campuses reflect a rich history shaped by years of service, growth, and connection to their communities. Over time, they have developed from Waller High School to Waller Junior High, from Pecos Elementary to Austin Elementary and from the Hoover Street School to Graebner Elementary. Each with distinct identities rooted in shared experiences, traditions, and a strong sense of place. Preserving these campuses means honoring that legacy while thoughtfully adapting them to meet current and future needs. By maintaining and improving their character and cultural significance, the district can continue to foster a sense of pride, ensuring that each campus remains a meaningful and recognizable part of the community it serves.



IDENTITY

WALLER JUNIOR HIGH ✨



UMLAND SCHOOL BUILDING
ERECTED A. D. 1958
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

HENRY E. NAEGELI	PRESIDENT
G. W. PHILLIPS	VICE-PRESIDENT
DAVID SOUTHARD	SECRETARY
A. S. DENNISON	C. W. FREY
BEN J. GRAETER	BEN F. POPE
I. T. HOLLEMAN	SUPERINTENDENT

EMDRY S. WHITE & ARNE G. ENGBERG
ARCHITECTS

A. N. EVANS, JR. CONTRACTOR

WALLER HIGH SCHOOL
WALLER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

DR. H. A. BERRY	PRESIDENT
H. C. CATER	SECRETARY
T. P. MOORE	
J. I. BROWN	
EDGAR SMITH	
C. FLUKINGER	
F. H. WAWAROFKY	
F. E. WHITE	SUPERINTENDENT
C. G. CURTIS	ARCHITECT
R. G. BRASHEAR	CONTRACTOR

1930

AUSTIN ELEMENTARY



GRAEBNER ELEMENTARY ✨





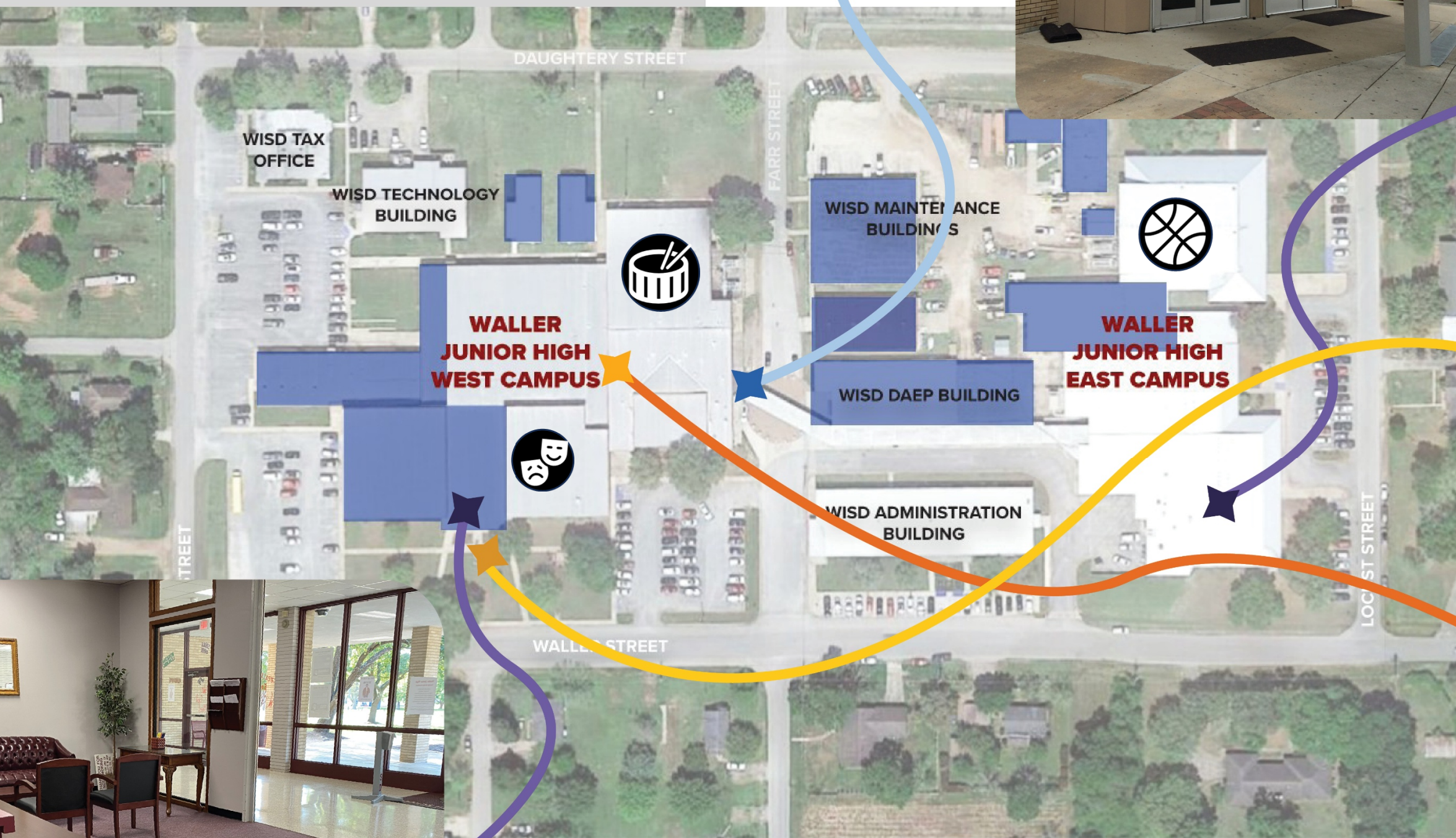
The campus evaluations identified several challenges impacting functionality and user experience, including inefficient circulation patterns, narrow hallways, and outdated building layouts. Classrooms are undersized, with limited access to natural daylight and minimal visibility across the campus, contributing to a less effective learning environment. The campuses also lack a clearly defined front entry and sufficient common or collaborative spaces. Additionally, aging infrastructure and systems, along with safety and security limitations, further highlight the need for comprehensive improvements.

The campus evaluations also highlight a strong sense of belonging. The campuses reflect years of impact on the communities they serve, with spaces that embody their history and identity. While each campus is unique to its district, all represent valuable assets with meaningful potential for growth both within and beyond the learning environment.

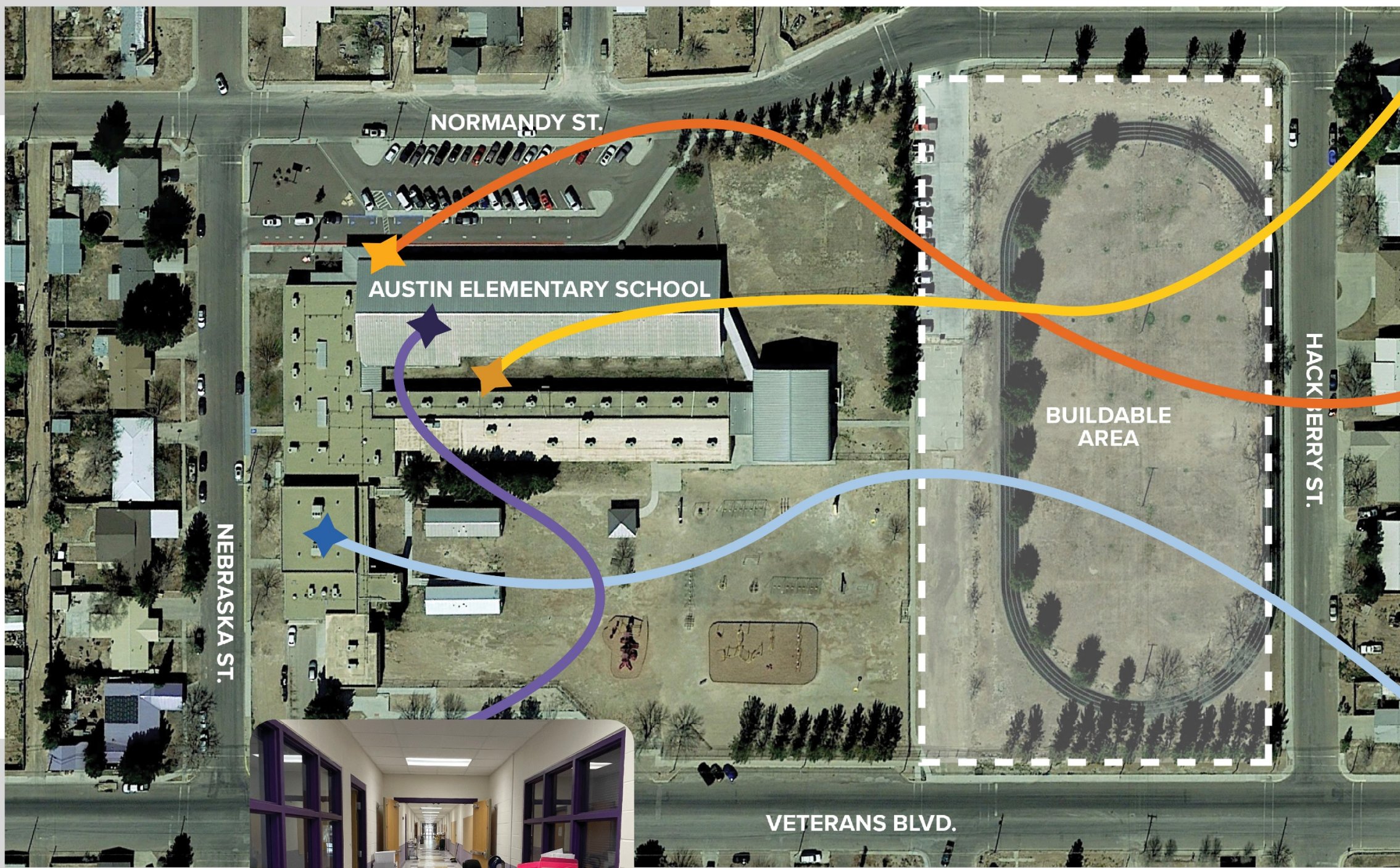


EVALUATE

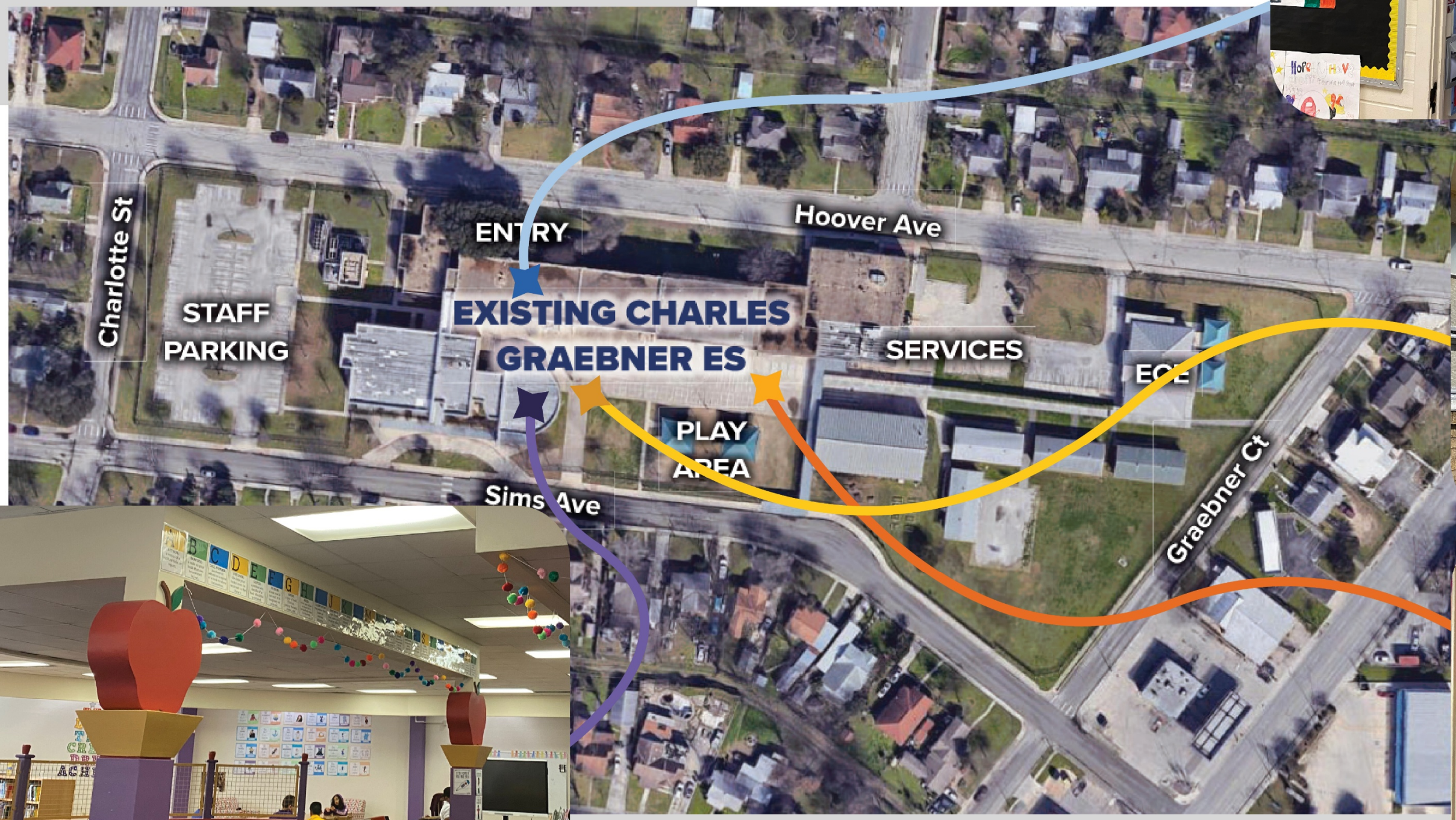
EXISTING CONDITIONS

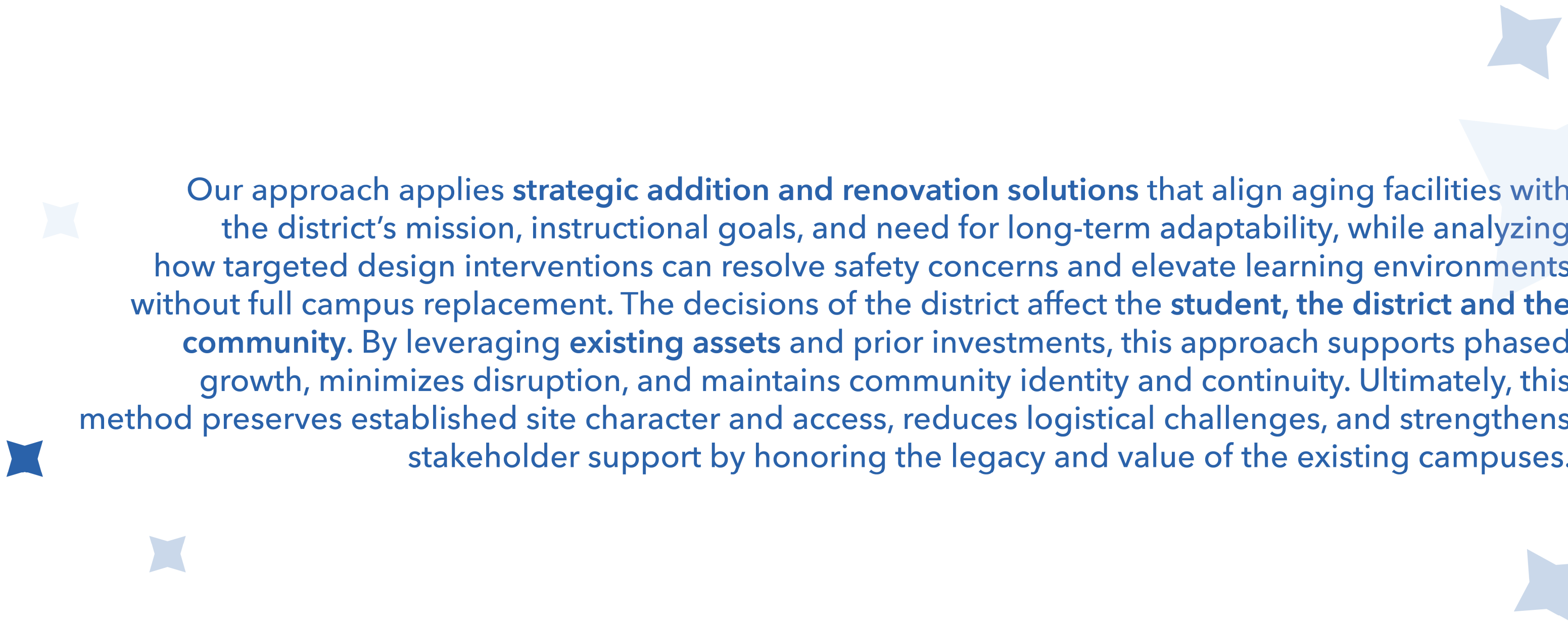


EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING CONDITIONS





Our approach applies **strategic addition and renovation solutions** that align aging facilities with the district's mission, instructional goals, and need for long-term adaptability, while analyzing how targeted design interventions can resolve safety concerns and elevate learning environments without full campus replacement. The decisions of the district affect the **student, the district and the community**. By leveraging **existing assets** and prior investments, this approach supports phased growth, minimizes disruption, and maintains community identity and continuity. Ultimately, this method preserves established site character and access, reduces logistical challenges, and strengthens stakeholder support by honoring the legacy and value of the existing campuses.

ANALYZE



STUDENT

- Create opportunities to utilize new modernize technology
- Minimize disruption to students by avoiding full relocation
- Allows integration of modern educational environments
- Retains proximity to neighborhoods
- Reduces need for rezoning and retains existing friendships





DISTRICT

- **Maximize an existing district asset**
- **Provides flexibility for phased construction**
- **Minimize disruption to students, staff & transportation**
- **Reduces cost of new site acquisitions**
- **Avoids politics of rezoning**
- **Maintains historical connection to the districts past**








COMMUNITY

- **Maintains community identity & legacy**
- **Retains established access & circulation**
- **Retains existing neighborhood patterns**
- **Retains existing proximity to neighborhoods**
- **Preservation of mature site & provides improvements**
- **Strengthens stakeholder support**
- **Supports improvements to community identity**





A bright, welcoming, and thoughtfully designed learning environment transforms teaching and learning by placing the student experience at its core. Distributed collaboration spaces and access to secure outdoor courtyards encourage discovery and play, while appropriately sized classrooms with increased natural light provide safe, supportive spaces for all learners. Intentional programming and design foster independence, enhancing comfort and engagement across all grade levels. Each campus incorporates grade-level neighborhoods defined by distinct colors and playful graphics that support intuitive wayfinding, helping students navigate with ease and confidence. Together, these elements reflect a deep understanding of student needs, creating a nurturing, modern environment that inspires a lasting love of learning.



APPLY

WALLER JUNIOR HIGH



6th GRADE NEIGHBORHOOD

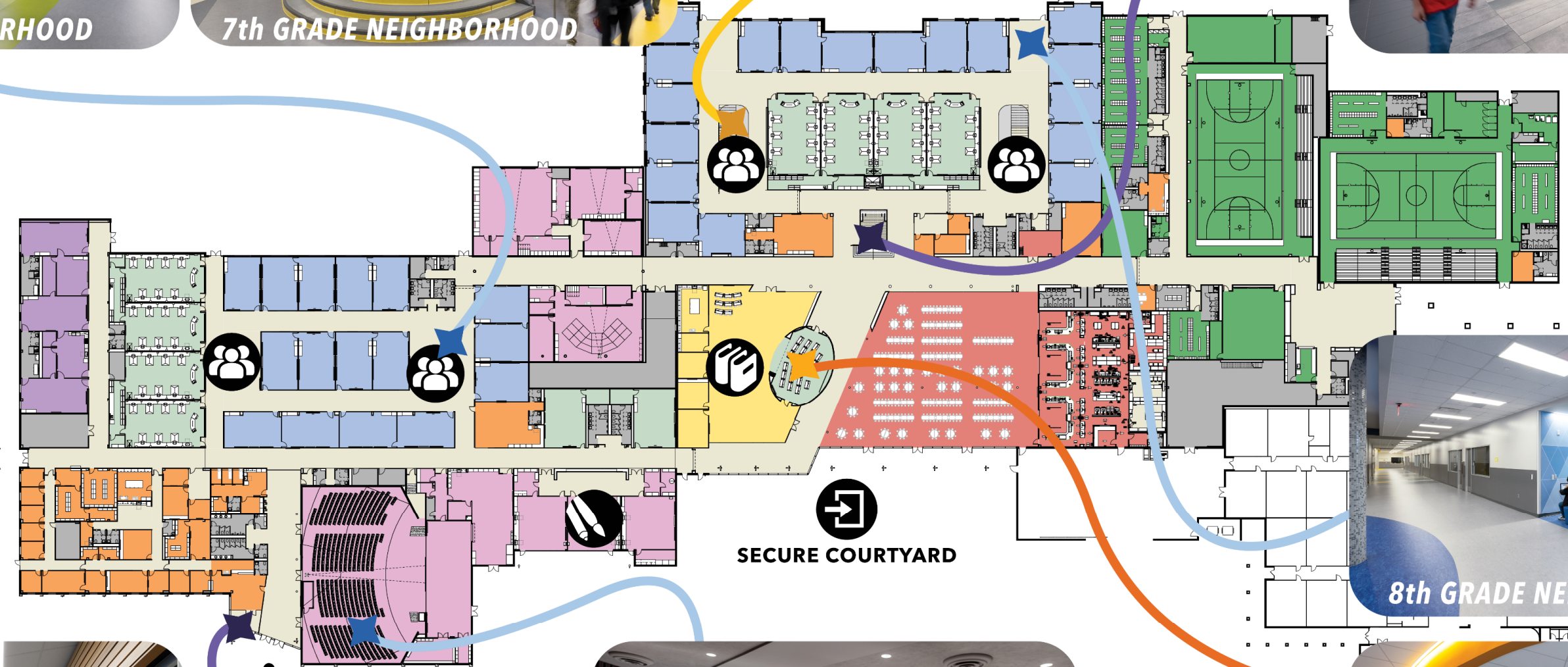


7th GRADE NEIGHBORHOOD



STAFF VISIBILITY

- CREATE
- EXCHANGE
- STREAM
- SPECIAL EDU.
- GYMNASIUM
- FINE ARTS
- ADMIN.
- LIBRARY
- CAFETERIA



8th GRADE NEIGHBORHOOD



SECURITY VESTIBULE



AUDITORIUM



MEDIA CENTER



SITE PLAN

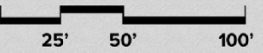


TRANSFORMATION

The entire site is a story of transformation. The remaining east campus has been adapted for other district functions while this **modern campus** has again risen to take its place as an educational environment **for generations to come.**

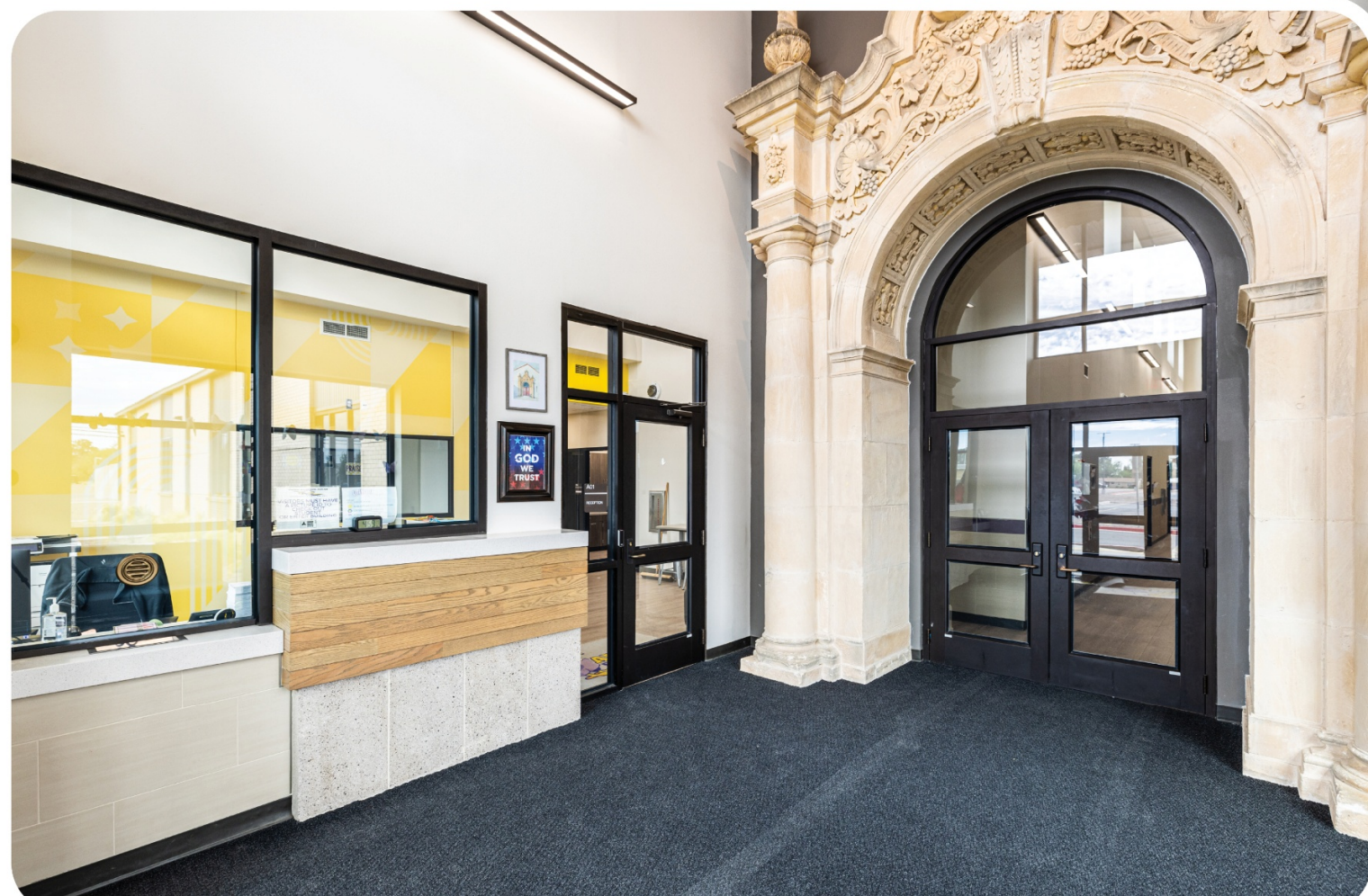


SITE PLAN



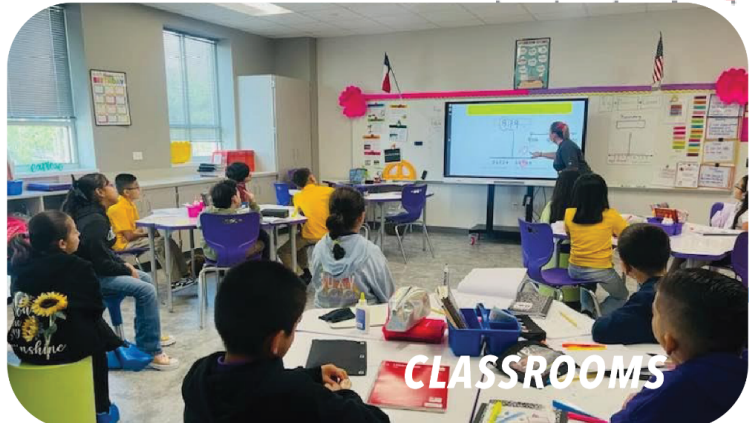
PRESERVATION ✨

Artifacts from the past offer a tangible **connection to history**. By preserving the ornate, 1930s facade from the original elementary school and having it serve as the **grand entry to the secure school building**, the community's proud **history is honored** and protected for future generations.

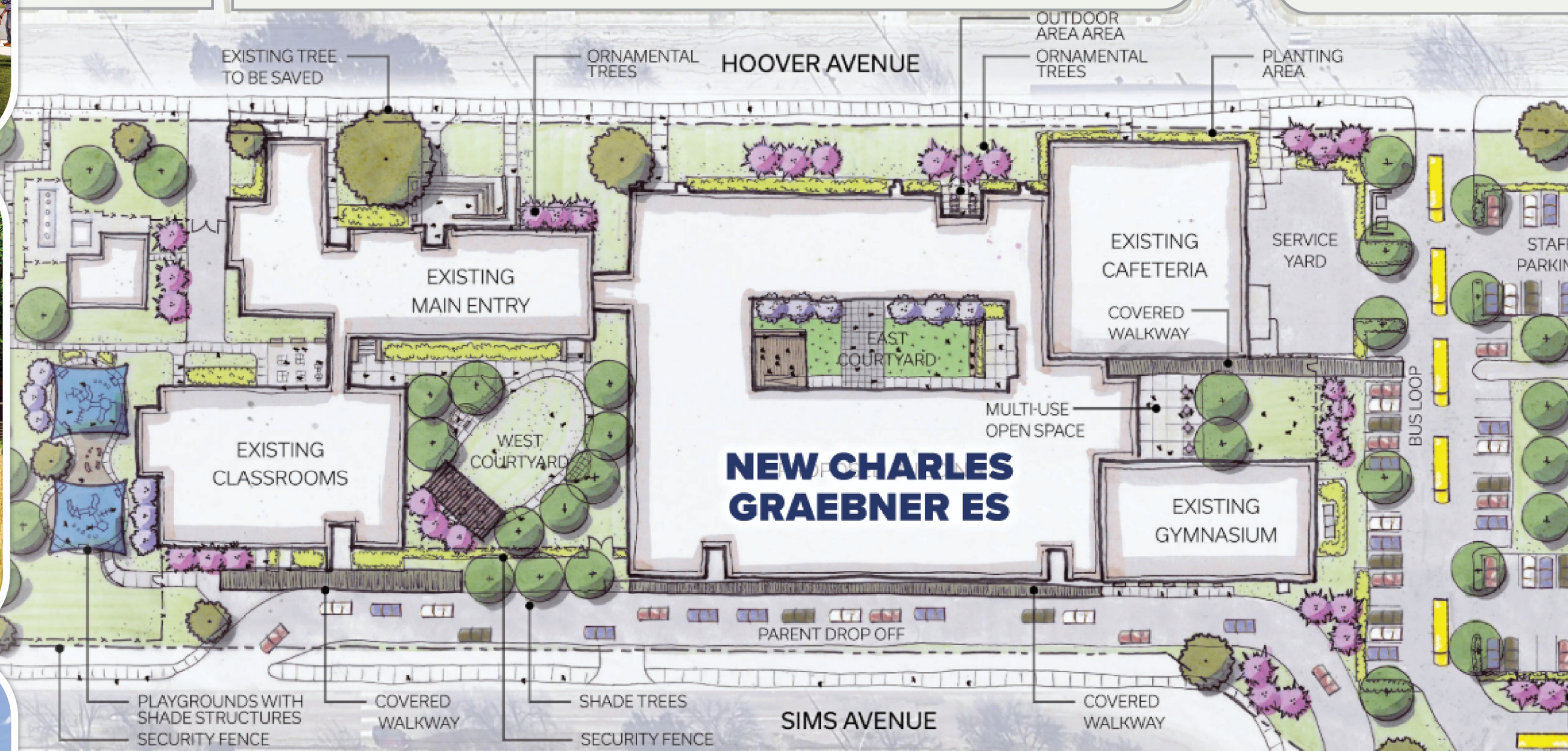


AFTER

GRAEBNER ELEMENTARY



SITE PLAN





REIMAGINATION

The addition and renovation of Graebner Elementary School **reimagines an aging campus** as a safe, light-filled, and collaboration-driven learning environment through strategic adaptive reuse. Rather than replacing the school, the design **leverages existing assets**—including the original structure, gymnasium, and a 2001 addition—to deliver targeted interventions that significantly **elevate student experience** and campus performance.





★ IDENTIFY

★ ANALYZE

★ EVALUATE

Understanding where you are is the first step toward **meaningful change**.

TRANSFORMATION



REIMAGINATION



PRESERVATION



By evaluating existing conditions, districts can unlock opportunities to **preserve legacy, address deficiencies, and reimagine** campuses for present and future students.

THANK YOU!

VVLK

