



# Cuyahoga Falls City School District

Educational Visioning Summary Report

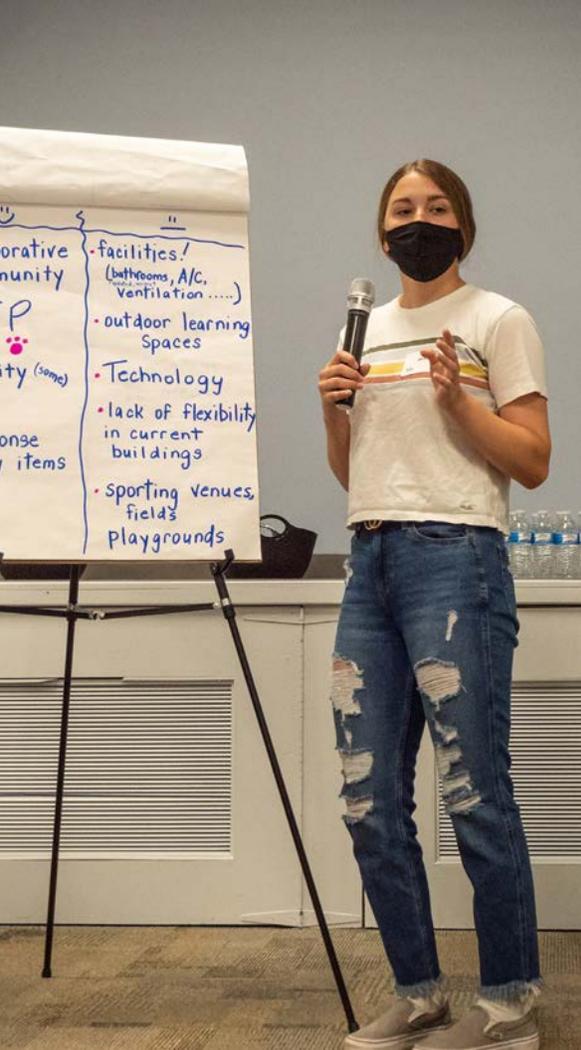
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**tda**  
thendesign architecture

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## Overview

**“We have the opportunity to drop all of those old, antiquated paradigms of what education was, and think about what it can be.”**

*- Dr. Todd Nichols, Superintendent*

ThenDesign Architecture (TDA) held an Educational Visioning session at the Summit Educational Service Center on April 29, 2021. This day-long event, focused on understanding the challenges presented by the current facilities and identifying opportunities for the new 6-12 Campus project. With over 80 in attendance including members of the community, students, the school district, architecture and construction professionals all provided input on the project. Attendees were encouraged to imagine how the new facility will improve education in the district. Topics of conversation include; how core academics can be enhanced, the integration of the middle school and high school, and how this building can serve as “the hub of the community.” The day culminated in a hands on activity that allowed attendees to work on spacial adjacencies on a site plan, then report out how their group addressed these issues.

Superintendent Todd Nichols commented: “Educational Visioning really sets the stage for us to dream big. We have the opportunity to drop all of those old, antiquated paradigms of what education was, and think about what it can be.”

The new 370,000 SF building will include a performing arts center, sports stadium and other community focused spaces, constructed on the site where Bolich and Newberry schools currently sit.

*“We know that we have good teachers and we know we have kids who love to learn,”* commented Board of Education President Karen Schofield. *“We know that with the combination of those two things in a new facility with appropriate ventilation, air cooling systems, natural light and flexible spaces, only great things will happen.”*

The following pages detail the output from this session and how this information will be incorporated into the design process for the project.



# Define the Problem

## Identifying Successes and Challenges of Facilities at Cuyahoga Falls City School District.

In order to understand the current state of the facilities, small group discussions were held to understand the overall successes and challenges. Following this exercise, each group was asked to report out on their discussion – sharing what does and does not work at the existing school buildings.

### Common Successes Reported

Among the most widely reported successes was the dedicated staff who prioritize education and are resourceful with the current environment and facilities. Frequently noted was the expanded programming offered including Career Tech, greenspace/outdoor learning areas and strong sense of Black Tiger pride. The gymnasium and auditorium were identified as large group spaces with accessibility to students, staff, administrators, and the community.

### Common Challenges Reported

Common challenges highlighted from the groups were limited flexibility to create different learning environments, small classroom sizes and lack of storage. Other challenges noted were poor site circulation causing traffic congestion, lack of parking, limited ADA accessibility, concerns with safety and security due to multiple building entrances and poor climate control.



# Define the Problem

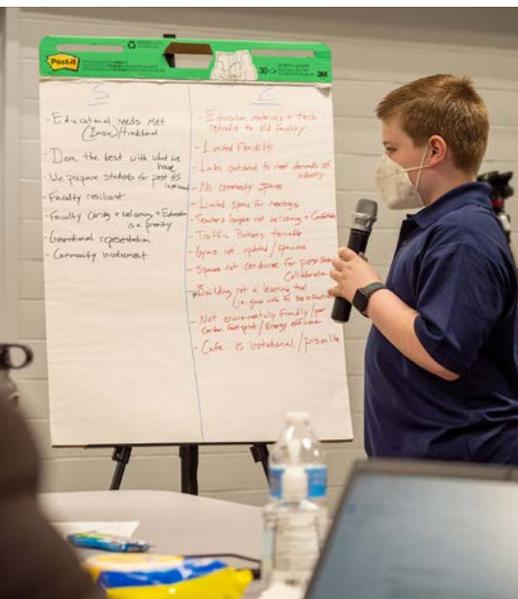
Identifying Successes and Challenges of the Existing Facilities at Cuyahoga Falls City School District.

Below is brief representation of the group discussions around this exercise:



## EXISTING SUCCESSES IDENTIFIED

- Programming opportunities including Career Tech, Industrial Arts and Extracurricular classes
- Committed and dedicated staff with a focus on education
- Abundance of Black Tiger Pride
- Greenspace, outdoor learning areas and playgrounds
- The High School offers character and nostalgia
- Large, communal spaces for gatherings including the Auditorium and Gymnasium
- Offering of 1:1 Chromebooks
- Music, Band and Performing Arts programs
- Supportive and involved community



## EXISTING CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- The large overall footprint of the High School can be difficult to navigate and creates long walking distances throughout the building
- Safety and security concerns with having multiple entrances to the building
- Poor site circulation causing traffic congestion
- Lack of parking
- Small classroom sizes
- Lack of community and meeting spaces
- Limitations with technology and WiFi
- Lack of student and staff storage
- Limited flexibility within the building to support different learning environments
- Ventilation, as well as heating and cooling of buildings
- Lack of ADA accessibility
- Upkeep due to aging facilities



# Design the Solution

Imagine the potential for the design of spaces at the new Cuyahoga Falls 6-12 campus.

TDA shared a presentation on student-centered learning environments that highlighted other Northeast Ohio school districts with flexible and progressive educational spaces. Afterward, attendees participated in an exercise to envision design possibilities by listing their goals for the following spaces within the District:

Administration

Career Technical

Clubs / Organizations / Partnerships

Core Academics

Core + More

Food Service

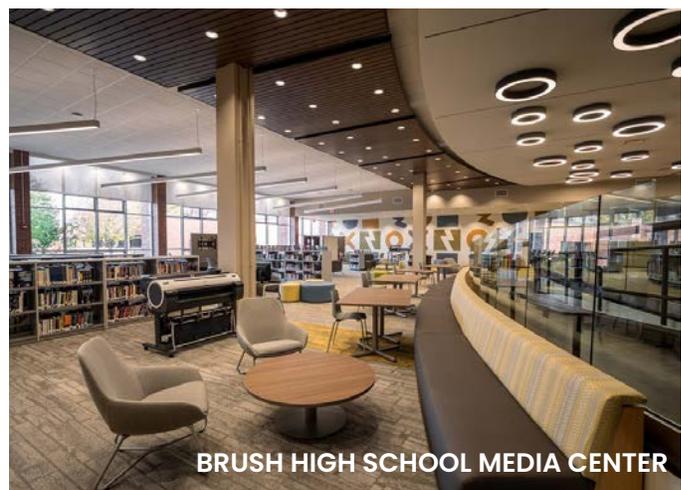
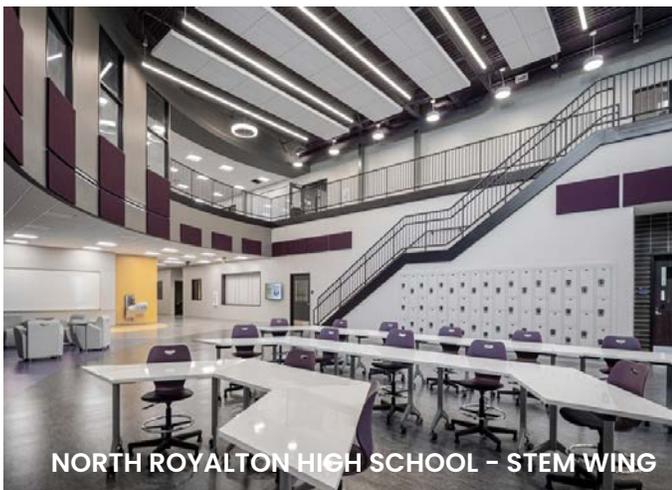
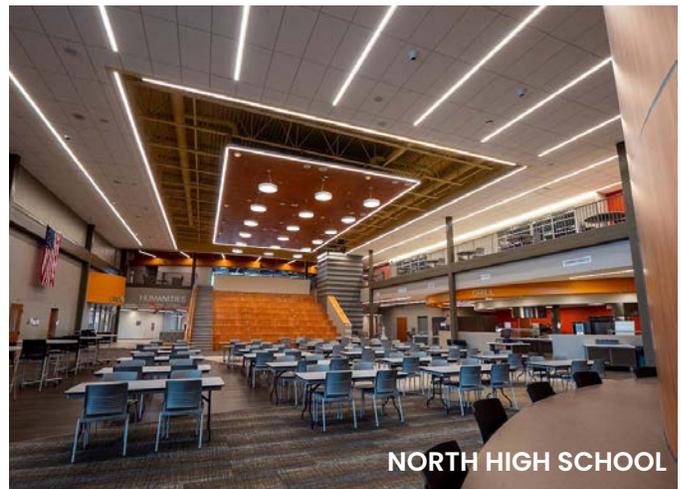
Media Center

Music / Performing Arts

Physical Education / Athletics

Science / STEAM

Visual Arts



# Design the Solution

Imagine the potential for the design of spaces at the new Cuyahoga Falls 6-12 campus.

Below is a brief summary of key goals identified across the various spaces:

SPACE	SUMMARY OF GOALS FOR SPACES AT THE NEW BUILDING
Administration	A multipurpose, inviting space with a centralized location; private space for meetings/needs; invest in new technology; staggered start times; sensory/cool down room for students; close proximity of related services to support collaboration
Career Technical	Public spaces supported by local businesses; community access; exposure to program in Elementary and Middle School; prominent location; partnership with local businesses that promote students for the workforce.
Clubs / Organizations / Partnerships	Partnering with local businesses; designated space to meet where it is flexible for multi-uses; More club offerings for all 3 levels including after school; dedicated space/post for the swim team
Core Academics	Flexible, collaborative spaces to support various learning styles; sliding glass walls for small and large group gatherings; learning pods; dry erase boards and walls; technology; outdoor learning opportunities; writing studio; dedicated teacher space
Core + More	Sensory rooms; more gifted classes; independent living pods; booths for group work; functional life skills lab; area to provide medical services; flexible seating and collaboration spaces
Food Service	Cafe style with various seating options including outdoor; integration with gardens/other academic subjects; community access; student run
Media Center	Designated media space that can serve for multi-uses, while fostering collaboration and independent studying/reading; natural light; accessible to all students; access to E-books
Music / Performing Arts	Flexible spaces for rehearsal and classrooms; more storage; more instruments; outdoor performing space; restrooms, concessions and ticket booth
Physical Education / Athletics	Fieldhouse with batting cages, indoor golf, wrestling room, locker rooms; multipurpose gym spaces; soundproof dividers; pool; indoor track; central location for all sports
Science / STEAM	Lab spaces that promote inquiry; maker spaces for inventing and collaborating; storage for all items; incorporate labs into Middle School; outdoor learning; inclusion of robotics and physics
Visual Arts	Gallery and display space; sinks; storage; dedicated photography space; natural light; ventilation; open floor plans; teacher collaboration opportunities

# Put It All Together

Explore how these spaces should relate to one another at the new Cuyahoga Falls 6-12 Campus.

Taking into consideration input from the previous activities, each group was tasked with implementing a solution which explored how spaces should relate to one another at the new Cuyahoga Falls 6-12 Campus. Using cutouts of each program space type, each group developed concepts for adjacencies and layouts on the site plan.



# Put It All Together

Explore how these spaces should relate to one another at the new Cuyahoga Falls 6-12 Campus.

Below is a summary of the common themes identified throughout each group's site plan design as well as some key unique ideas explored:

## COMMON THEMES FOR THE NEW BUILDING

- Shared common space for the middle and high school students including the media center, food service and student dining
- A 2-story, 6-12 building
- Career technical education classes visible along 13<sup>th</sup> Street to provide convenient, public access for parking and promotion of the programs available
- Preservation of Newberry Park to maintain the greenery and utilize for outdoor learning opportunities including greenhouse, gardens and wellness
- Adjacencies of core academic spaces including:
  - Performing Arts Center, music and theater
  - Student dining, Food service and Family and consumer science
- Stadium situated on the North of the site alongside Newberry Park; utilization of existing hill for walkway, seating and/or press box
- Addition of several parking lots to accommodate stadium, staff, students and visitors
  - Parking lot primarily on existing Bolich Middle School site
- Special education integrated throughout core academics

## UNIQUE IDEAS FOR THE NEW BUILDING

- Building separation of the middle school and high school with a central courtyard or gym
- Prominent main entrance to the High School and Performing Arts Center along Portage Trail for visibility to pedestrian and car traffic
- One main entrance and exit to support better site circulation
  - Currently there are too many entrances at the high school which creates congestion
- Create a grand entrance for a new competition gym, built on a gradient
- Separation between the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> students to support developmental transitions to high school.
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade students located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor with Administration
  - 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students located upstairs on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor
- Create separate gyms for the middle school and high school students
- Addition of athletic fields on site including baseball, tennis courts





# Conclusion

The Educational Visioning session at Cuyahoga Falls City School District resulted in a productive and insightful day, serving as a kickoff to the design process for the new 6-12 school project. The cross section of representatives across the District and community provided a forum to celebrate the many successes across the District, share ideas, and dream about how new facilities can positively impact how students are educated in Cuyahoga Falls.

Some of the key takeaways captured from this session are the need for flexible, collaborative spaces to support the delivery of education and student learning; improvements to site circulation; maintaining and celebrating Black Tiger Pride; creating separation of Middle School and High School but utilizing common spaces where appropriate; integrating learning outside of the building; and prominence of the new building with community access.

The design team will use information collected throughout this session along with other engagement opportunities to serve as the foundation for the design of the new 6-12 school.

