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# BERG MIDDLE SCHOOL

**frk** architects + engineers

**Newton, Iowa** | Case Study No. 1, January 2024

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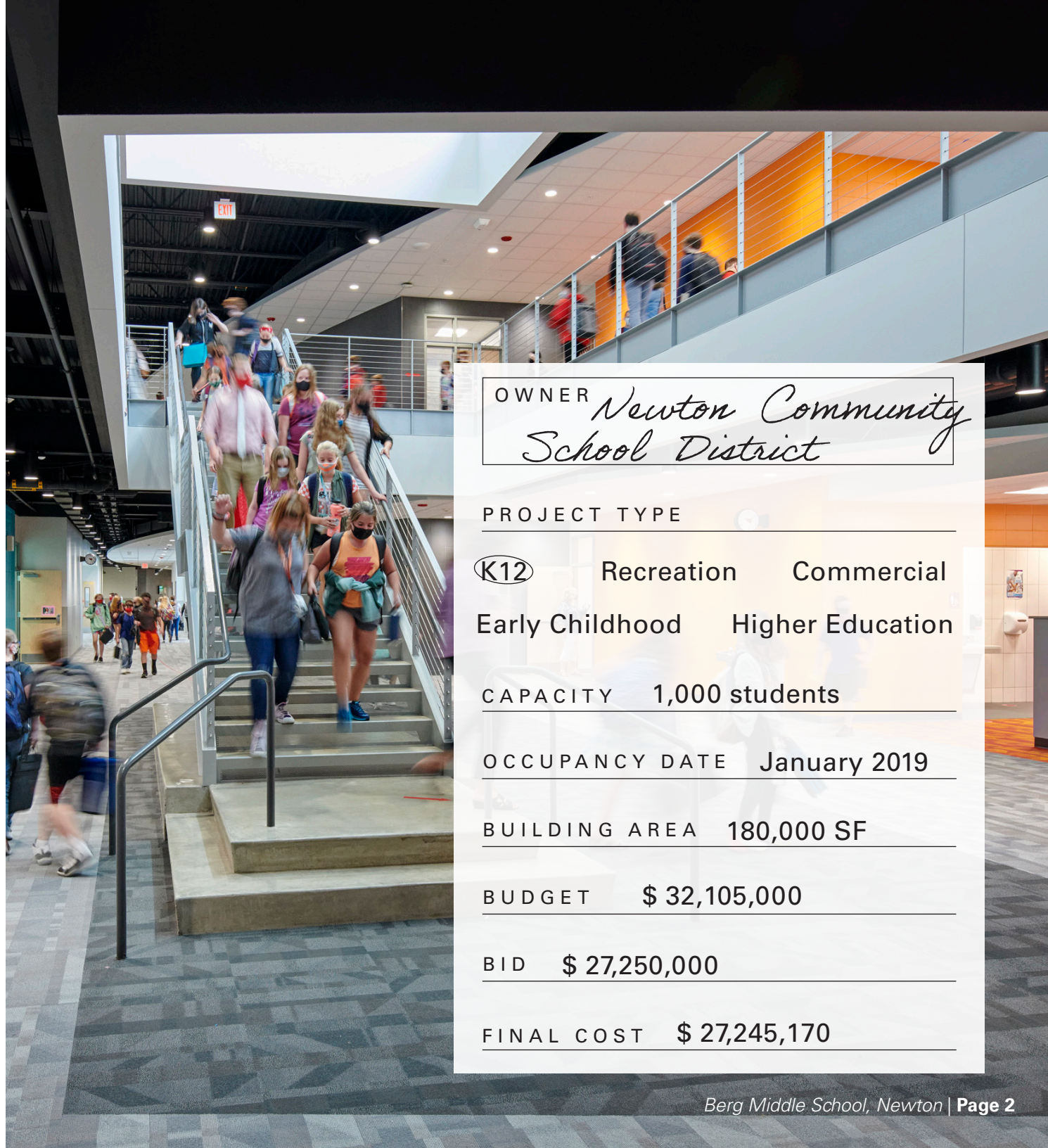


# 1 SCOPE

The Berg Middle School project completes a vision of reinvention by a school district serving a city that is well-versed in the concept. The new facility was the heart of a district-wide grade level shift, done to free needed space for future curriculum delivery. Much more than just a replacement facility, the project was a catalyst to approach teaching and learning in a new way, and to do so at a very critical developmental stage.

Through a background of thorough research and assessment, this project became reality with an inclusive and interactive visioning process lead by frk. This process gathered what are strengths for the community and faced head-on the perceived challenges in order to head-off future roadblocks. This community engagement brought to life the resilience and readiness of this community to meet the future.

Embracing multiple logistical challenges of working around an existing functioning school, the frk planning team set off to fulfill the charge of creating a facility with a collaborative and safe learning environment that embraced student individuality and had the flexibility to adapt to multiple learning and teaching styles.



OWNER *Newton Community School District*

## PROJECT TYPE

**(K12)** Recreation Commercial  
Early Childhood Higher Education

CAPACITY 1,000 students

OCCUPANCY DATE January 2019

BUILDING AREA 180,000 SF

BUDGET \$ 32,105,000

BID \$ 27,250,000

FINAL COST \$ 27,245,170



# 2 COMMUNITY

The Newton Community School District serves around 3,000 students in both the city and surrounding rural area, aiming to empower every learner for a lifetime of personal success. Known for reinvention, Newton shifted from a coal mining hub to the “Washing Machine Capital of the World” with Maytag. Following Maytag’s closure in 2007, Newton attracted thirteen new companies, emphasizing renewable energy manufacturing and introducing a NASCAR Speedway for tourism. The city exemplifies resilience and adaptability while facing economic challenges.

***The Newton Community School District utilizes the High Reliability Schools Model to ensure:***

- Safe, supportive, collaborative culture in all buildings
- Effective teaching in all classrooms
- A guaranteed and viable curriculum

***Schools will show student growth at or above the state growth average.***

***All schools in Newton Community School District will seek:***

- High Reliability Schools Level 1 certification
- Capturing Kids Hearts with fidelity in all classrooms



# 3 PROCESS

## **Facility Assessment:**

- A thorough study was conducted on each district building, considering conditions and spaces for creating a safe, supportive and collaborative culture.

## **Grade Level Configuration:**

- Involved creating neighborhood-centric PK-4 buildings, a new 5-8 middle school and maintaining the existing 9-12 building.

## **Vision Planning:**

- Interactive exercises and a design charrette were conducted to establish goals and priorities for the school layout.

## **Bond Referendum:**

- Through a dedicated website, social media coverage and community engagement to inform voters, the bond referendum was successfully passed to fund the project.

## **Design Refinement:**

- The frk planning team worked on design refinement, regularly consulting with the vision committee to ensure goals for each space were considered in the construction documents.

## **Project Delivery:**

- The project was successfully delivered, meeting the goals and vision established at the outset of the process.





# 4 ENVIRONMENT



## **Organization/Team Building:**

- Intentional use of color for orientation and team building.
- Each grade-level area is designated with distinct colors carried through in interior finishes and furniture.

## **Daylighting:**

- Expansive exterior window openings connect to the outdoors and provide ample natural light.
- Lighting controls minimize energy usage by utilizing natural daylight.

## **Mobile Furniture:**

- Provides flexibility in classroom arrangements for multiple learning and teaching styles.

## **Collaboration Area:**

- Central flexible areas in each learning community for small or large group gatherings.
- Configurable and movable furniture for customization, also used for primary teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Transparency:**

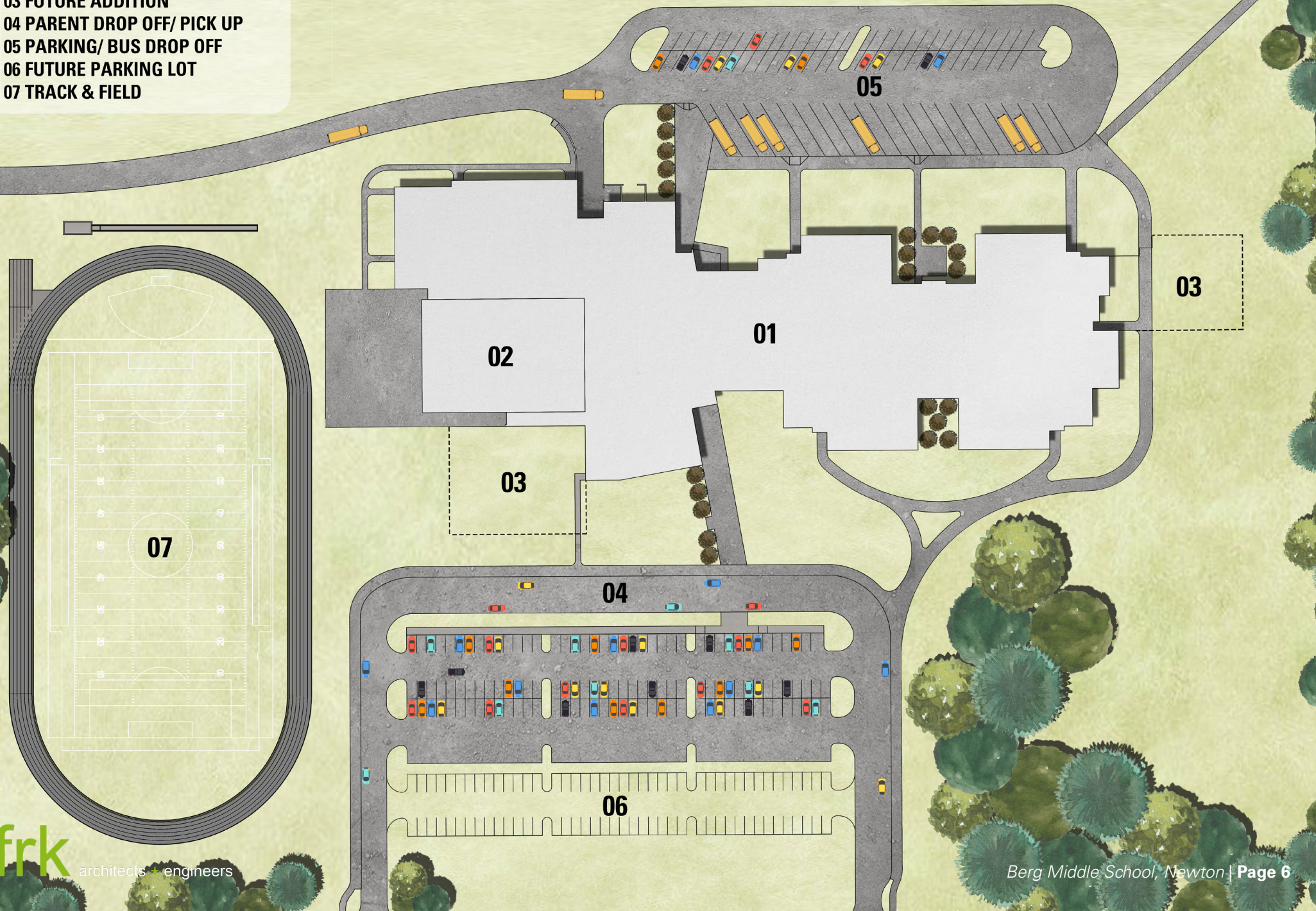
- Visual connection and accountability promoted through transparency to classrooms.
- Glass arrangement and absence of blank walls allow for security protocols during emergency lockdowns.

## **Secure Entry Vestibule:**

- Main entry vestibule off the student commons ensures security by passing through the main office.



- 01 NEW SCHOOL BUILDING
- 02 EXISTING GYM/ MULTIPURPOSE
- 03 FUTURE ADDITION
- 04 PARENT DROP OFF/ PICK UP
- 05 PARKING/ BUS DROP OFF
- 06 FUTURE PARKING LOT
- 07 TRACK & FIELD





# 5 PROGRAM

## ***Student Commons***

- Commons / food court
- Performance platform
- Lobby access to athletic areas

## ***Building Organization***

- Two learning communities per grade level
- Connected across main circulation
- Special learning areas centrally located
- Secure building access
- Academic wing secured from public area

## ***Learning Community***

- Classrooms
- Central collaboration area
- Central locker area

## ***Visual Arts***

- Centrally located access
- Ample daylighting
- On display for the school

## ***Media Center***

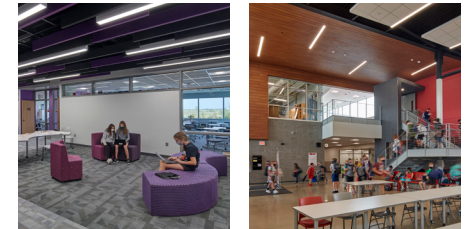
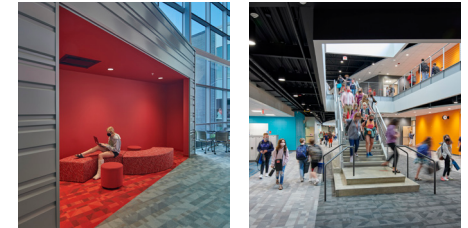
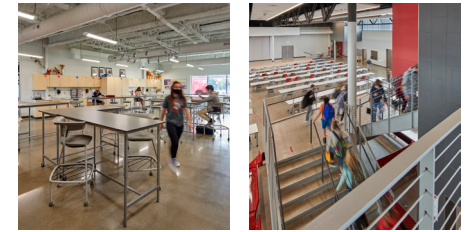
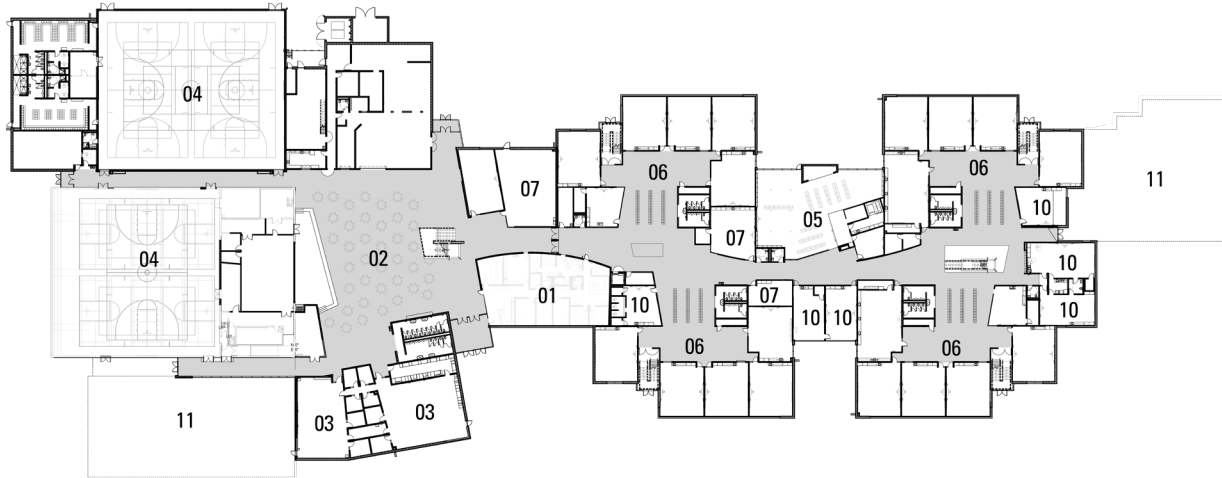
- Flexible use
- Spaces that adapt individual learning styles
- Visual connection

## ***Vertical Connection***

- Daylighting to building core
- Access for cross-level learning

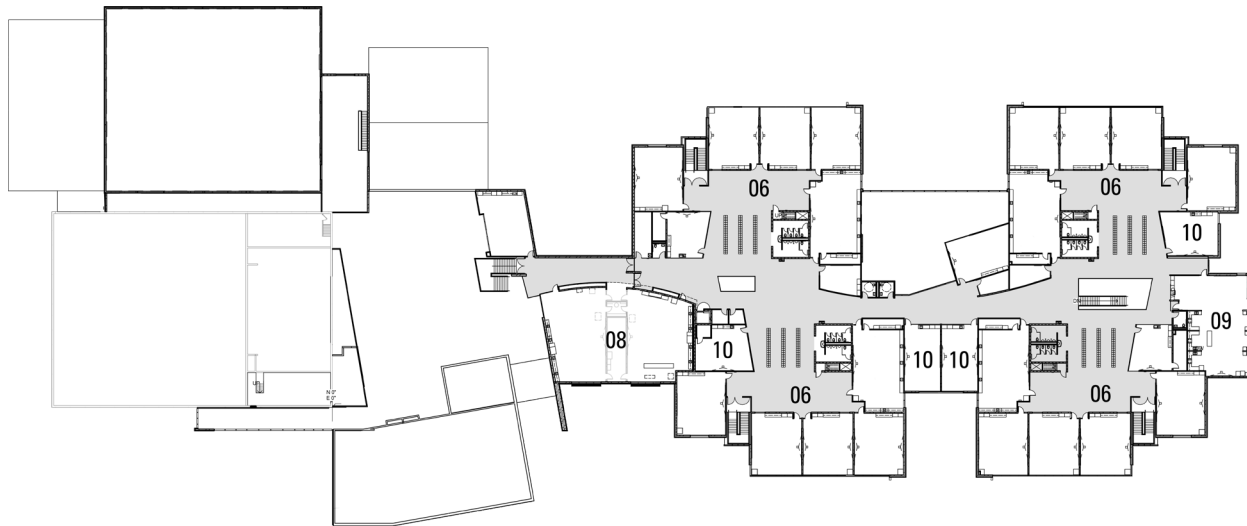






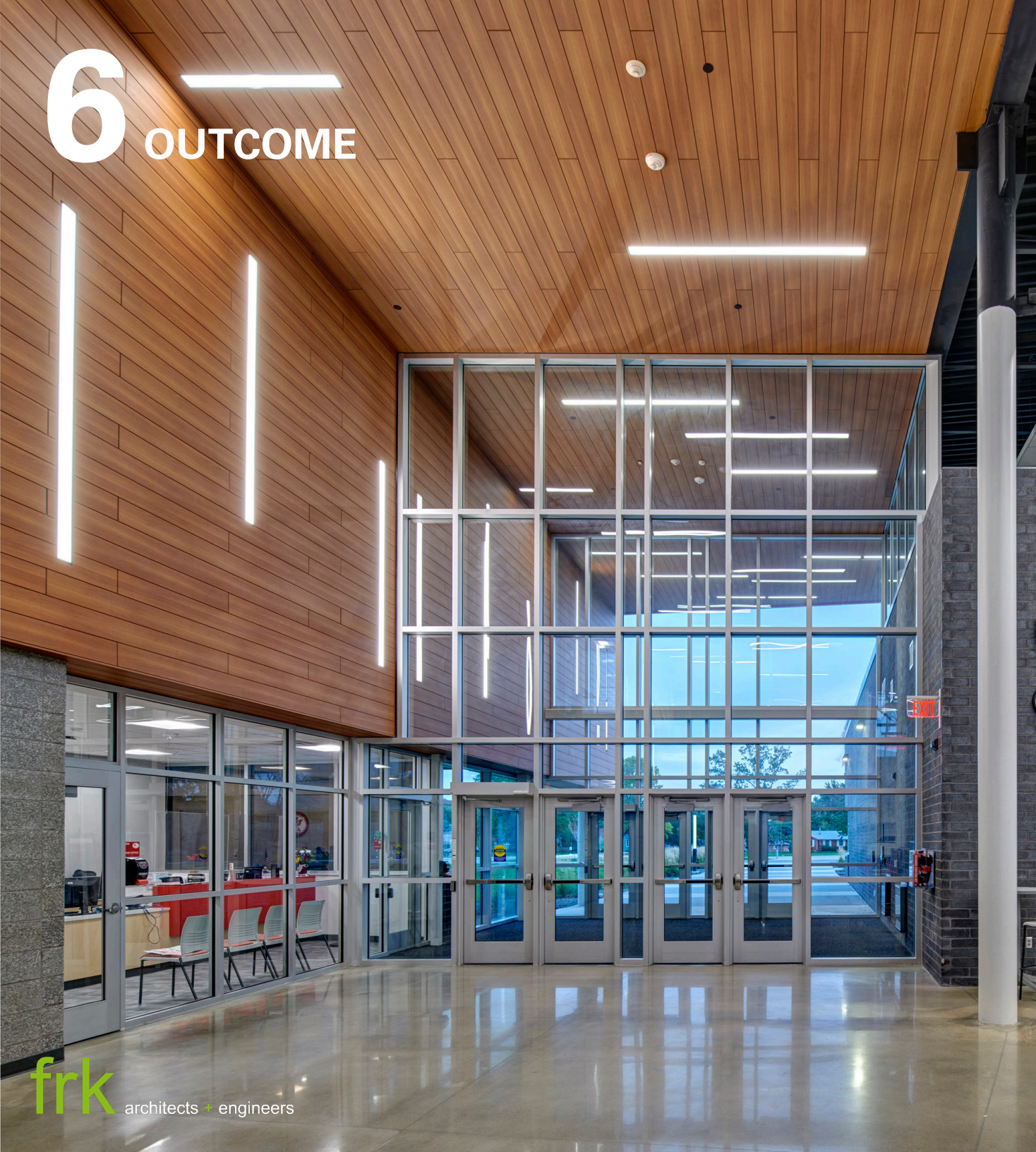
## Key

- 01... ADMINISTRATION
- 02... STUDENT COMMONS
- 03... MUSIC
- 04... ATHLETICS
- 05... MEDIA CENTER
- 06... LEARNING COMMUNITY
- 07... CTE LAB
- 08... VISUAL ARTS
- 09... FOODS LAB
- 10... SPECIAL EDUCATION
- 11... FUTURE ADDITIONS





# 6 OUTCOME



With the completion of Berg Middle School, the District was able to achieve district-wide grade level realignment. The district office, once housed in one of the elementary buildings with open space, was moved into a newly-remodeled building along with the alternative high school. With new level reassignment, the district now has space available for growth at all levels.

*Building a brand new 5-8 middle school facility enables the community to strengthen academics in key areas identified by both local teachers and parents, including:*

- Expand teacher and student access to grade-level appropriate educational environment and learning resources.
- Enhance collaboration, continuing education opportunities and instructional support for teachers providing instruction to students at the same grade level.
- Increase opportunities to match student-teacher learning styles in classrooms throughout the district.

The new Berg Middle School was unanimously embraced by both teaching staff and its new students. Although their first full year in the building was cut short by the Covid-19 pandemic, the district benefited greatly by the flexibility the spaces in the new building offered in order to work more physically distant.





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