

# DESIGN VISIONING

*in collaboration with the Albert & Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design*



INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF NEW ORLEANS





# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

PROJECT OUTLINE	04
SITE	06

## PROGRAM

PROJECT GOALS	08
DESIGN CONCEPT	10

## RESEARCH

PRECEDENTS	12
ENGAGEMENT	14

## DESIGN

DESIGN CONCEPT	16
LEARNING COMMONS	18
CAFETERIA + GALLERY	22
SCHOOLYARD	26

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

33
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# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT OUTLINE

In Fall 2018, the International High School of New Orleans (IHSNO) worked with the Tulane University School of Architecture's Albert & Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design to re-envision its historic home. The working group, made up of IHSNO students, staff, and leadership, alongside students and faculty of the Tulane School of Architecture, created a design vision for possible improvements and additions to the existing school. At once aiming to respect the historic character of the building and make creative improvements, this document should serve as inspiration to create these changes by showing the potential for dynamic impact on an already vibrant IHSNO school and community.

## THE SCHOOL

Located in New Orleans' Central Business District, the L.E. Rabouin Memorial School building was originally designed and constructed as a women's school in the late 1930's. Since its origination, the high school has had several name changes, including its designation as the International High School of New Orleans in 2009. The school allows students to be challenged academically by enrolling in the International Baccalaureate program, as well as business and early college courses.





International High School of New Orleans

# SITE

The International High School of New Orleans is located at 727 Carondelet Street in the city's Central Business District. As the only high school in the entire downtown area, the school plays an important role in serving as both a neighborhood school and one whose programs draw students from across the city.

Given the limitations of the site's relatively small urban footprint and the need to retain onsite parking, IHSNO may benefit from partnerships with nearby institutions and amenities including the New Orleans Culinary & Hospitality Institute (NOCHI), local arts organizations and performance venues, and other potential internship partners.

## Community Partners:

1. New Orleans Culinary and Hospitality Institute- 0.2 miles
2. Lafayette Square- 0.2 miles
3. The New Orleans Advocate- 0.2 miles
4. Gambit Weekly- 0.3 miles
5. The Civic Theater- 0.3 miles
6. Orpheum Theater- 0.6 miles
7. Saenger Theater- 0.7 miles

Streetcar Lines .....





# PROJECT GOALS

With the help of school leadership, faculty, staff, and students, the project team worked to understand the needs of the IHSNO community and how the building might need to change to better meet the needs of a modern high school. Through a multi-step engagement process the team identified the following project priorities and goals:

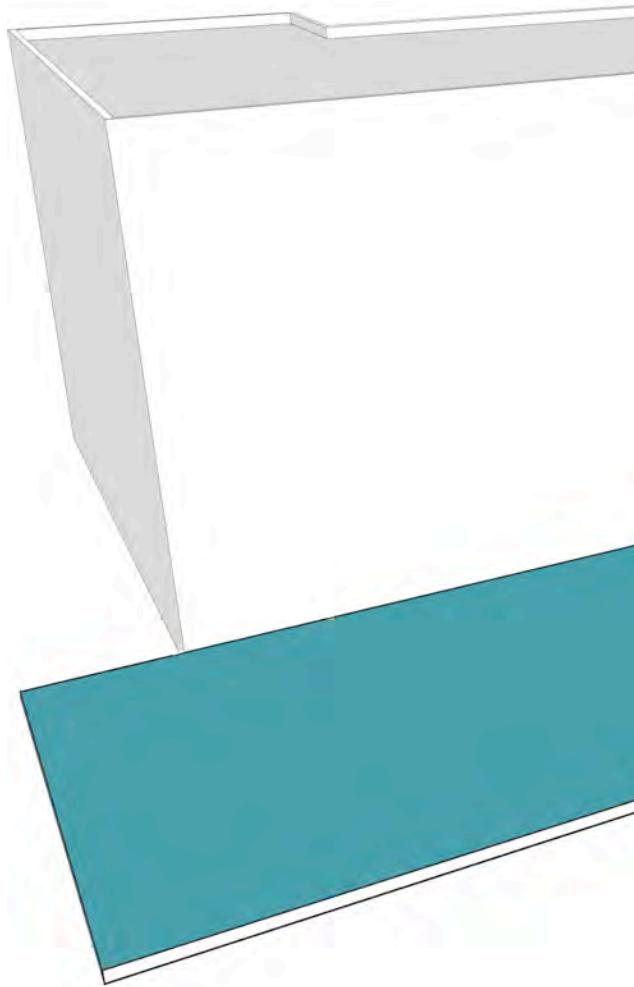
- To create a healthy, safe, and inviting learning atmosphere for students
- To increase the size and functionality of the cafeteria
- To increase outdoor activity by beautifying the existing courtyard area

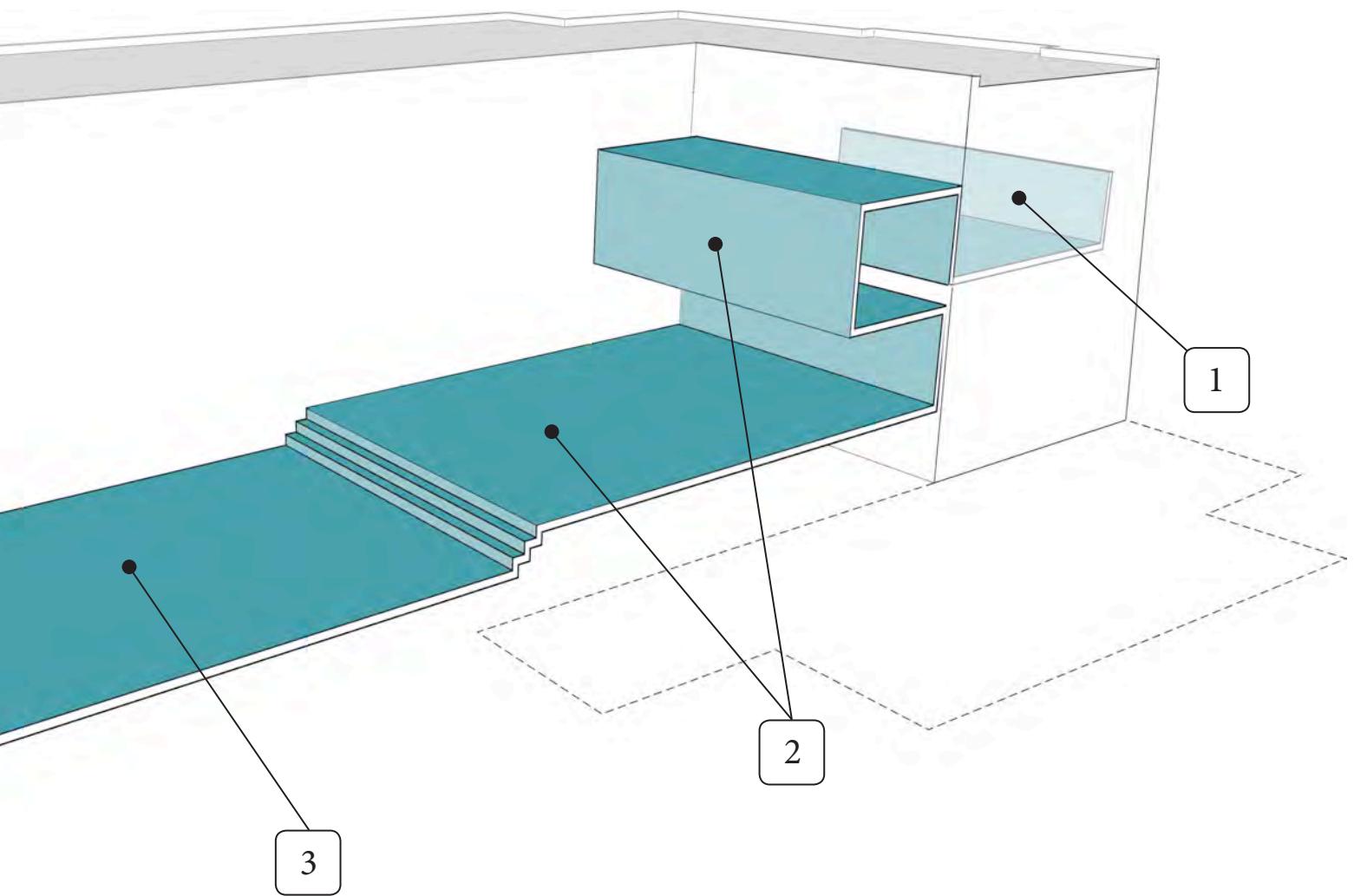
The IHSNO's historic building is in need of a complete renovation, including a new HVAC system, accessibility upgrades, and other major investments executed with sensitivity to the historic character of the building. The costs and specifications for such a renovation have been studied by the Orleans Parish School Board in a 2017 report.

When a full renovation is undertaken, an unparalleled opportunity exists to further enhance the amenities and performance of the building with a focus on the experience of students, faculty, and staff, ultimately providing a thoughtful and inclusive space for all. As such, this report provides schematic designs that will give life to the building renovation through the creation of new centralized public amenities. Pictured on this page, these include:

- 1) student learning commons
- 2) a new multi-purpose cafeteria & gallery for student work
- 3) outdoor recreational improvements

Additional recommendations include a new faculty lounge, counseling and development offices, dance studio & blackbox theater, and more.





# DESIGN CONCEPT





3

## 1 LEARN

A new student commons will provide easy access to counseling services, a variety of small group and solo study spaces, and an environment conducive to learning. An upgraded computer lab will accommodate classroom teaching, coding, yearbook, and other digital clubs, and student research for ongoing projects and papers.

## 2 NOURISH

Creating a dynamic new central social core for IHSNO will serve as the “heart” of the school, doubling as a cafeteria, after-school club meeting space, evening event location, and more, with a visual connection and social staircase to a new student art gallery.

## 3 SHARE

A performance “porch” outside the cafeteria and improved outdoor recreational amenities will create a new shared space perfect for lunch, events, sports, and more.

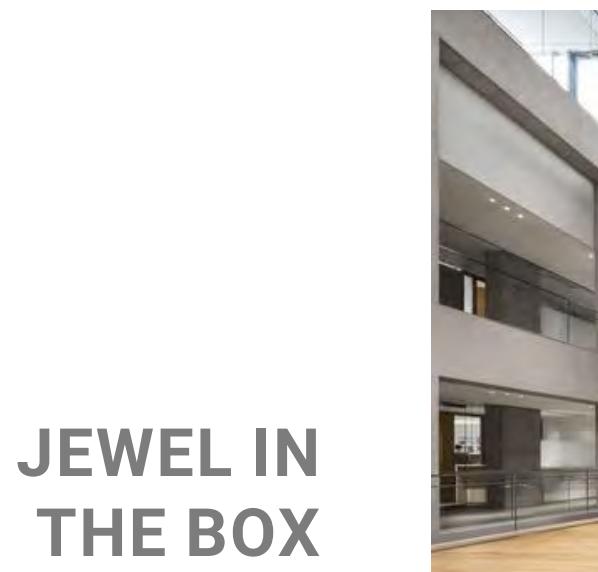
# PRECEDENTS

The design team examined a wide variety of precedent examples from other schools, institutions, and other public, people-oriented spaces.

“Jewel in the box,” examples inspired an opportunity to make the most of a new cafeteria space, providing an area for student art and other displays also visible from the most public and social space in the building.

Examples that “activate the ground” were studied to provide a dynamic quality to the new cafeteria space by using multi-level, occupiable stairs.

“Occupy the wall” precedents explored the use of thickened walls, already present within the historic IHSNO building, to create storage space and a variety of environments for solo or group study.



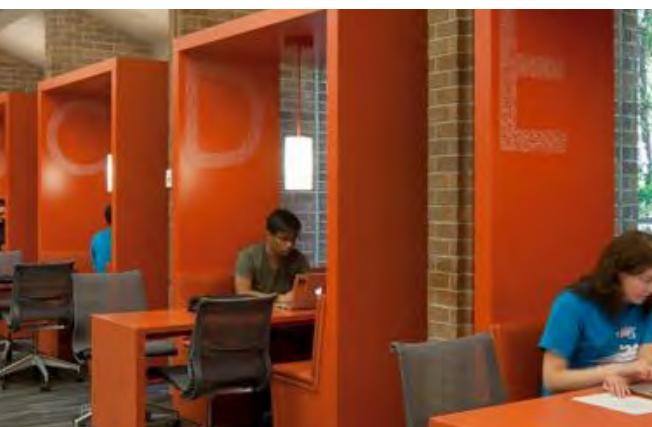
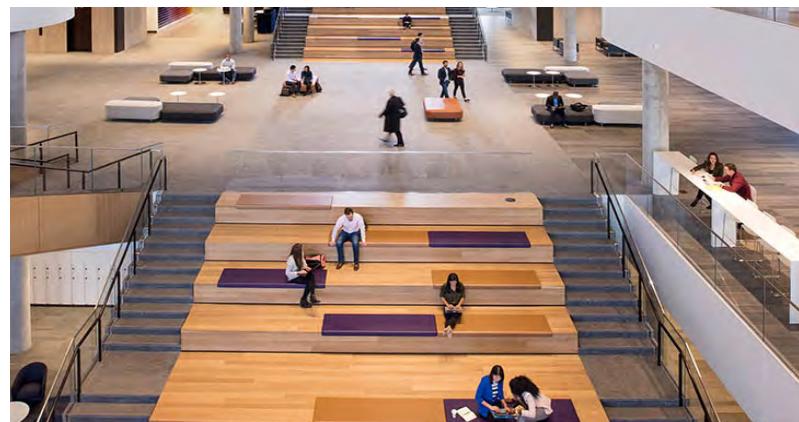
## JEWEL IN THE BOX



## ACTIVATE THE GROUND



## OCCUPY THE WALL



# ENGAGEMENT



A collaborative design process was used to:

- 1) Understand the site and historic building
- 2) Learn about existing efforts to budget for the renovation needs of the bldg.
- 3) Gauge the most pressing needs of the faculty and students
- 4) Hear about ongoing programming and current uses of indoor and outdoor spaces
- 5) Assess priorities
- 6) Create schematic design ideas
- 7) Solidify final design solutions



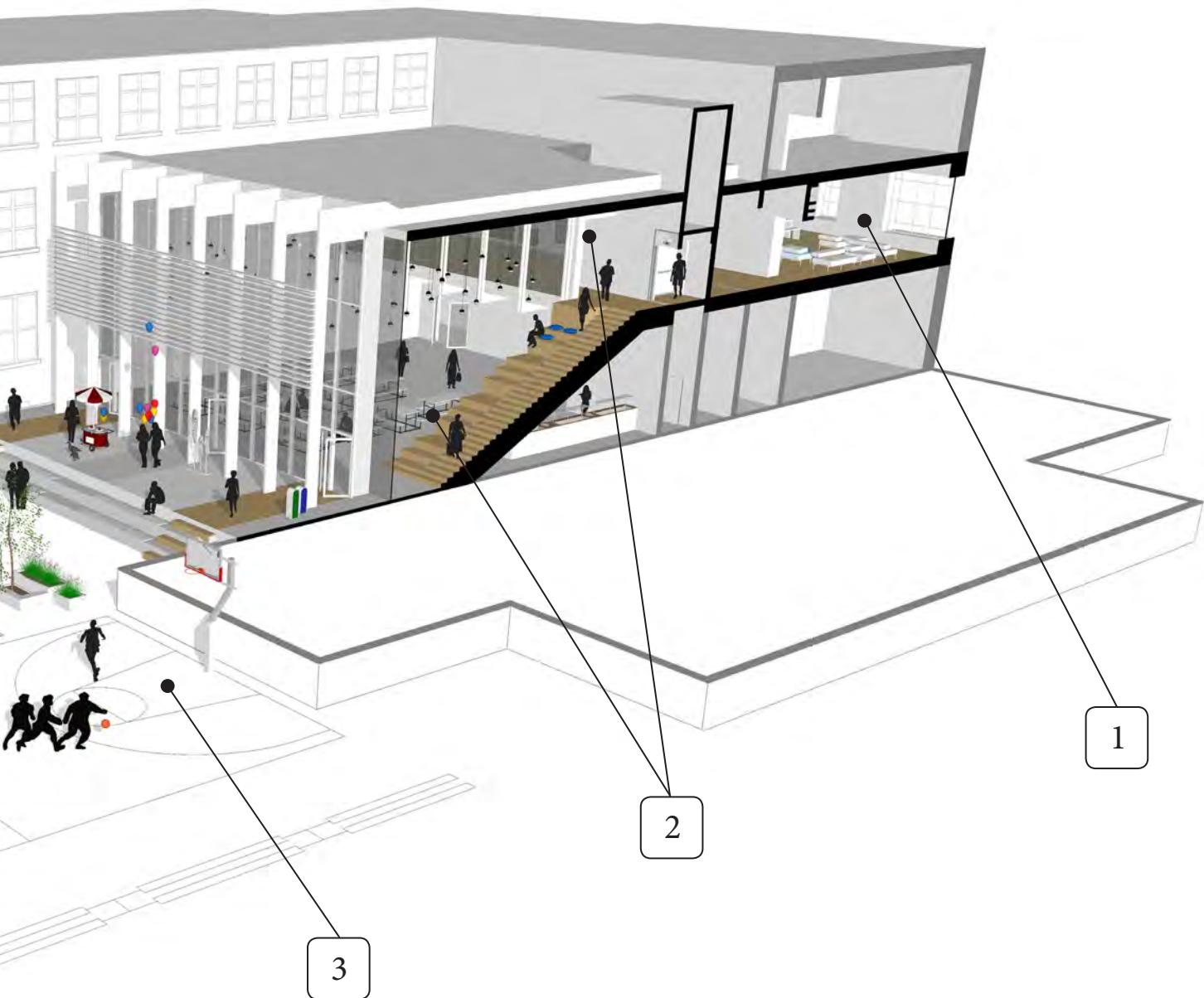
The design team met with IHSNO board members, executive leadership, and faculty to understand the pressing budgetary and political challenges of undertaking a major renovation. Ongoing meetings with faculty and school leadership led to a clearer picture of day-to-day spatial and programmatic needs of students and staff, in addition to a reasonable wish list of amenities to improve the experience of students, from consistent A/C delivery to a less congested cafeteria.

Tulane Architecture students worked directly with IHSNO students through cafeteria surveys, one-on-one conversations, and small group design charrettes to allow for an open exchange of both challenges and possible design solutions. This interactive and iterative approach led to a series of both big and small design ideas with shared approval from both students and faculty.

# DESIGN CONCEPT



As introduced on pages 8-11, the primary design ideas for IHSNO run through the heart of the existing building, and include (1) a new student commons that will centralize access to student services and non-classroom study, (2) a dynamic addition built within the existing courtyard and featuring a multi-purpose cafeteria and event space and a new student art gallery that can be used to celebrate the art, writing, awards, and other student achievements, and (3) improved outdoor recreational courts and activity areas.



# LEARNING COMMONS

**A new student learning commons will provide a quiet space for small group and solo study.**

The learning commons aims to consolidate access to student services, with counselors' and advisors' offices connected to the commons. The space also provides a comfortable classroom alternative for students studying between classes and after school. It makes use of existing thickened walls within the historic building, using the space to create storage, accommodate a school library collection, and embed study nooks.







An updated computer lab within the Learning Commons will ensure IHSNO students have access to the latest technologies as they train for college and an increasingly technology-oriented job market. The lab may remain open as part of the commons or closed off by sound barrier partitions for more traditional classroom instruction.

The Learning Commons benefits from views to Baronne street through the building's historic Art Deco facade, with harsh southern light mitigated by thickened walls and window sills. This historic design feature is mimicked on the opposite side of the room with additional storage, study nooks, and library books.





2



## CAFETERIA + GALLERY

***A dynamic new cafeteria and event space will serve as the social hub and heart of the IHSNO campus.***

Designed to replace the congested existing cafeteria, this new space is nestled within the existing courtyard. Featuring the exposed brick walls of the historic building, space for a full kitchen to improve food service, and an occupiable platform staircase, this new space will serve as a central gathering area for the entire school, at lunch, for club activities, and even for indoor/outdoor events including parents and the entire IHSNO community.

Hanging above the open area is a new student gallery, meant to celebrate the art and other achievements of the IHSNO student body, a showcase for both day-to-day use, prospective students, and visitors.



Trusses above the new space create an open floor plan that can be used for a variety of purposes, from regular lunches, to lectures, to movie nights. The glass wall faces north, which reduces heat gain in the warmer months while providing plenty of light and creating indoor/outdoor event possibilities when all its doors are opened. Storage for tables and event equipment allow for more open events such as dances and small performances.

A new gallery for student work overlooks the cafeteria. The two are connected by a wide and occupiable platform stair, which serves as additional seating for lunch, festivals, and other events. A new elevator in the corner provides needed accessibility to the historic building and creates another connection between the gallery and cafeteria.







## SCHOOL YARD

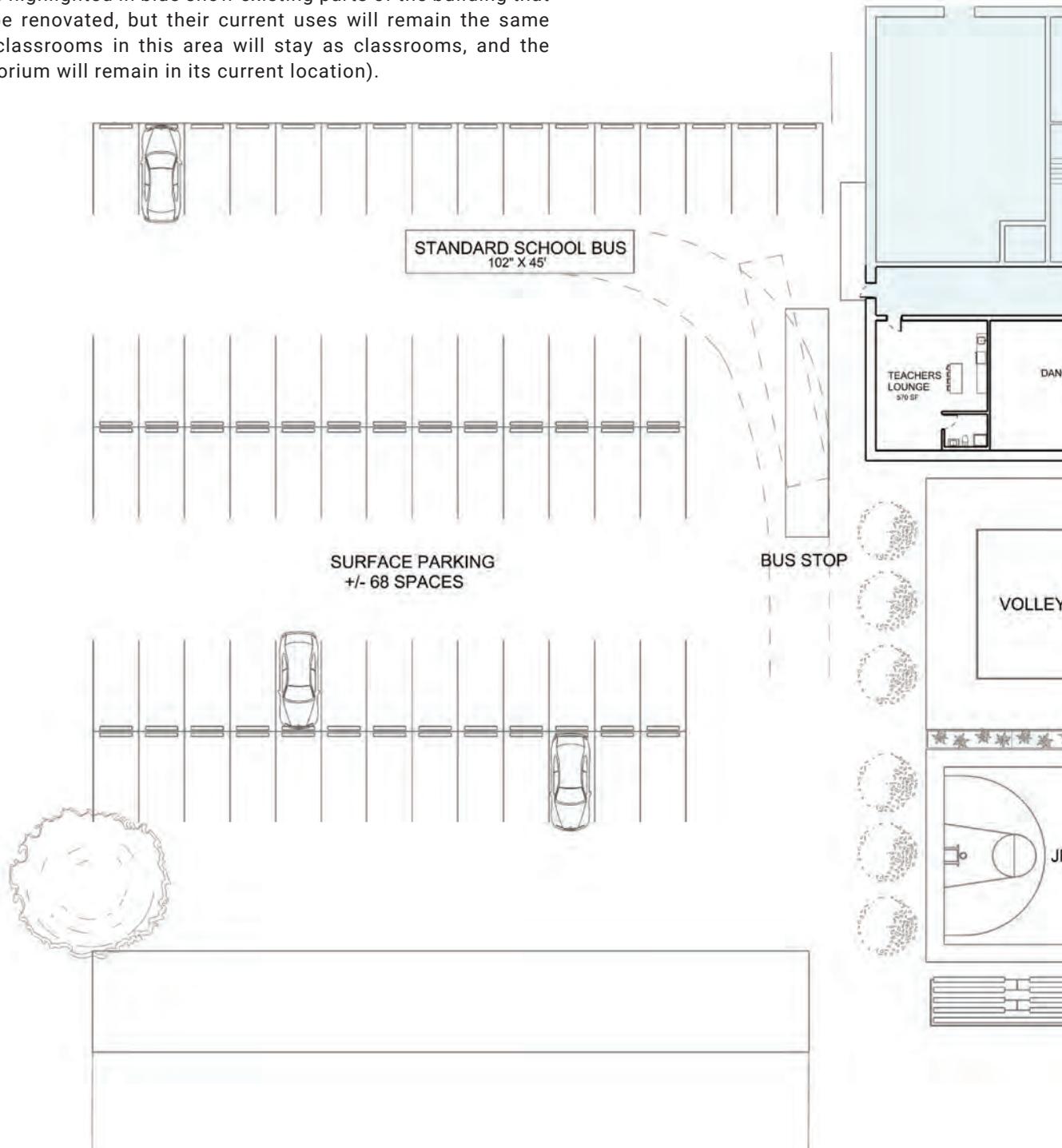
*New recreational opportunities and an outdoor “stage” highlight the improved outdoor space.*

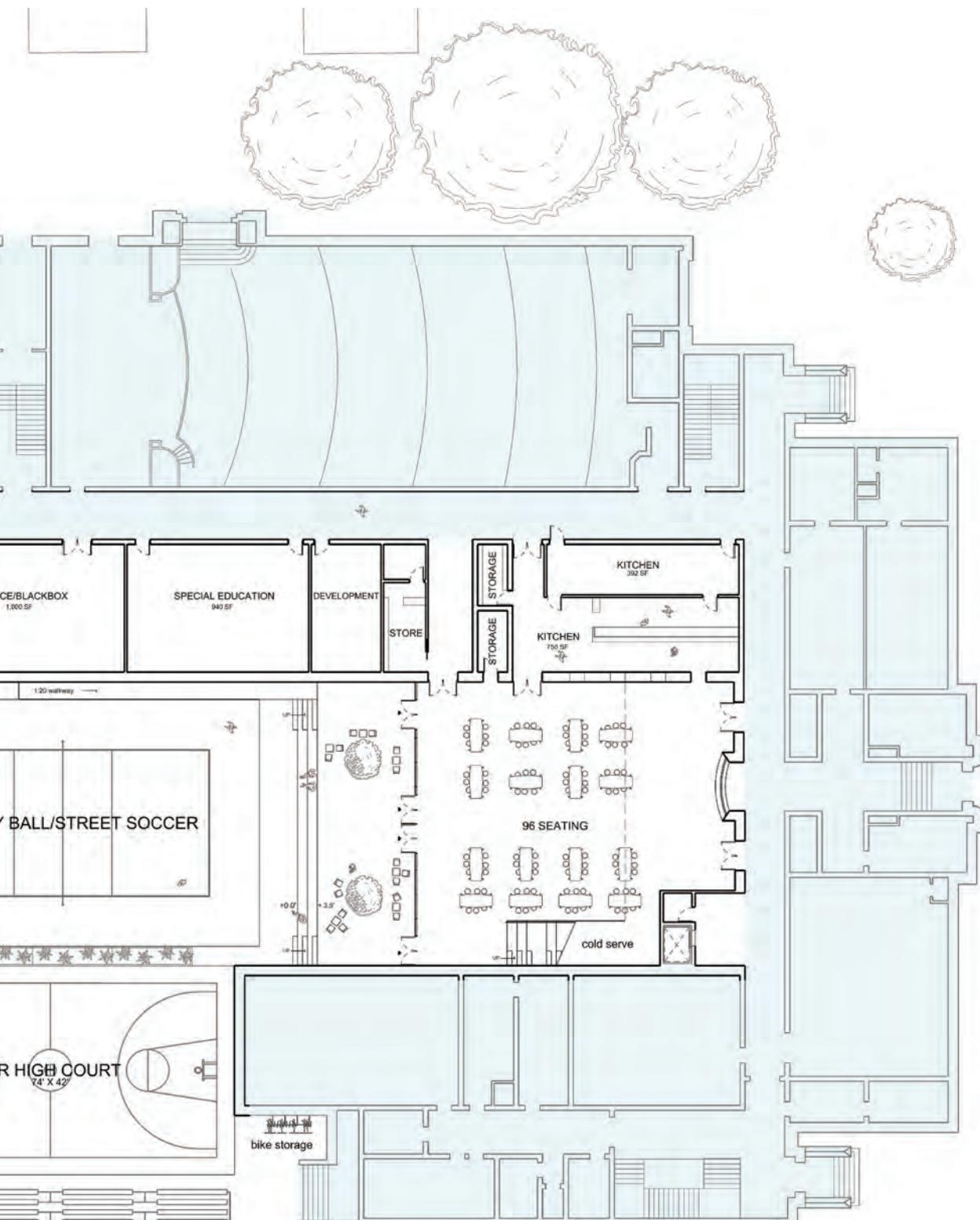
Designed in tandem with the new cafeteria, students will be able to flow in and out of the space into an expanded outdoor school yard with both multi-use spaces and new courts such as basketball and volleyball.

The new school yard creates an expanded lunch area when the weather is mild. The space will serve the school's sports teams and clubs, and can also be used for a variety of festivals and other activities. Additional outdoor space has been utilized by moving existing mechanical equipment to the roof of the new cafeteria, and by redesigning the parking lot. Students arriving by bus will enter the school through a new landscaped walkway, while additional plants and trees will help to reduce the currently harsh, hardscaped outdoor area.

Schematic floor plans show the redesigned parking area, and the relationship between the school yard and the new cafeteria. Additional improvements include a new faculty lounge, a black box theater and dance studio that can also serve as a "backstage" for the existing auditorium, improved special education and development offices, a school merchandise store, additional storage, and a full-service kitchen.

Areas highlighted in blue show existing parts of the building that will be renovated, but their current uses will remain the same (i.e. classrooms in this area will stay as classrooms, and the auditorium will remain in its current location).





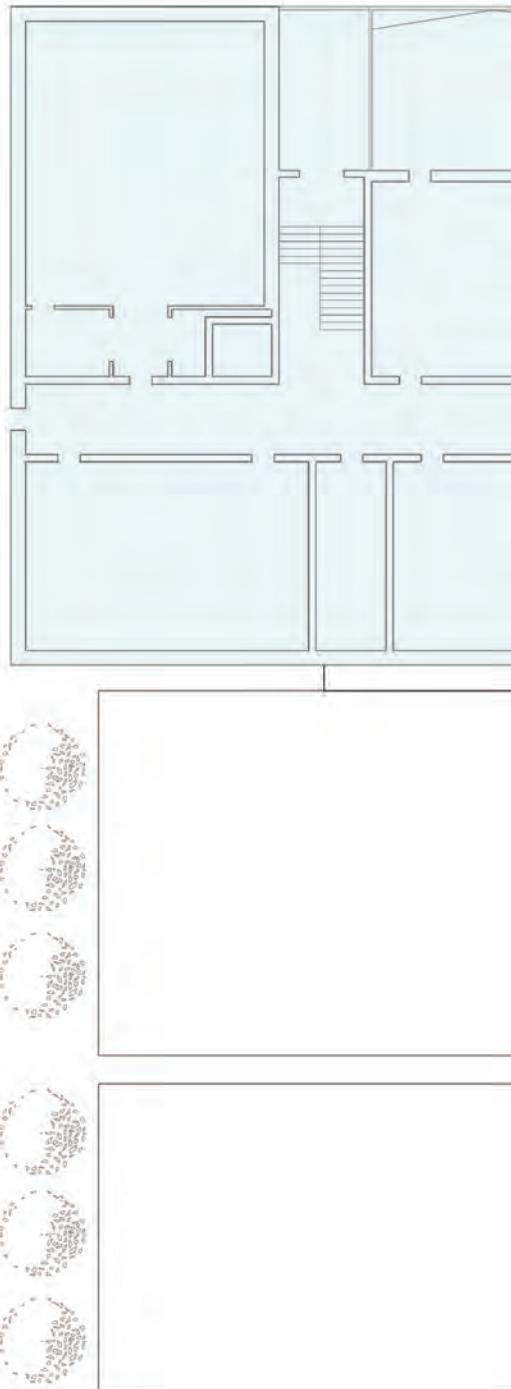
SCHEMATIC 1st FLOOR PLAN

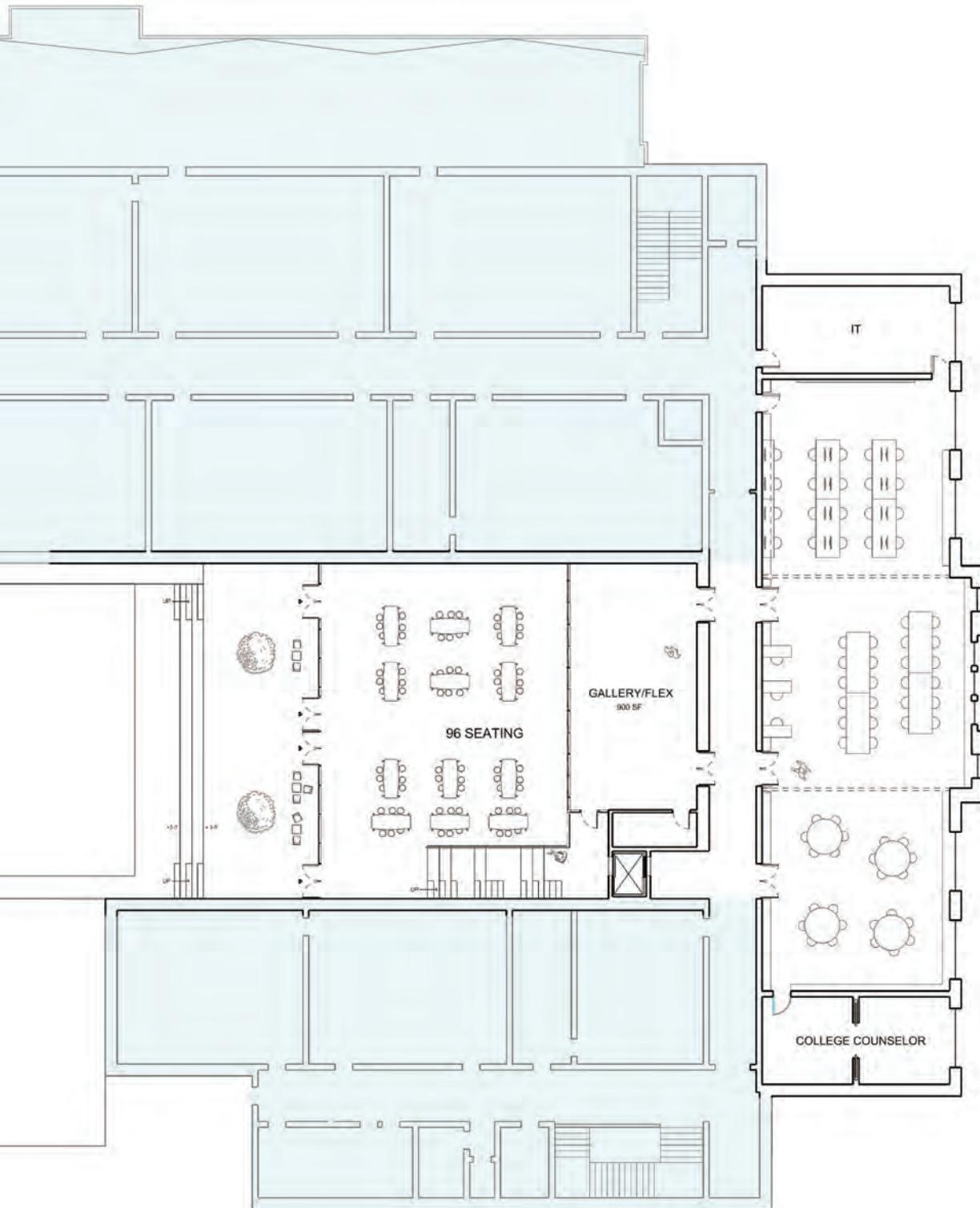
Schematic plans for the second floor show the gallery above the new cafeteria and across the hall from the learning commons. It highlights the proximity of college counselors to the study area and IT equipment to the computer lab, and dotted lines indicate where the commons can be divided by partitions to accommodate simultaneous activities that may need noise separation.

Areas highlighted in blue show existing parts of the building that will be renovated, but their current uses will remain the same (i.e. classrooms in this area will stay as classrooms).

Schematic plans for the third floor remain nearly unchanged from the existing classroom layout and are therefore not depicted.

Additional building improvements needed include accessibility upgrades to existing bathrooms, some window restorations and upgrades, and an entirely new HVAC mechanical system. Use of the existing kitchen and shop equipment in the basement for cooking and carpentry courses would become feasible within the scope of a full building renovation.





SCHEMATIC 2nd FLOOR PLAN





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Albert & Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design worked closely with the leadership, staff, and students of the International High School of New Orleans to envision a dynamic future for its campus in the Central Business District.

The Small Center's team was led by Tulane School of Architecture Professor of Practice Andrew Liles (design lead), in collaboration with Nick Jenisch (project manager) and students of the School of Architecture.

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