

# **RUSSELL USD 407 COMMUNITY TASK FORCE REPORT**

OCTOBER 30, 2017



## INTRODUCTION

Since early this summer the Board of Education requested this Community Task Force to review and assess the needs of the educational and district facilities of Russell Public Schools with respect to storm safety, security, fire life safety and space, and present a report with recommendations. We appreciated this opportunity to be selected by the Board of Education in this effort.

The district facilities we reviewed were Simpson Elementary; Bickerdyke Elementary, Ruppenthal Middle School, Russell High School and Central District Office.

Tonight we are here to submit our report and recommendations.

First, I would like to recognize those members on Community Task Force.

The following is the process we engaged in and our findings.

## WE REVIEWED THE RUSSELL COMMUNITY

As this school district is critical to the present and future of Russell we began our effort by reviewing the demographics and population characteristics of the area. Since the school district makes up two thirds of Russell County statistics used are (with 4700 in the city) averaged city/county.

Population is approximately 7000 people with a median age of 43.8 years old. The population growth is stable and increased slightly over the past 5 years.

The Comprehensive Development Plan for Russell Area completed in 2016 indicated continued slight growth to 2036.

The age breakdown shows the largest percentage of people living in Russell is between 20 years old and 64 years old.

The median income of a household is \$41,102 and the median home value is \$86,500.

Russell Community has experienced recent improvements to roads, streets and highway projects; city electrical upgraded; expansion of the local hospital; expansion and upgrading of several churches; construction of two family housing; and per the Russell ECODEVO there are yet such more positive improvements to come.

## WE REVIEWED RUSSELL USD 407

There are approximately 850 FTE students that attend schools in Russell. The student population has been slightly growing at a steady but intermittent pace similar to the general population. Growth is not at one level but is spread across the all grade levels and usually averages in the range of 15 to 20 students per year.

One segment of the student population that is growing are those students with special needs. The special education population currently comprises about 21% of the total student population. And this continues to grow.

In addition a large number of students about 55%, qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program based on the income levels of the families.

## WE REVIEWED EDUCATION TODAY

During our review and discussions as a committee, we began to realize how education has changed since the years of 1938, 1952 and 1962 when our current schools were constructed.

- Children with special challenges require education spaces that are specifically sized and equipped to meet their education needs. As we just mentioned these children make up 21% of our student population.
- Also today education programs for Music, Art, and Sciences require dedicated spaces with specific features.
- Society today challenges our Education System in Russell to prepare our students with the latest uses of computers, media and technology.
- Teaching strategies today have less emphasis on didactic learning and is focus more on small group project based learning environments which has a much higher outcome and retention for learning.

Also we realized the importance of Pre Kindergarten and Early Childhood Education. Children entering the education system at this level will have a greater chance of success for the remainder of their Kindergarten thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade educational experience.

## WE TOURED DISTRICT FACILITIES

Over the span of several weeks the Task Force met at each of the district facilities, reviewed and identified issues that needed to be addressed.

In our walk through we were all impressed on how well maintained all of the buildings were. The floors were well maintained, walls were clean, doors and windows looked good. It was in some of the meetings the temperature outside was unbearable making the temperature in the school very uncomfortable. In spaces where there was air conditioning the noise from the unit was so loud it required the use of a sound system. Our meetings lasted 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

How difficult it must be to have students and teachers in these conditions for an entire school day!



## WE IDENTIFIED ISSUES COMMON TO ALL FACILITIES

We found issues that were common with each of the facilities. These are:

- Aged Heating Systems with maintenance having difficulty to keep them operating. And with few exceptions, no Air Conditioning System in any of the spaces. Those spaces with air conditioning have systems that are 20 plus years old and past their useful life.
- Plumbing lines are from 55 to 80 years old with problems. Plumbing Fixtures are original to the building and difficult to maintain and do not meet the accessibility (ADA) requirements.
- Electrical power is insufficient and maxed out, especially with the advent of technology.
- Each classroom lacks sufficient access to electrical power to meet today's education program needs.
- Lighting is old and insufficient and contributes to high electrical use.
- With the vintage of the buildings there is no thermal insulation in the walls and little in the roofs making all schools energy inefficient. Large windows areas create significant thermal gain. And there is little means to control temperature.
- Each of the buildings has significant barriers for physically challenged students, teachers and public in access to the buildings and circulation in the buildings.
- None of the buildings have any areas built for Storm Protection which has been a recent focus of all communities.

## WE IDENTIFIED ISSUES COMMON TO ALL FACILITIES

- None of the buildings have any areas built for Storm Protection which has been a recent focus of all communities.
- There is a Security System for access control, in each of the buildings, but more access control with a surveillance system is needed for safe schools today.
- Due to their age none of the buildings meet current Life Safety Code requirements for fire rating of corridors, fire wall separations, or control of a fire/ smoke spreading. Fire notification (fire alarm systems) have not been updated, except at Russell High School.
- All doors and hardware will need to be replaced to meet Fire Life Safety and accessibility (ADA) requirements.
- All school sites with exception of Russell High School are about 2 acres in size. The current buildings take up most of the site leaving little playground area much less any off street parking. With Ruppenthal there is no playground/ playfield area. Any building additions become virtually impracticable.
- The vehicle and pedestrian circulation at each school site especially during the student pick-up and drop-off times are hazardous.

With the size of the site and the age of the buildings ranging from 56 years to 80 years old the question has to be asked whether these facilities themselves have reached the end of their useful life.



## WE FOUND SEPARATE ISSUES UNIQUE TO EACH FACILITY

In addition and more specifically at SIMPSON ELEMENTARY we found:

- the 1990 wood frame classroom addition was in poor condition and in need of replacement with a new building addition;
- the roof on the main building was the original roof system and has to be replaced;
- the existing classrooms are deficient in size;
- there is not sufficient space for the Pre Kindergarten or for the Special Education
- the large exterior windows need to be reduced in size to reduce heat gain;
- the interior corridor stairs to the gym need to be replaced with new steel and concrete ramp;
- the kitchen needs updating and a fire suppression hood;
- the administration and support area needs updating for visitor access control and expansion;
- new playground surface is needed
- staff toilets are needed; and
- the school is essentially at capacity.



## WE FOUND SEPARATE ISSUES UNIQUE TO EACH FACILITY

And at BICKERDYKE ELEMENTARY we found:

- the building entry needs to be significantly modified for access by the physically challenged;
- a new elevator is required;
- the main building should be connected with the gymnasium building;
- more student toilets are needed;
- school is at capacity and more classrooms are needed for special education and for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades;
- the administration and support needs to be centralized and modified for visitor access control;
- new playground surface is needed;
- the exterior windows should be replaced; and
- staff toilets are needed.



## WE FOUND SEPARATE ISSUES UNIQUE TO EACH FACILITY

And at RUPPENTHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL we found:

- the building entry needs to be modified for accessibility;
- administration and support should be relocated at the entry for centralizing and visitor access control;
- there is no accessible path from the main building to the cafeteria;
- the existing elevator needs to be replaced;
- the stairwells do not meet current fire code;
- the locker rooms are on a lower level than the gym and not accessible for physically challenged;
- staff toilets are needed;
- the exterior windows should be replaced; and
- the kitchen needs upgrades including a fire suppression hood.



# RUSSELL USD 407

## WE FOUND SEPARATE ISSUES UNIQUE TO EACH FACILITY

And at RUSSELL HIGH SCHOOL we found this building to be in better shape than the others but still found the following that needed to be addressed:

- there are several areas at entry and exits that require modification for access;
- entry corridor to administration should be modified for access control;
- the exterior grounds near the building do not drain properly;
- more student and staff toilets are needed;
- the parking areas are in poor condition and require replacement;
- locker rooms need to be expanded;
- the kitchen should be expanded and upgraded with new fire suppressions kitchen hood.



## WE FOUND SEPARATE ISSUES UNIQUE TO EACH FACILITY

And finally at the CENTRAL OFFICE we found:

- the offices should be remodeled to better accommodate the visitors and provide for additional staff;
- the elevator controls should be updated;
- the main entry is not ADA accessible and cannot be feasibility modified;
- toilets need to be upgraded and reconfigured for ADA accessibility;
- the circulation path through the Board room during meetings is problematic for function and accessibility.



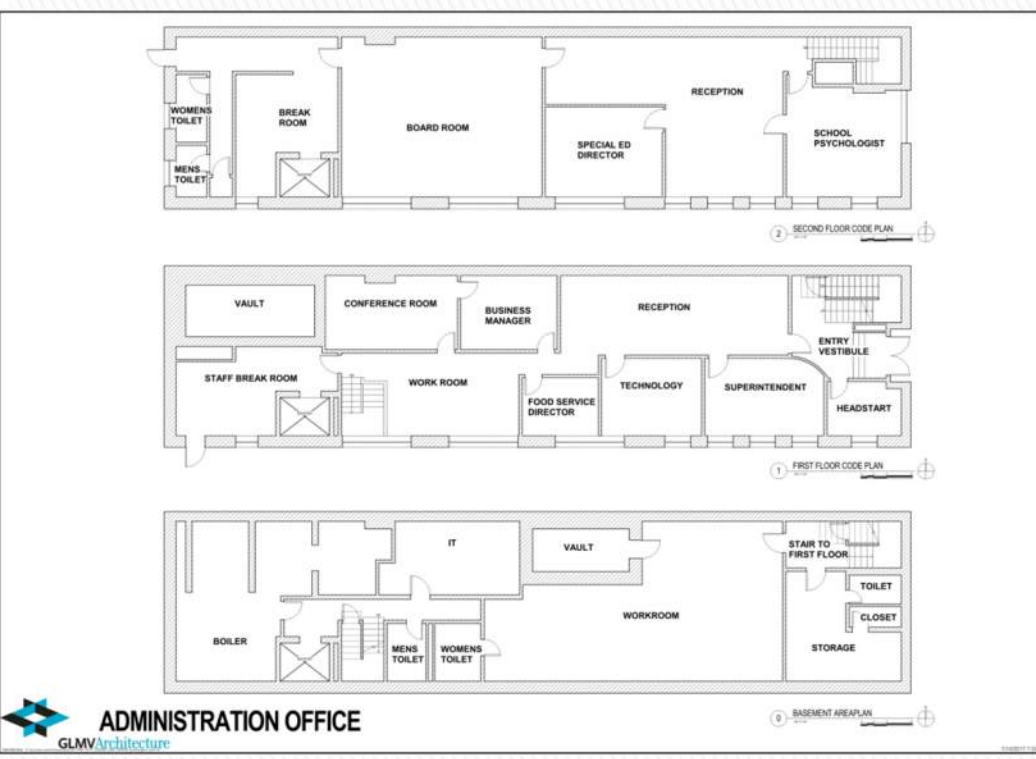
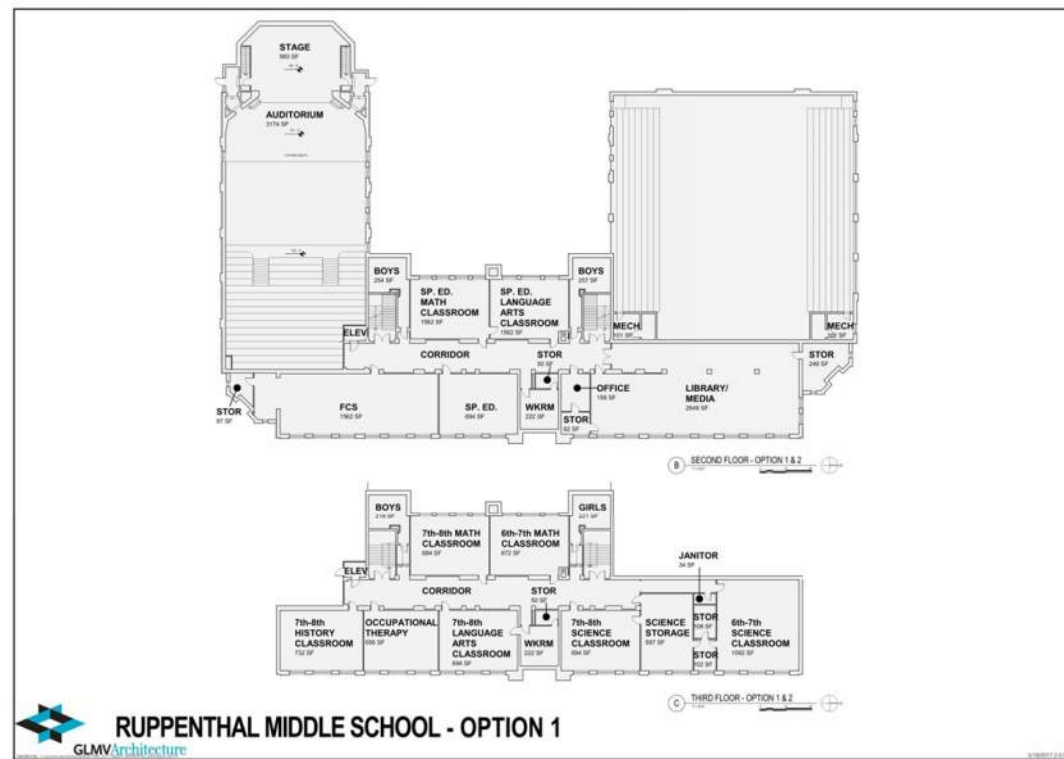
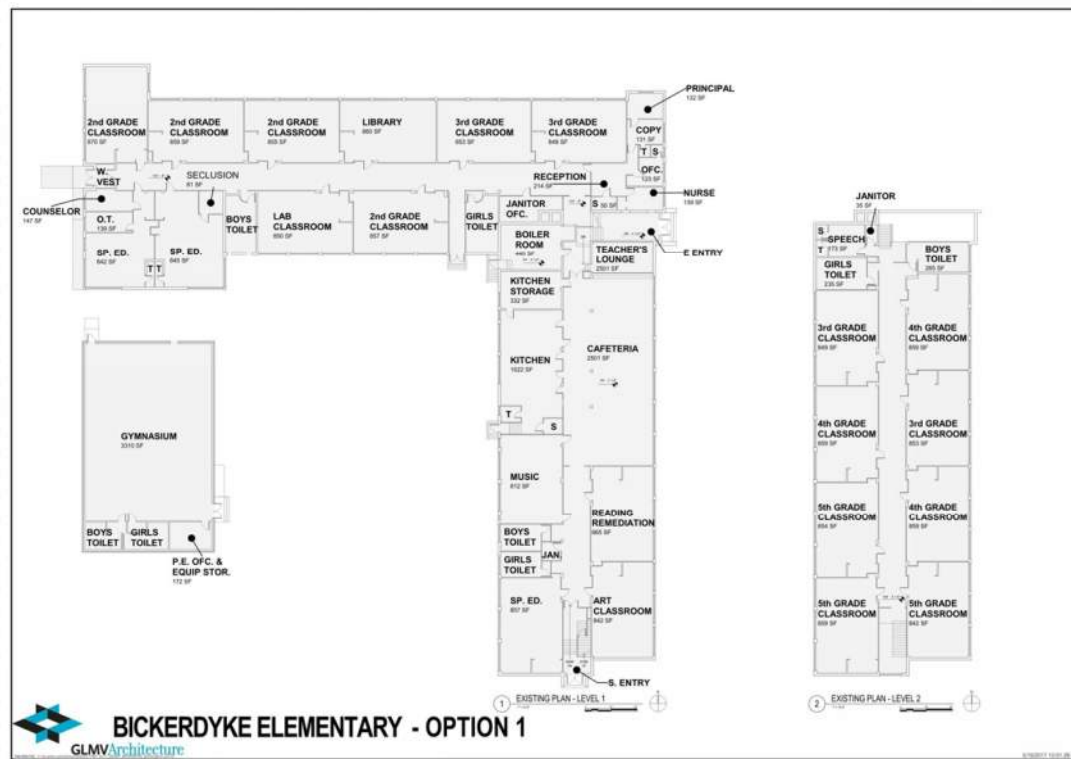
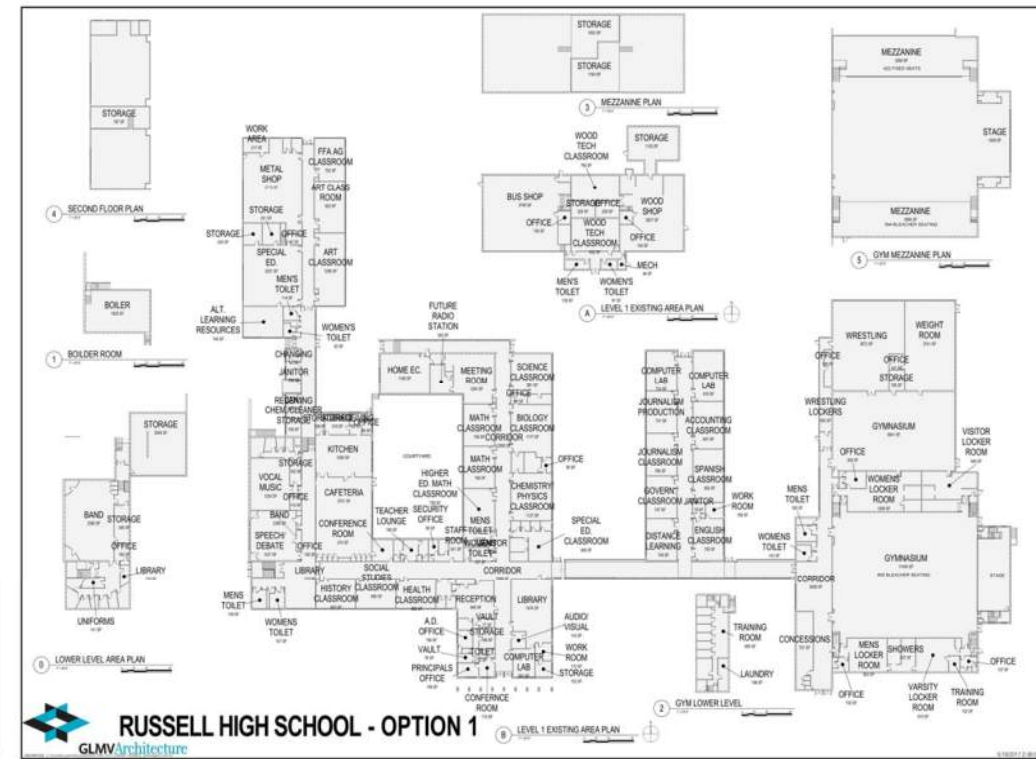
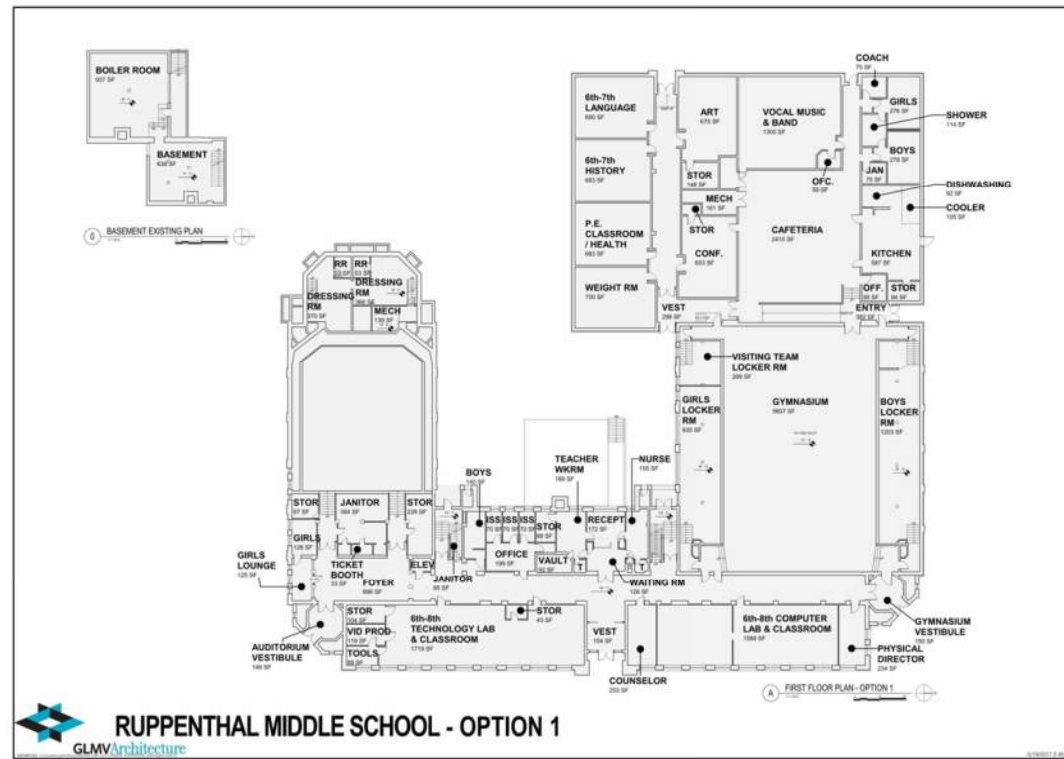
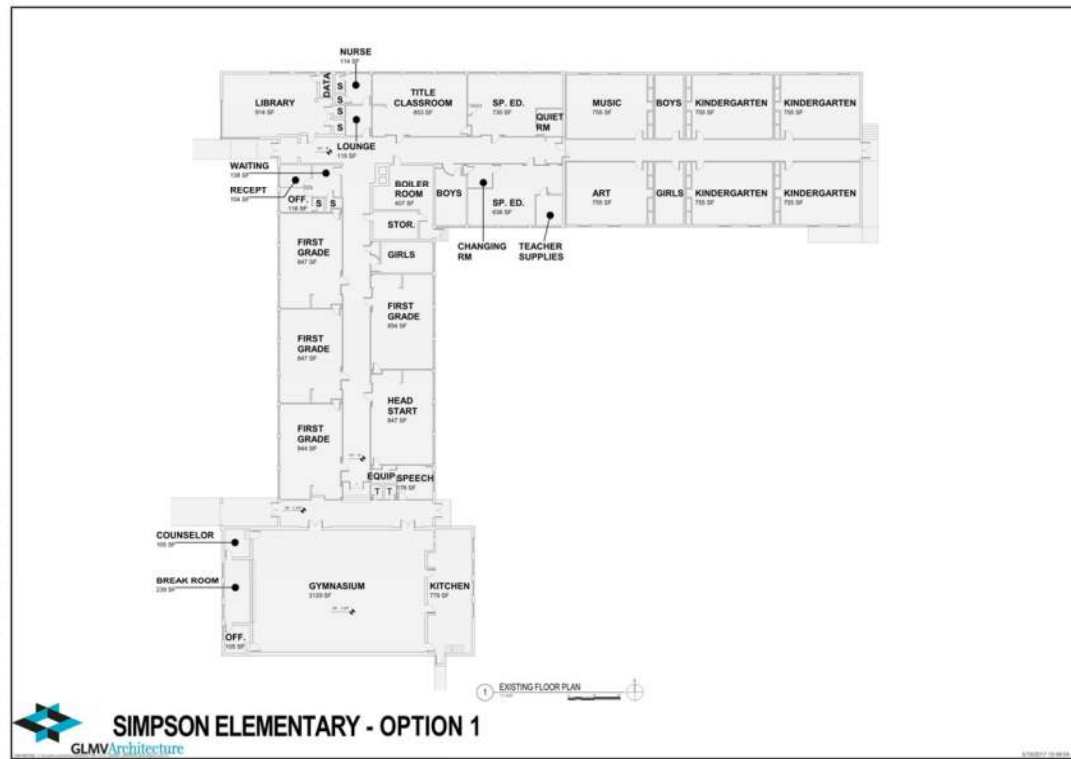
## RUSSELL USD 407

### **WE PREPARED OPTIONS**

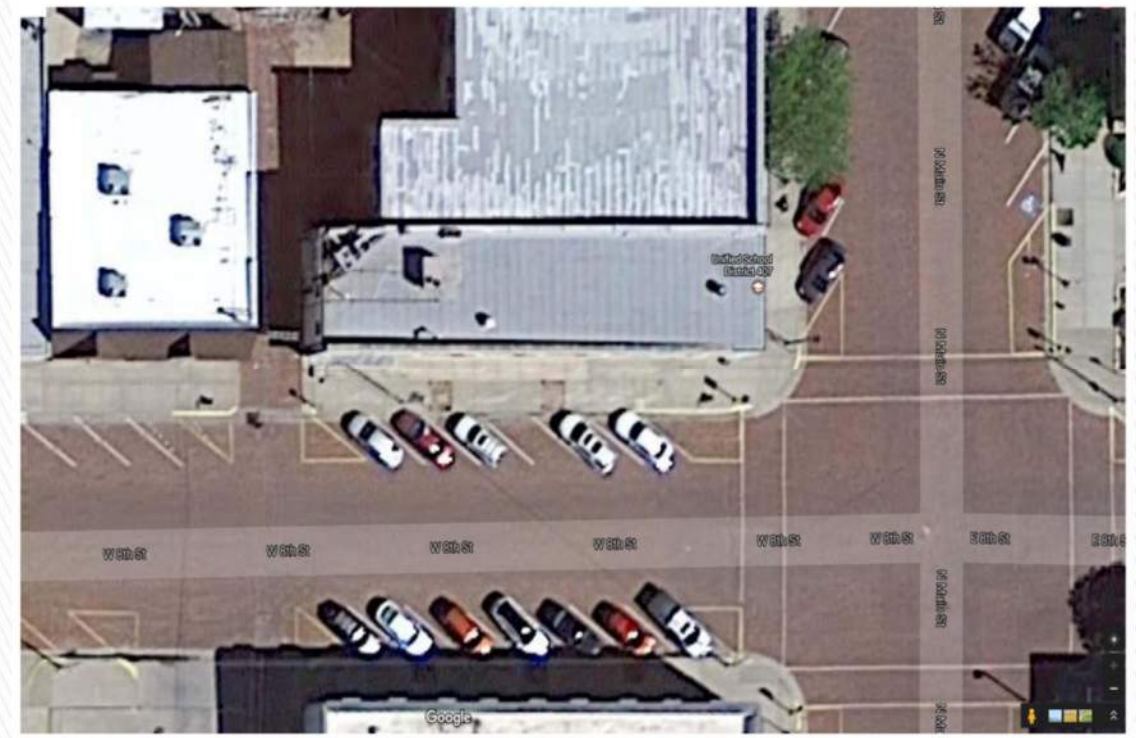
After identifying the issues with the buildings we reviewed four options presented.

Each option developed was progressive from the one prior.

For OPTION 1 we considered limiting the improvements for each facility to new heating and air conditioning system; new electrical power and lighting; and new plumbing piping and plumbing fixtures. The estimated cost is \$16,843,000.



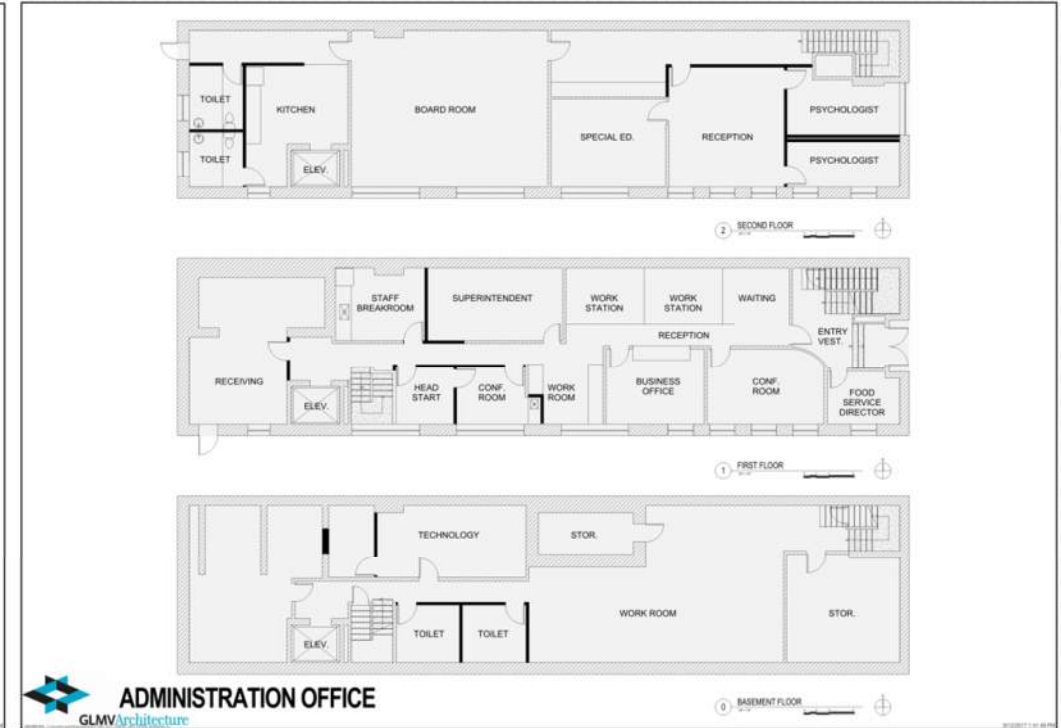
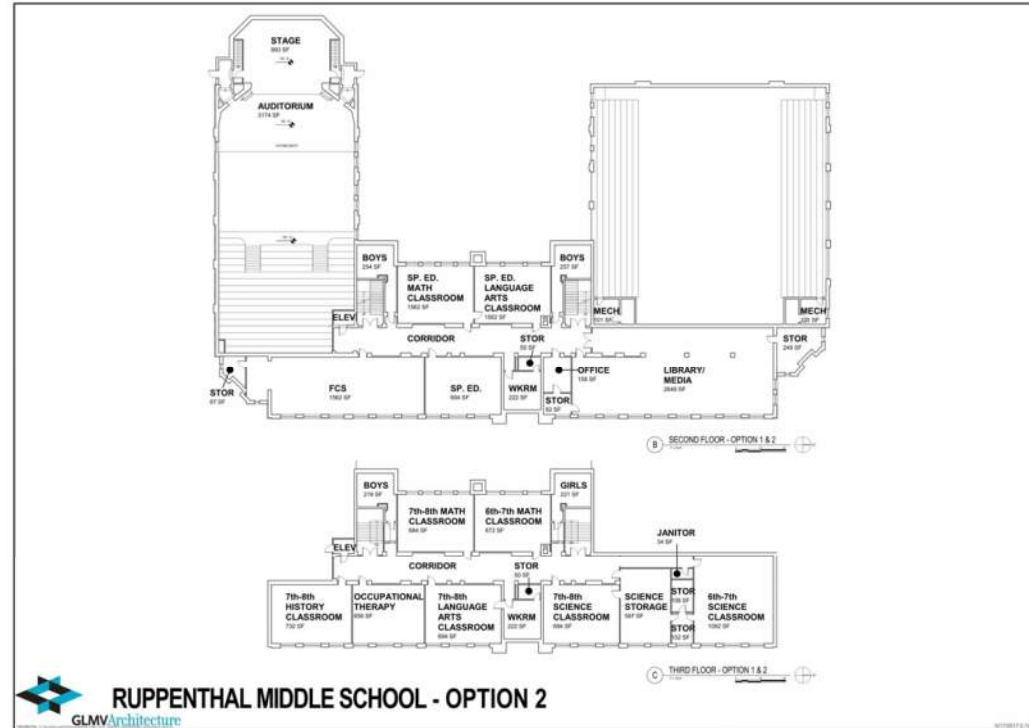
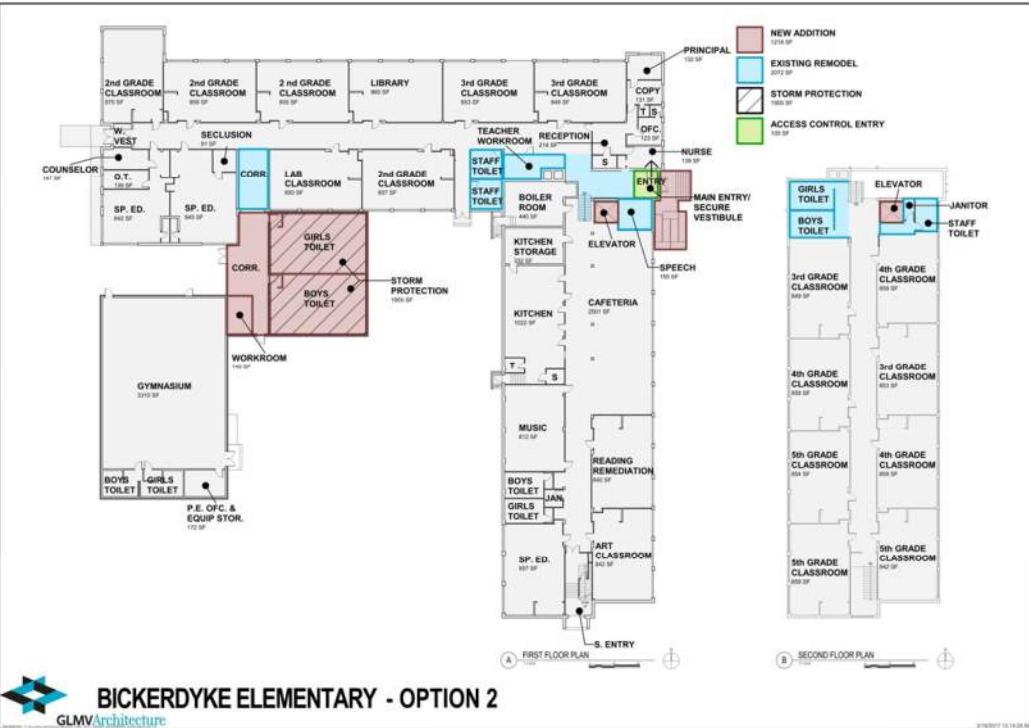
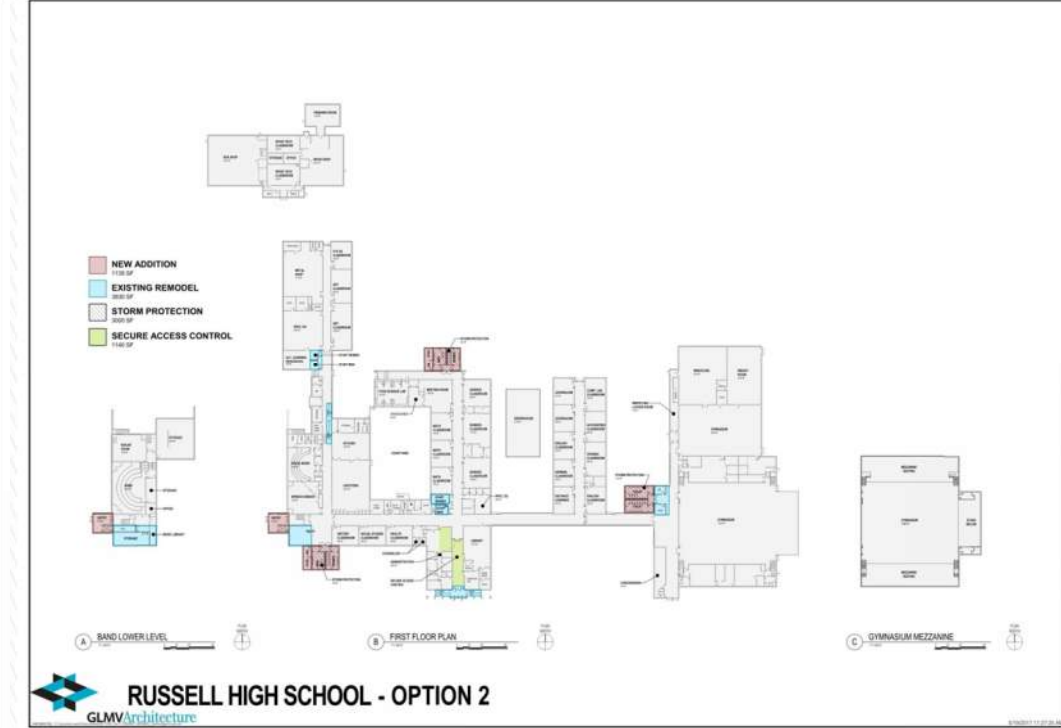
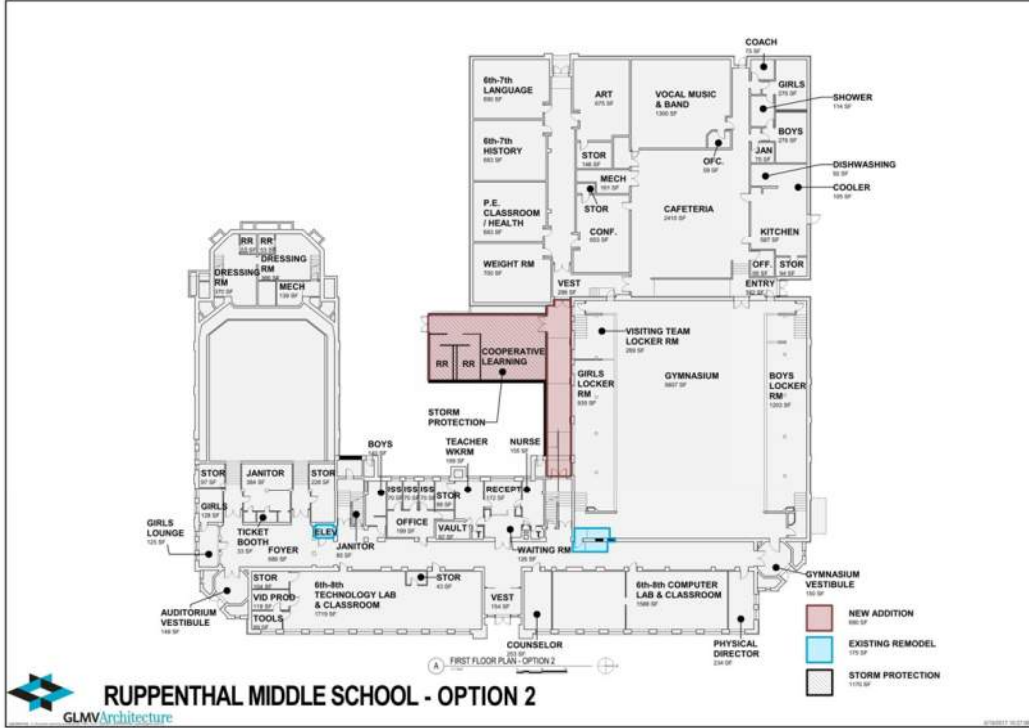
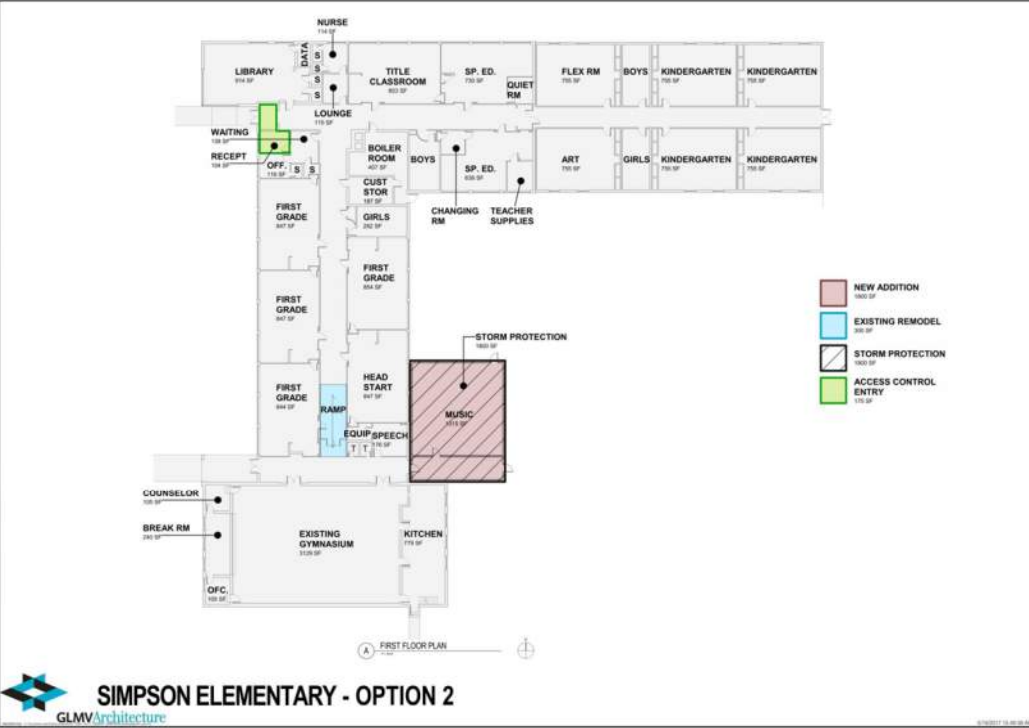
# OPTION 1 PLANS



# OPTION 1 SITES



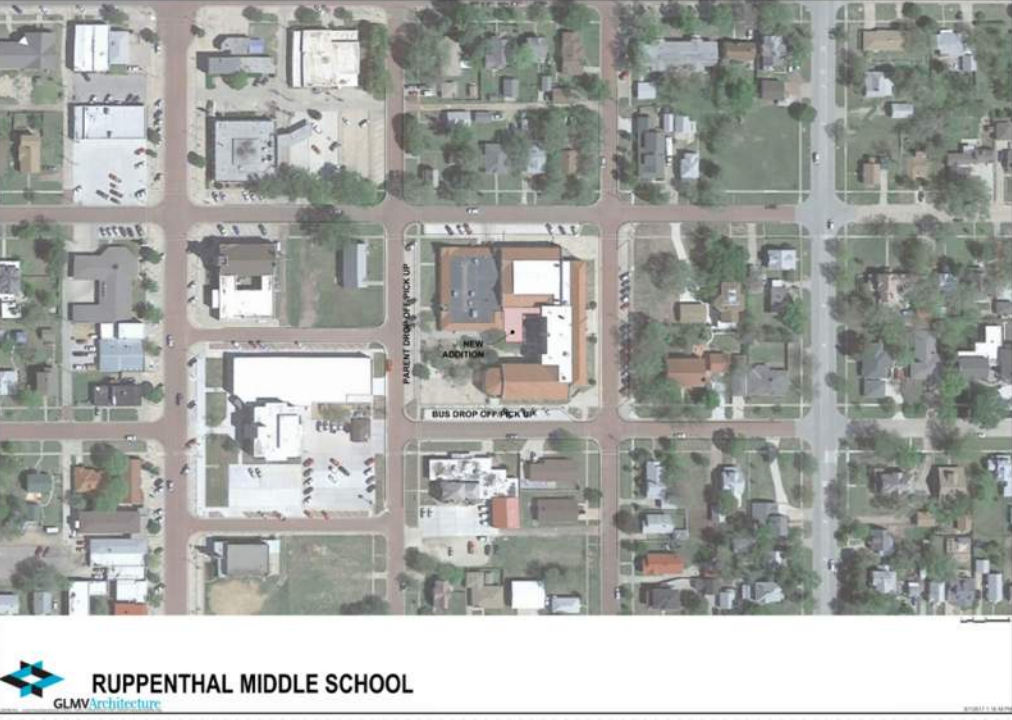
For OPTION 2 we considered that in addition to OPTION 1 the improvements would include fire alarms systems; modifications for new ramps; new elevators at Bickerdyke and Ruppenthal; building additions for storm protection and replacement building addition at Simpson Elementary; access and surveillance systems; and site improvements including new parking lot at Russell High School. The estimated cost is \$25,876,000.



# OPTION 2 PLANS



**SIMPSON ELEMENTARY**  
GLMV Architecture



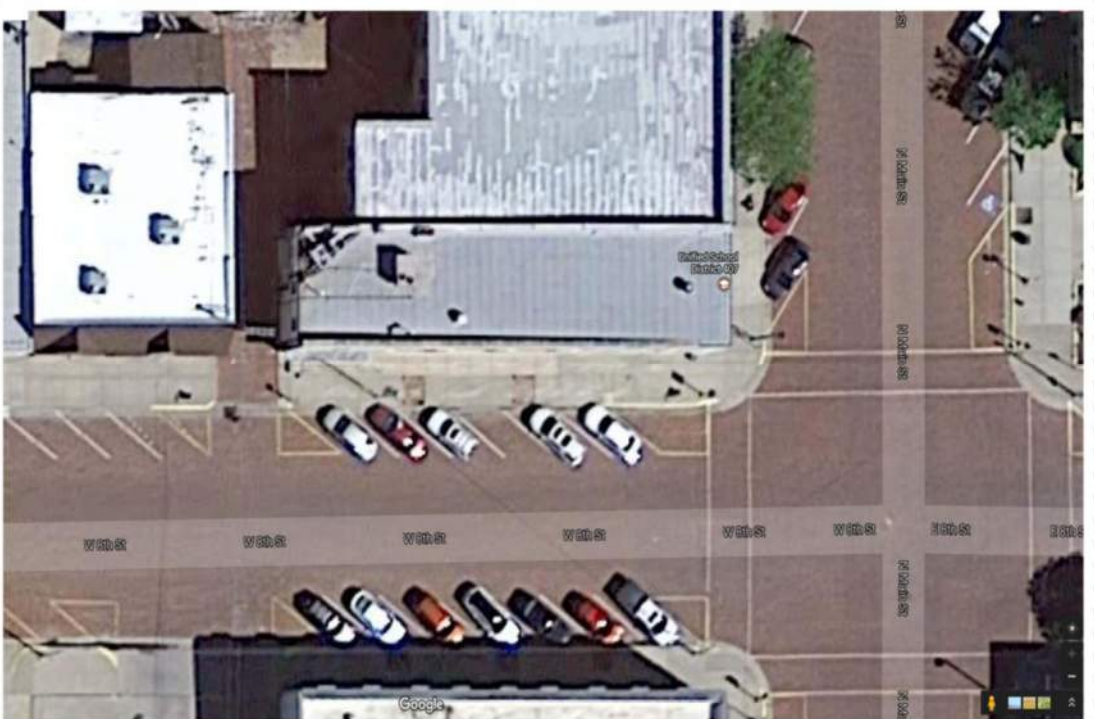
**RUPPENTHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
GLMV Architecture



**RUSSELL HIGH SCHOOL**  
GLMV Architecture

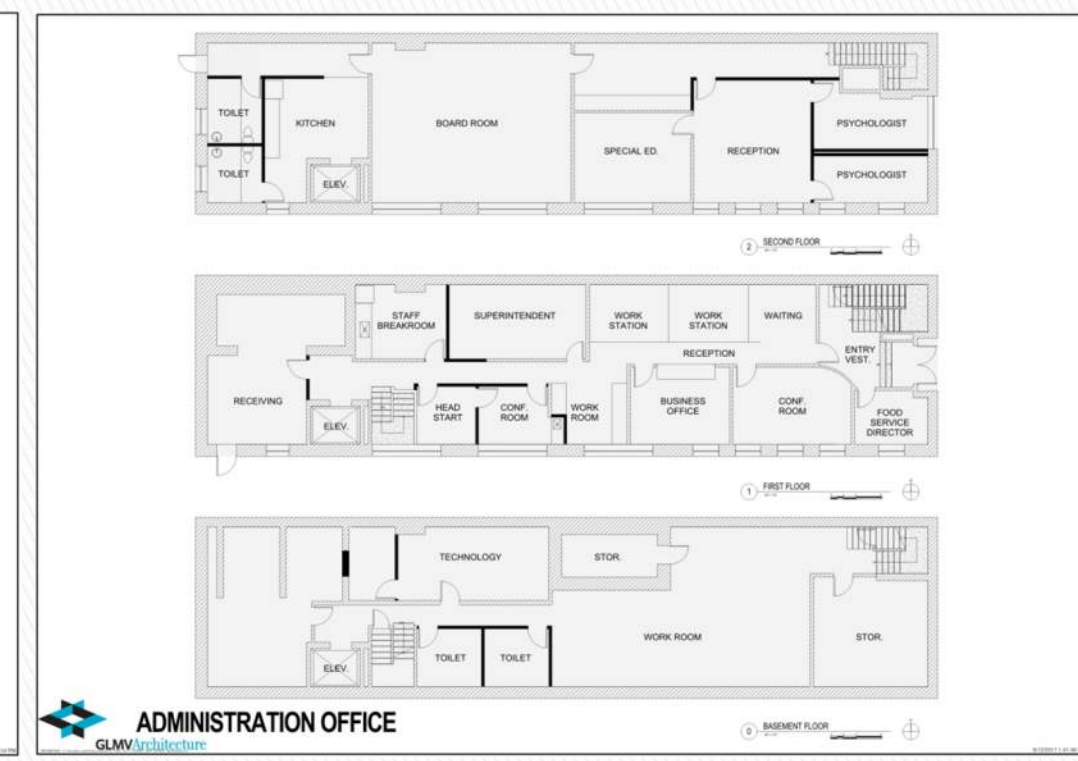
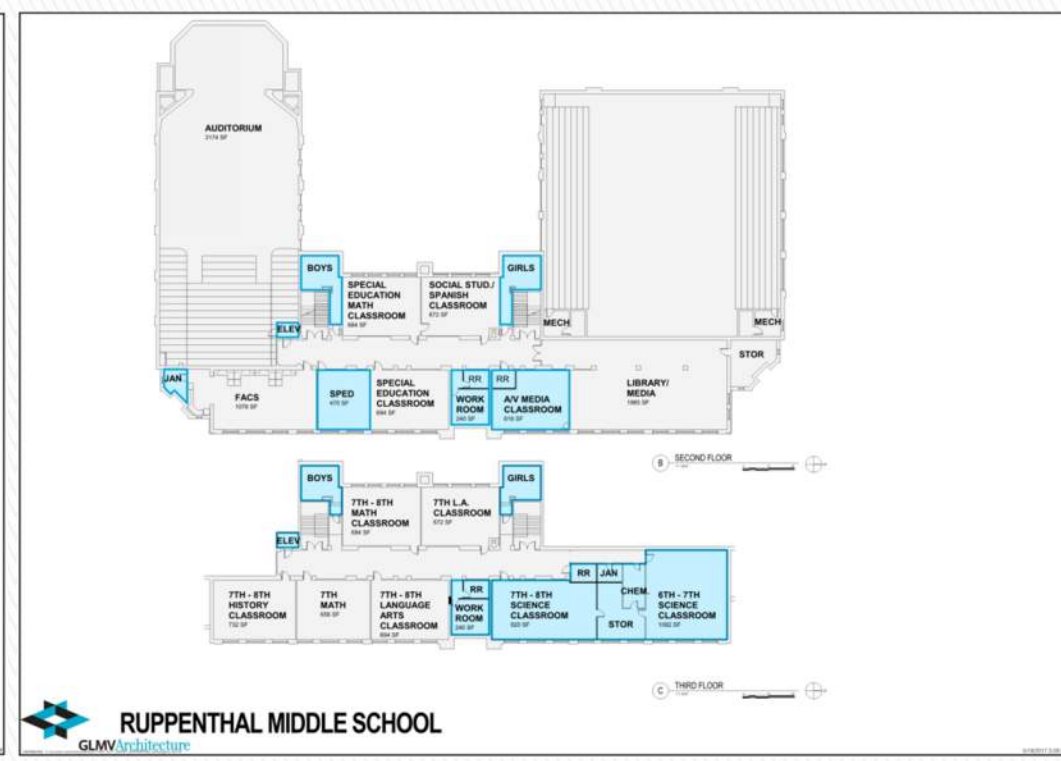
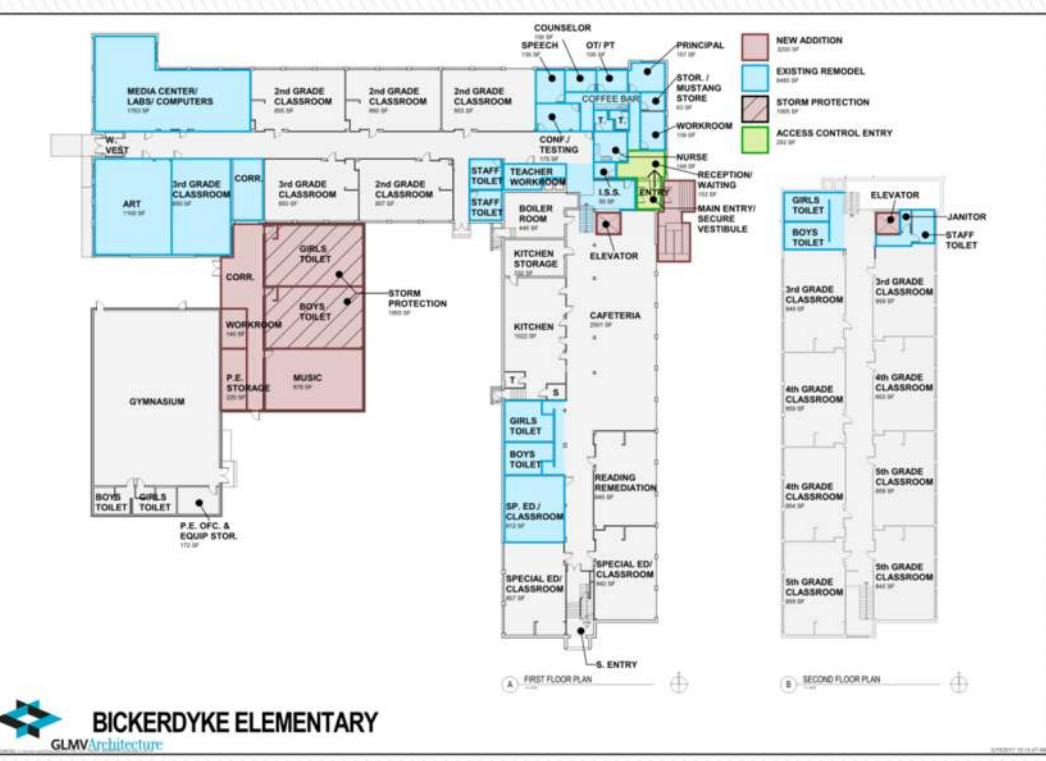
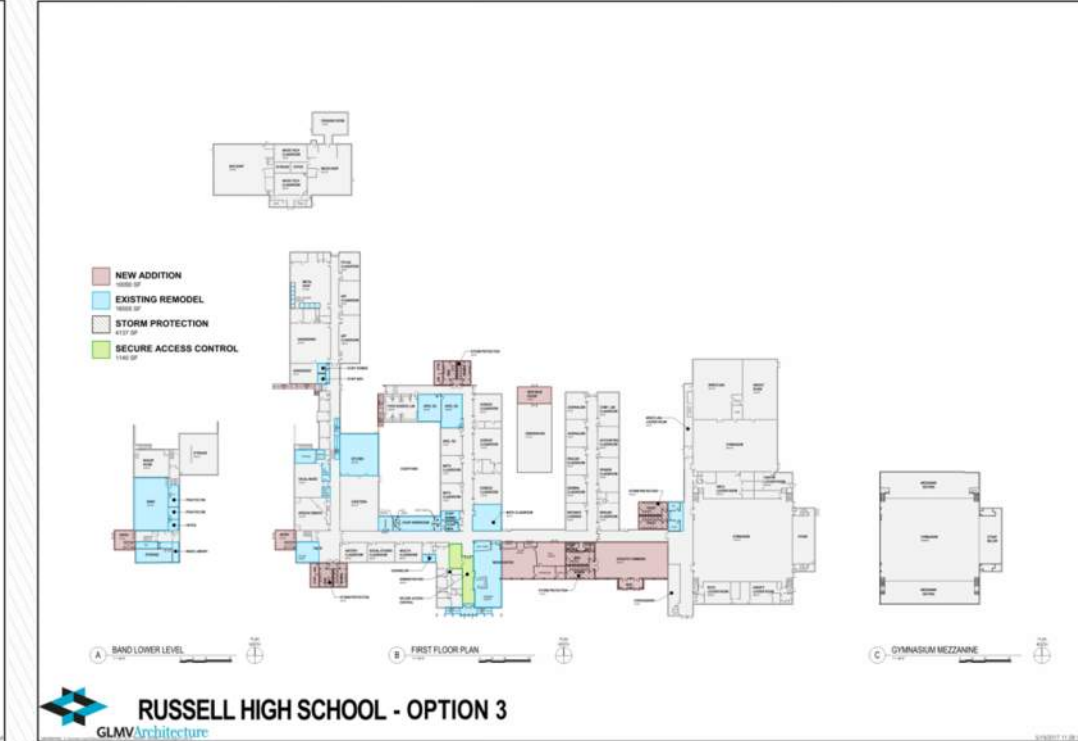
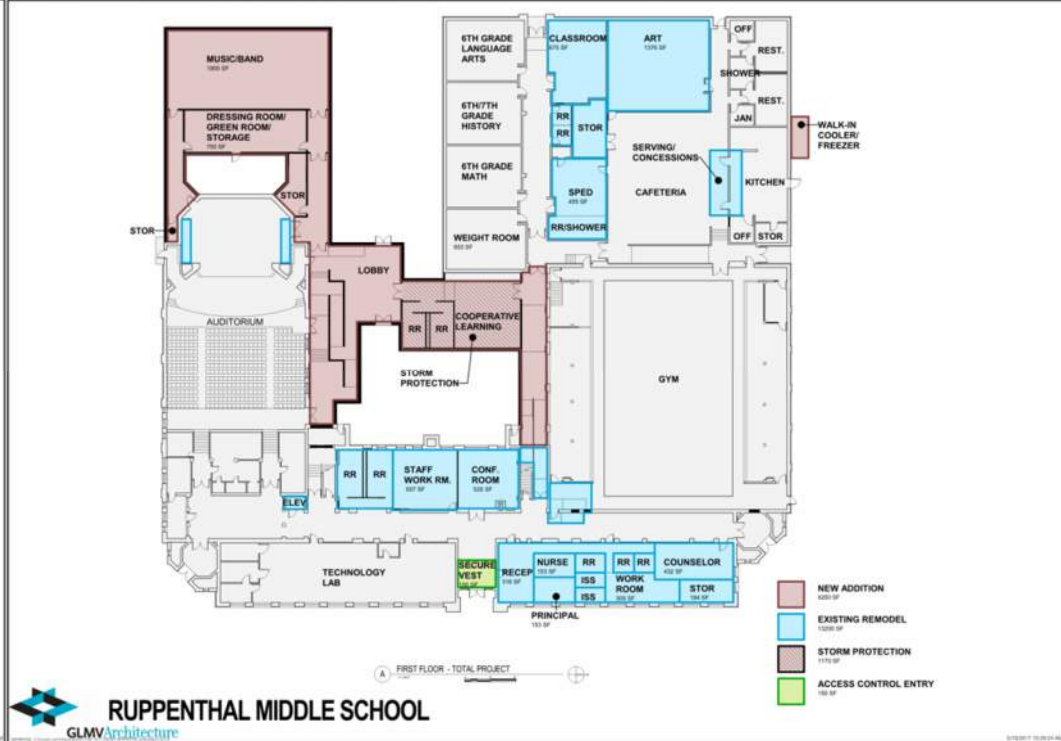
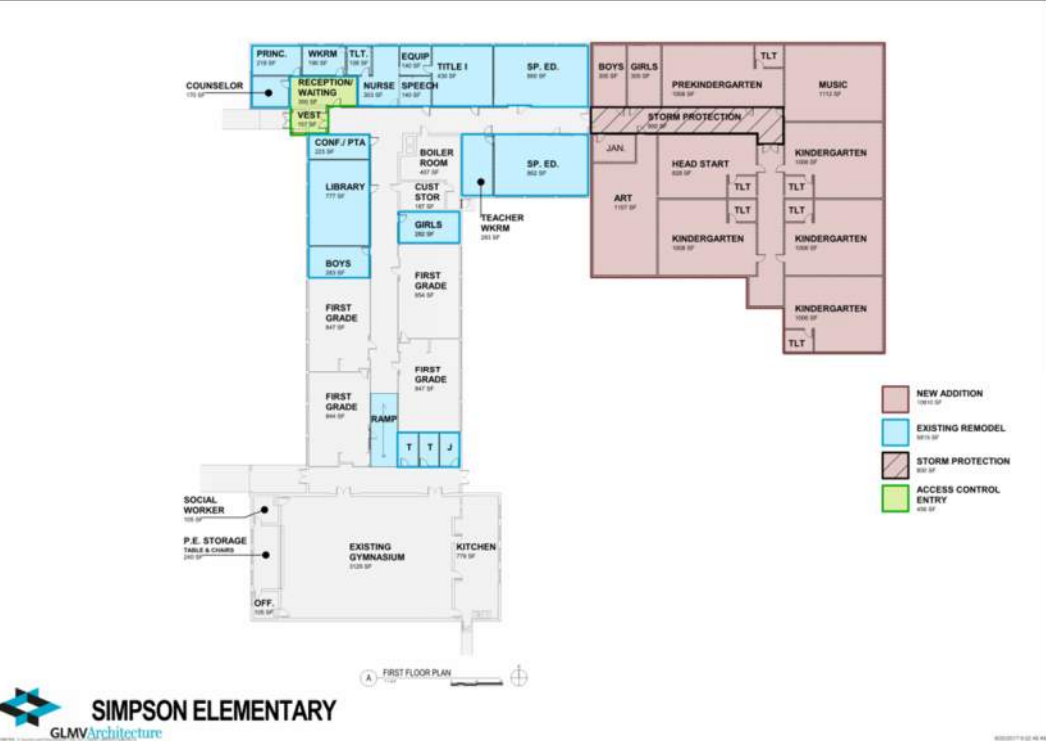


**BICKERDYKE ELEMENTARY**  
GLMV Architecture



**OPTION 2 SITES**

For OPTION 3 we considered that in addition to OPTIONS 1 AND 2 the improvements would include new windows at Simpson, Bickerdyke and Ruppenthal; building additions at Bickerdyke Ruppenthal and Russell High School; remodel of administration areas for all schools and Central Office; remodel for toilets and classrooms; building additions at Russell High School for toilets and athletic commons; and additional parking improvements at Russell High School. The estimate cost is \$36,978,000.



# OPTION 3 PLANS



**SIMPSON ELEMENTARY**  
GLMVArchitecture



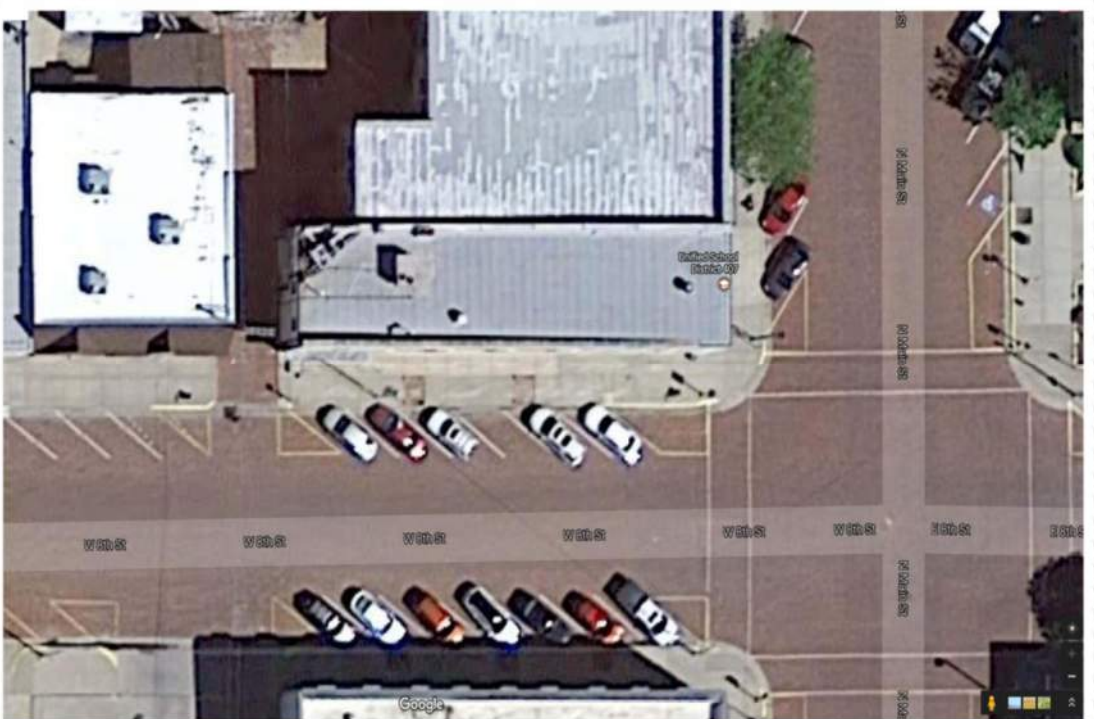
**RUPPENTHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
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**RUSSELL HIGH SCHOOL**  
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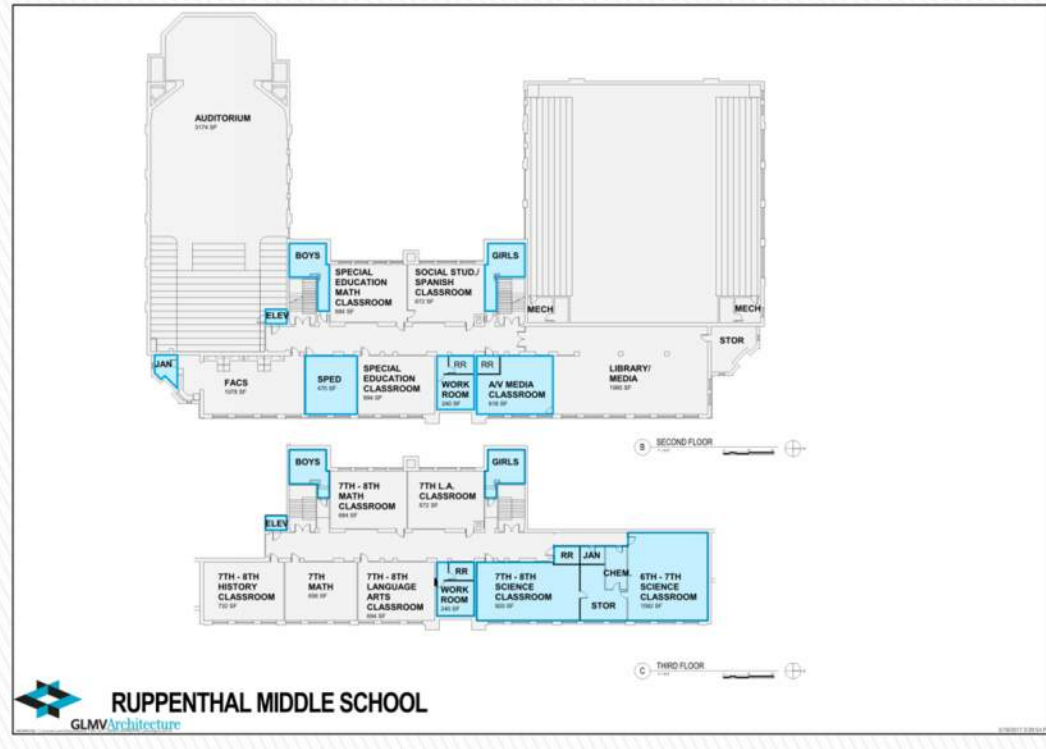
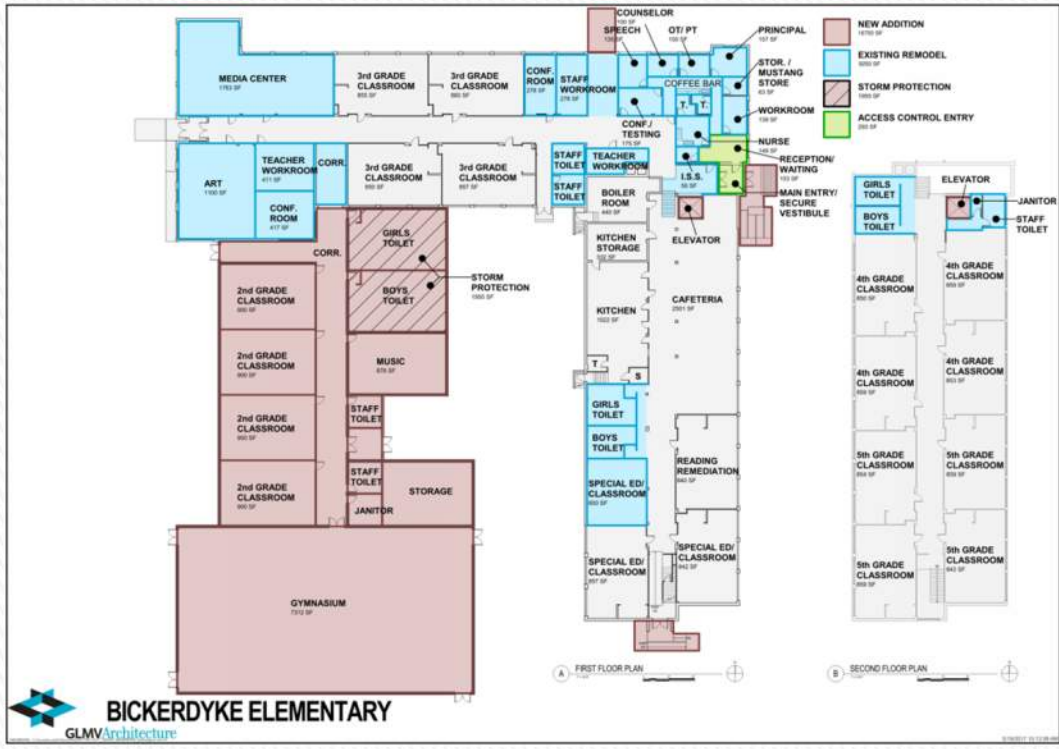
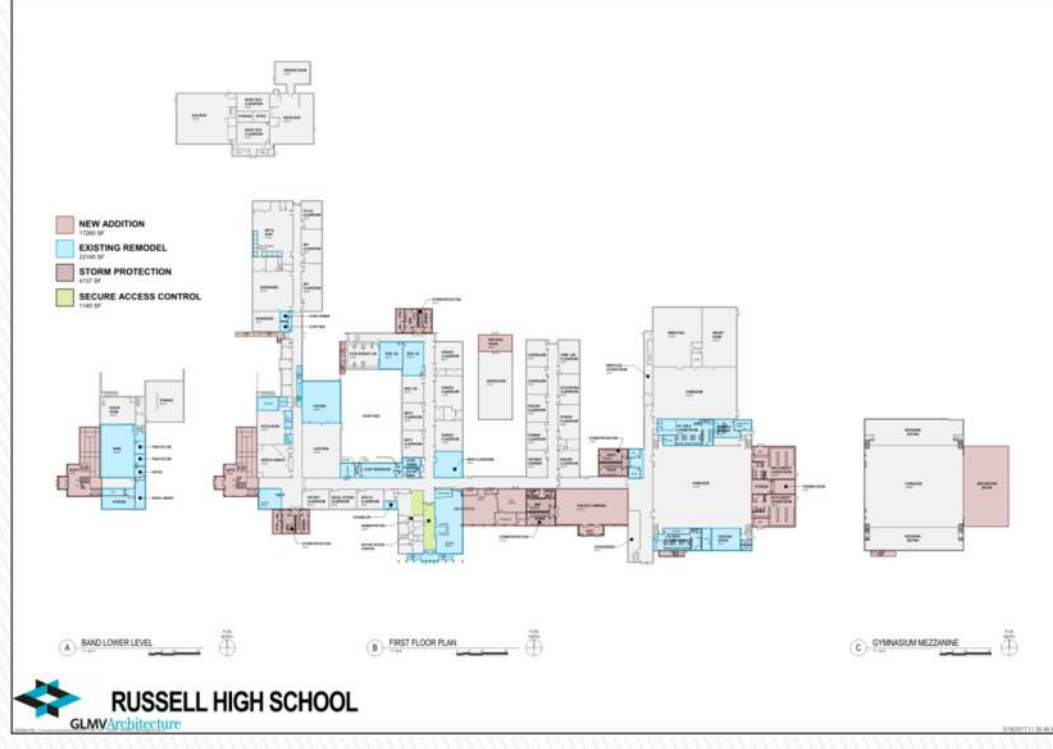
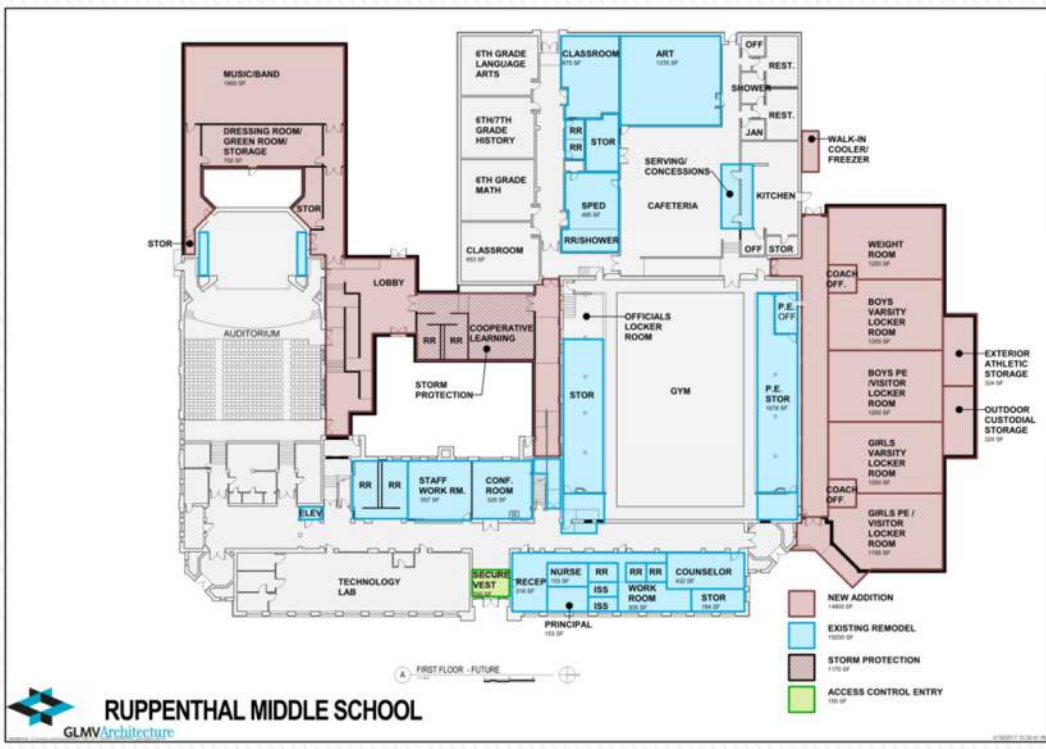
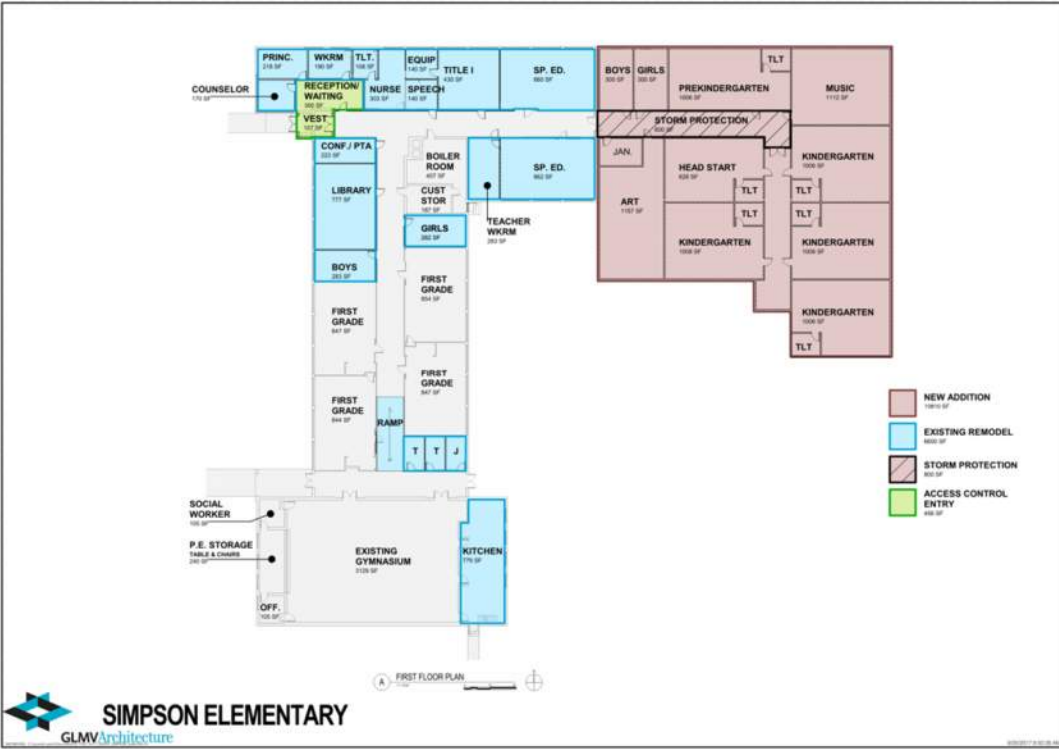


**BICKERDYKE ELEMENTARY**  
GLMVArchitecture



# OPTION 3 SITES

For OPTION 4 we considered in addition to OPTIONS 1, 2 and 3 the improvements would include remodel in all schools for configuring offices and classrooms; building additions for classrooms and new gym at Bickerdyke; and building additions for new locker rooms for Ruppenthal and Russell High School. The estimated cost is \$46,274,000.



# OPTION 4 PLANS



 **SIMPSON ELEMENTARY**  
GLMV Architecture



 **RUPPENTHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
GLMV Architecture



 **RUSSELL HIGH SCHOOL**  
GLMV Architecture



 **BICKERDYKE ELEMENTARY**  
GLMV Architecture



# OPTION 4 SITES

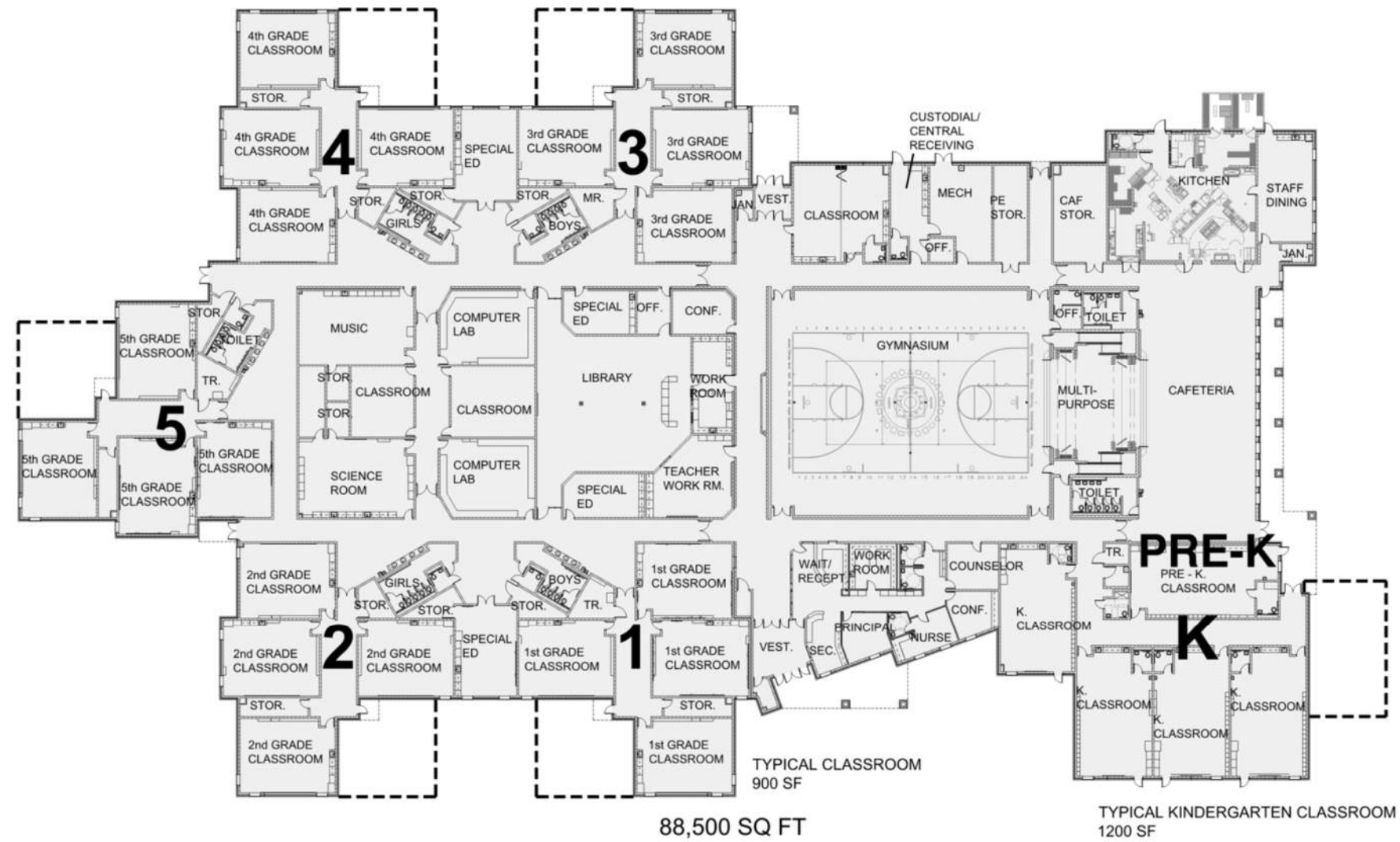
## OTHER OPTIONS

To accomplish the majority of the improvements needed for all facilities would require over \$46 million!

We requested additional options that would include new buildings. As we discussed the advantages of a new building include:

- Better learning environment allowing students to focus on the task at hand;
- Temperature control of quiet systems to reduce distractions;
- Greater flexibility in scheduling;
- Ability to reduce number of buildings for better efficiencies in staff use; and cost savings in operations and maintenance;
- Ease of achieving a four section school where it is difficult at the existing elementary schools' sites;
- Create space that meets education needs rather than continuing to use existing space that compromises the needs;
- New facilities will have longer use life than current facilities;
- Demonstrates the Community's commitment to Russell USD 407 and foster future growth.

We considered a new Pre Kindergarten thru 5<sup>th</sup> Grade OPTION. This building would be a four section school and replace Simpson and Bickerdyke. The estimated cost is \$24,900,000.



**PRE K-5 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (4-SECTION)**

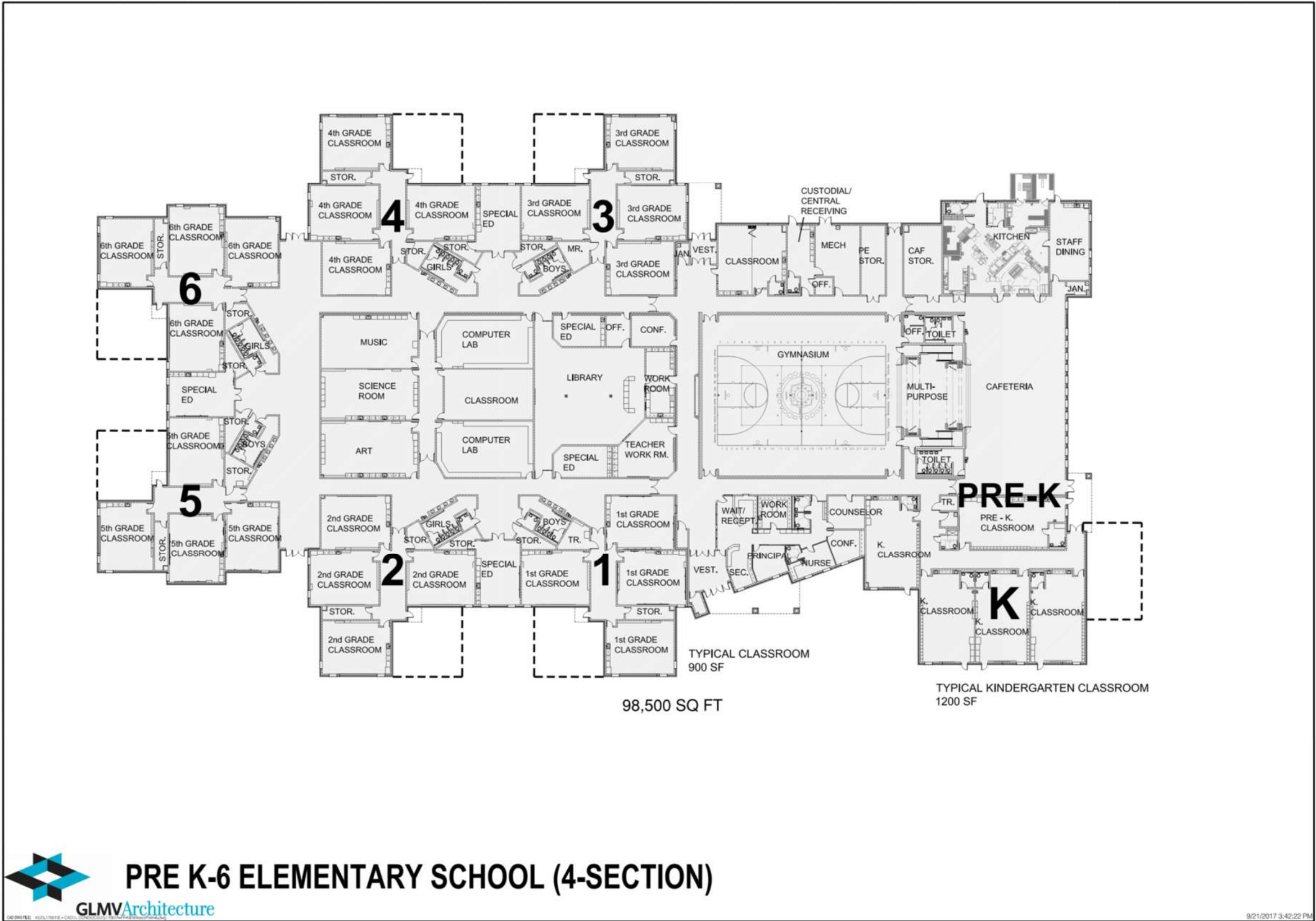
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**PRE K – 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

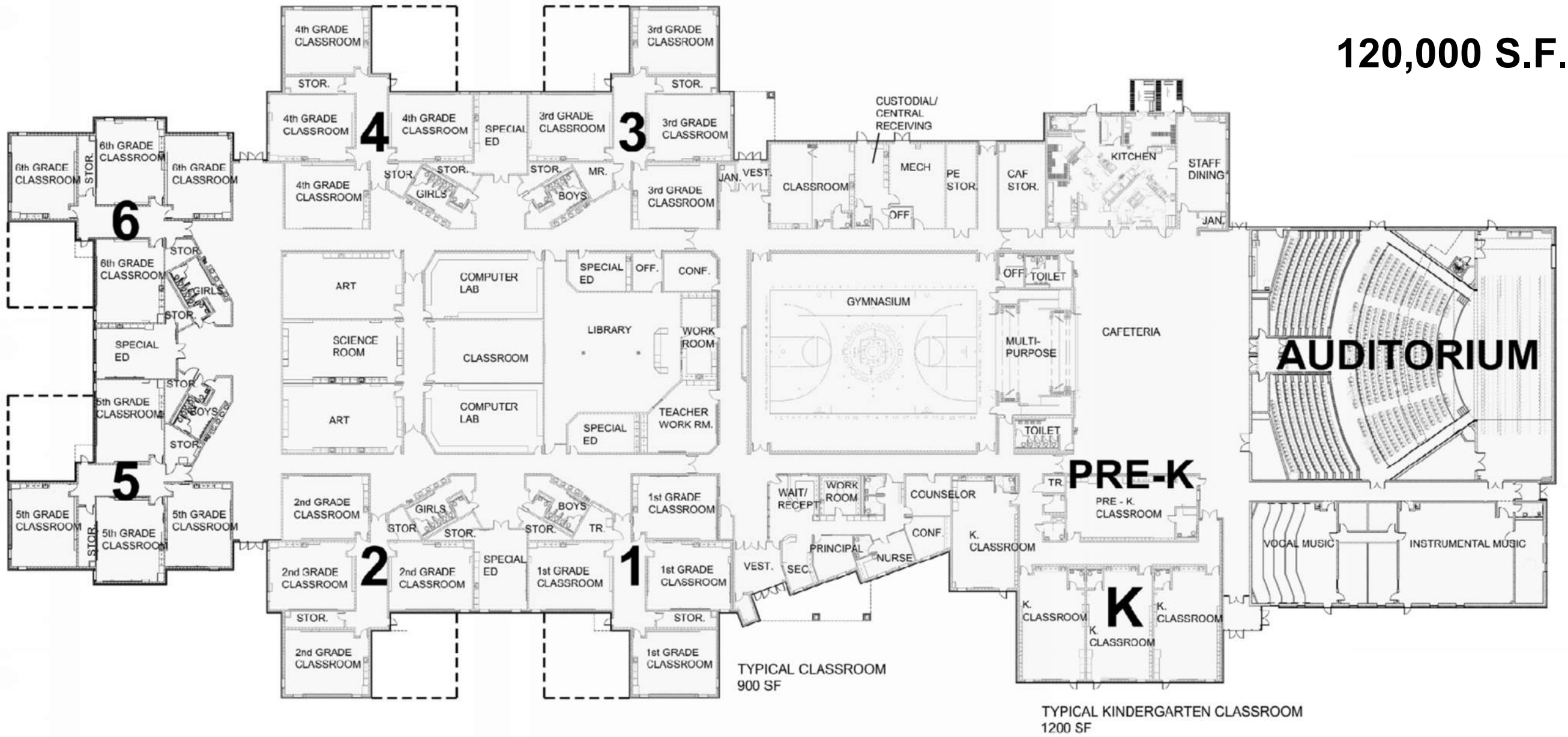


We considered a new Pre Kindergarten thru 6<sup>th</sup> Grade OPTION. This building would be a four section school and replace Simpson and Bickerdyke and move 6<sup>th</sup> grade from Ruppenthal. The estimated cost is \$27,800,000.



# PRE K – 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

We considered a new Pre Kindergarten thru 6<sup>th</sup> Grade including an auditorium OPTION. This would be a four section school and designed to accommodate 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades in the future. The estimated cost is \$34,200,000.



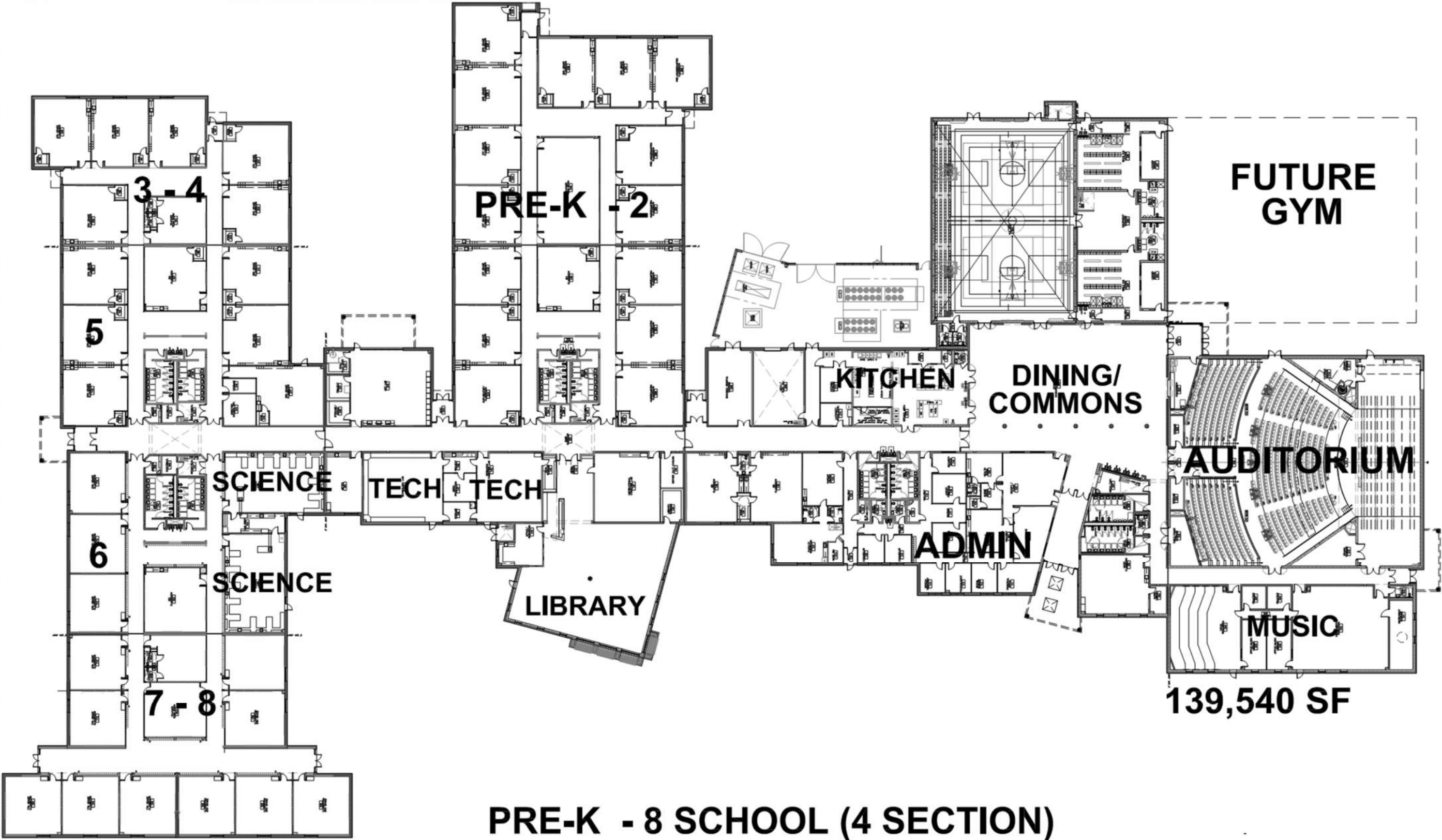
**PRE K-6 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (4-SECTION) + AUDITORIUM**

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**PRE K – 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE + AUDITORIUM**

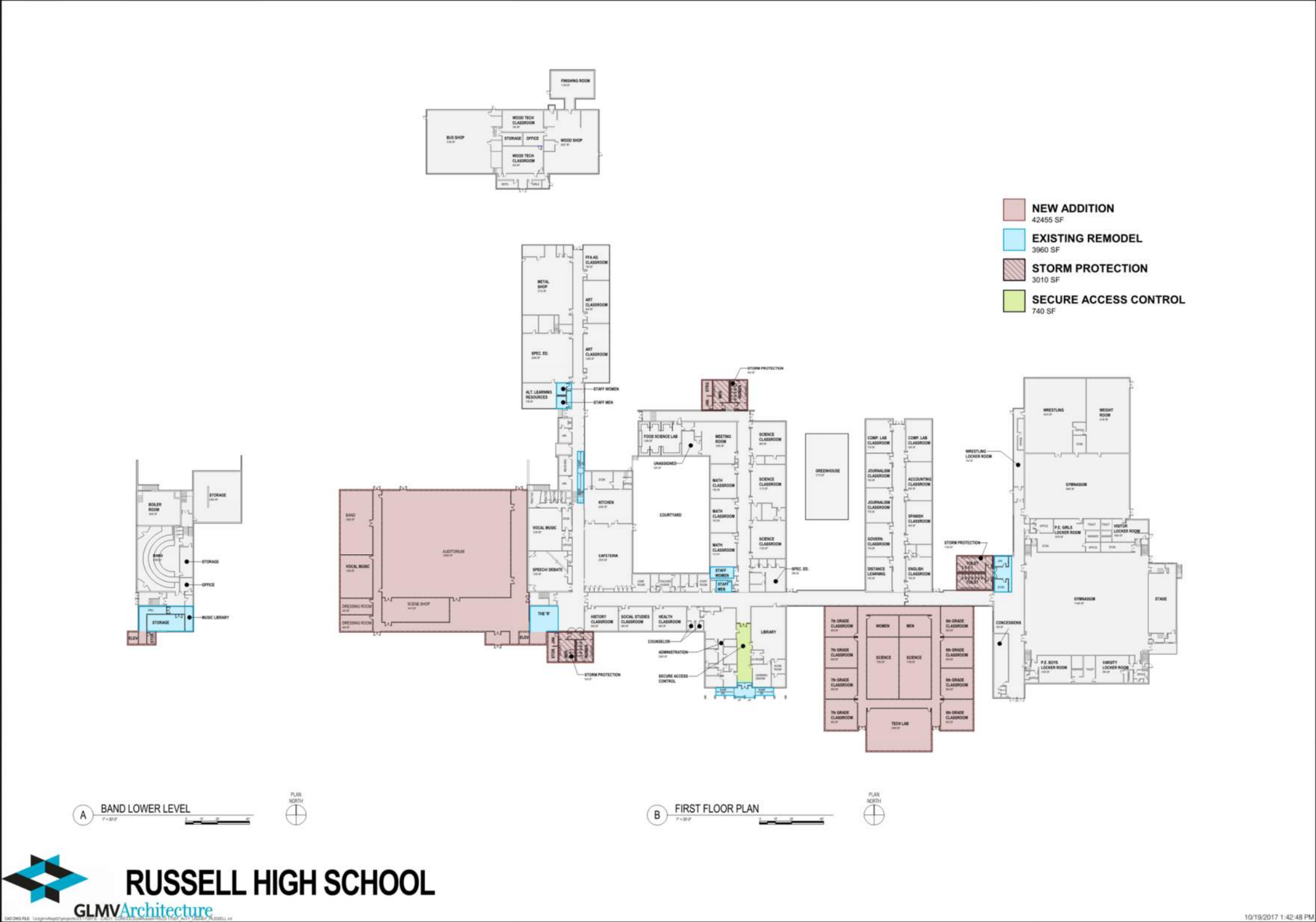
We considered a new Pre Kindergarten thru 8<sup>th</sup> Grade OPTION. This building would be a four section school and would replace Simpson, Bickerdyke and Ruppenthal. The estimated cost is \$39,700,000.



**PRE-K - 8 SCHOOL (4 SECTION)**

**PRE K – 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

Lastly we considered an OPTION for a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE addition to Russell High School for a 7<sup>TH</sup> thru 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE HIGH SCHOOL. This option would include a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade wing, new auditorium and the other improvements for Russell High School. The estimated cost is \$22,200,000.



# 7<sup>TH</sup> AND 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE ADDITION

## RUSSELL USD 407

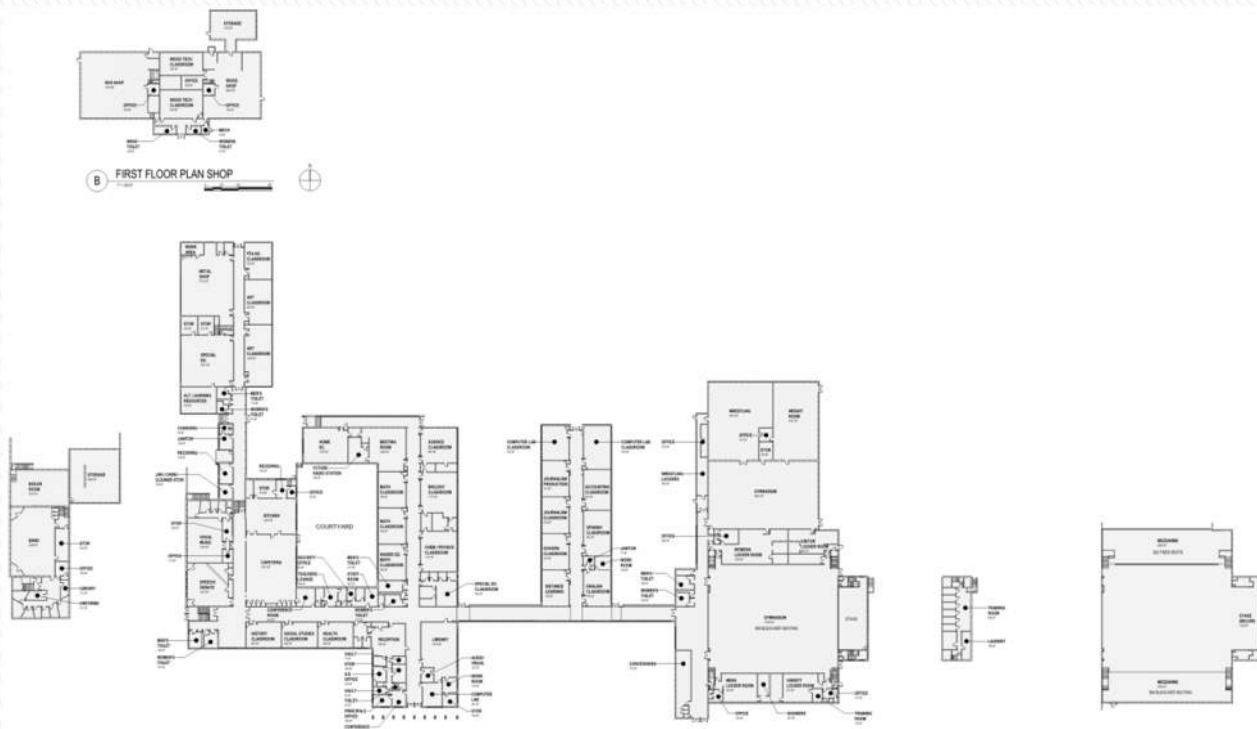
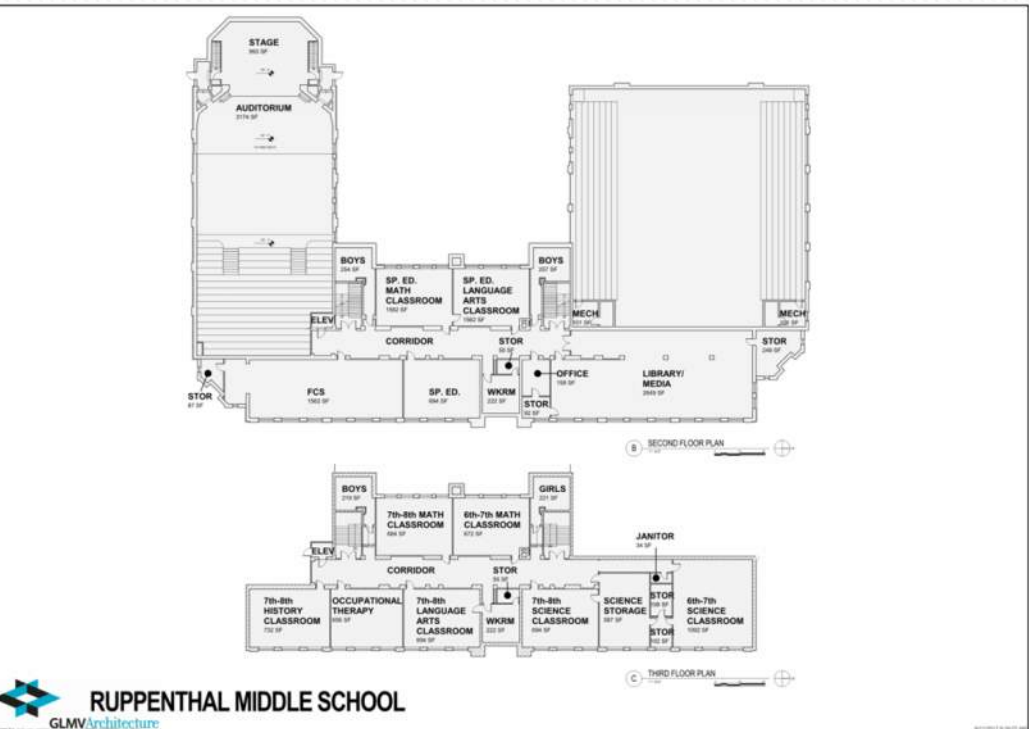
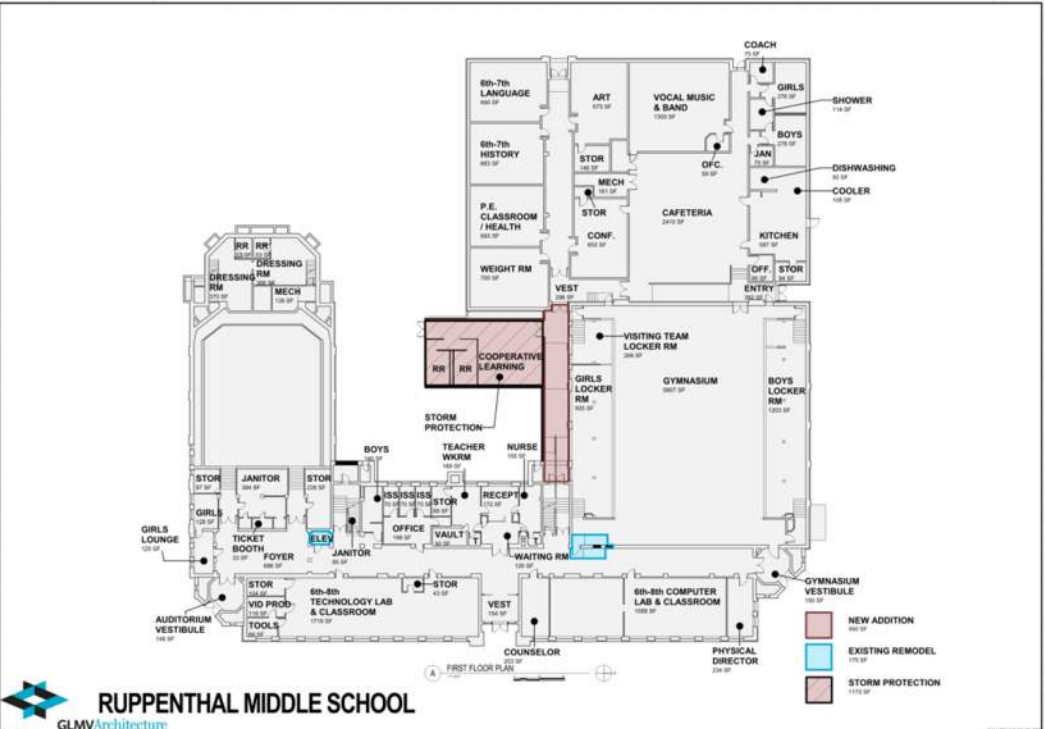
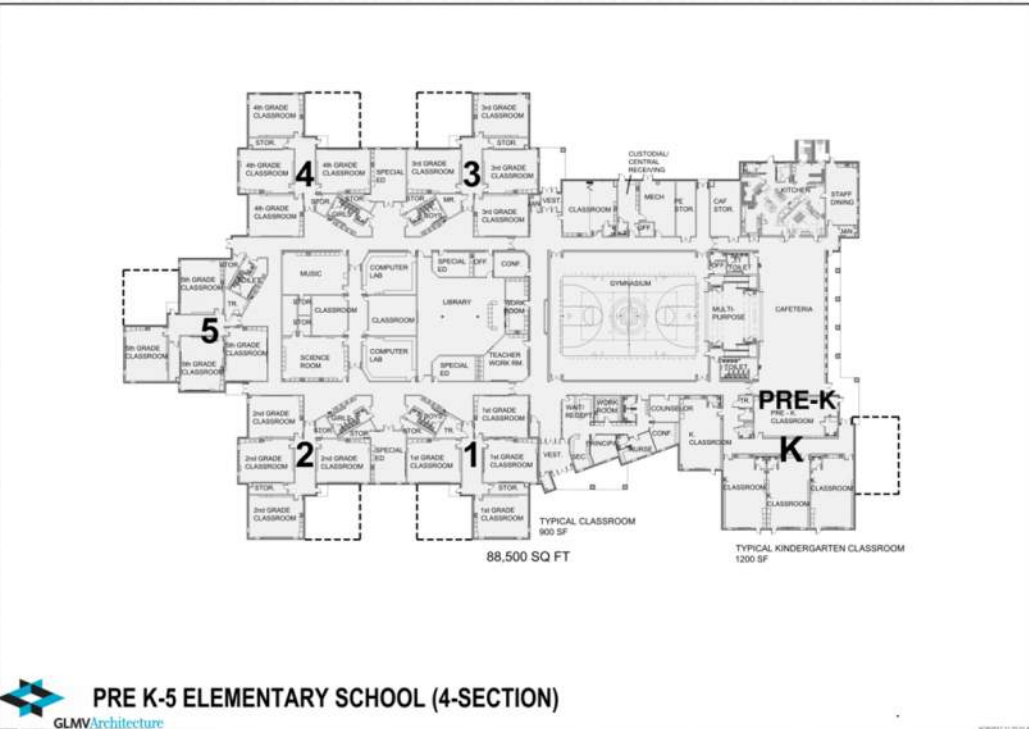
### **WE DEVELOPED SCENARIOS**

From the options prepared we developed four scenarios.

The scenarios are an option or combination of options to address the improvements.

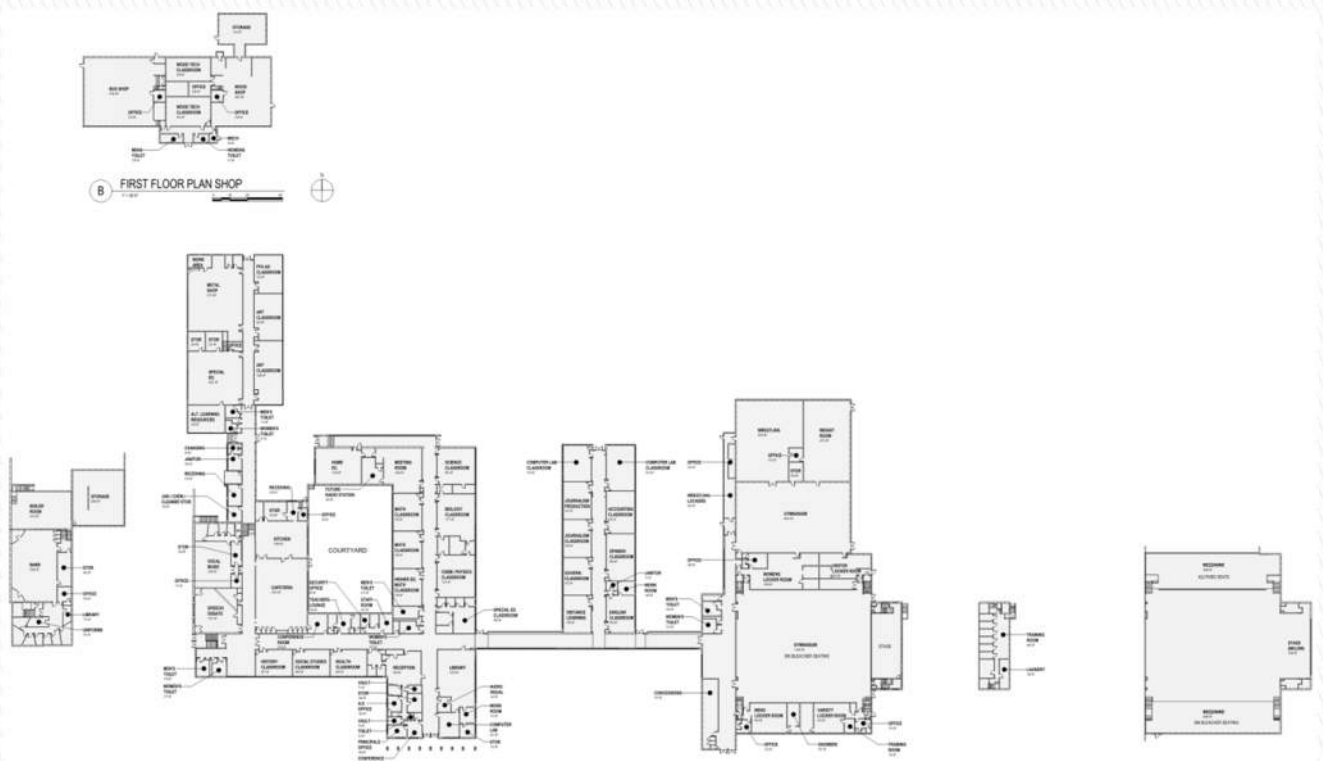
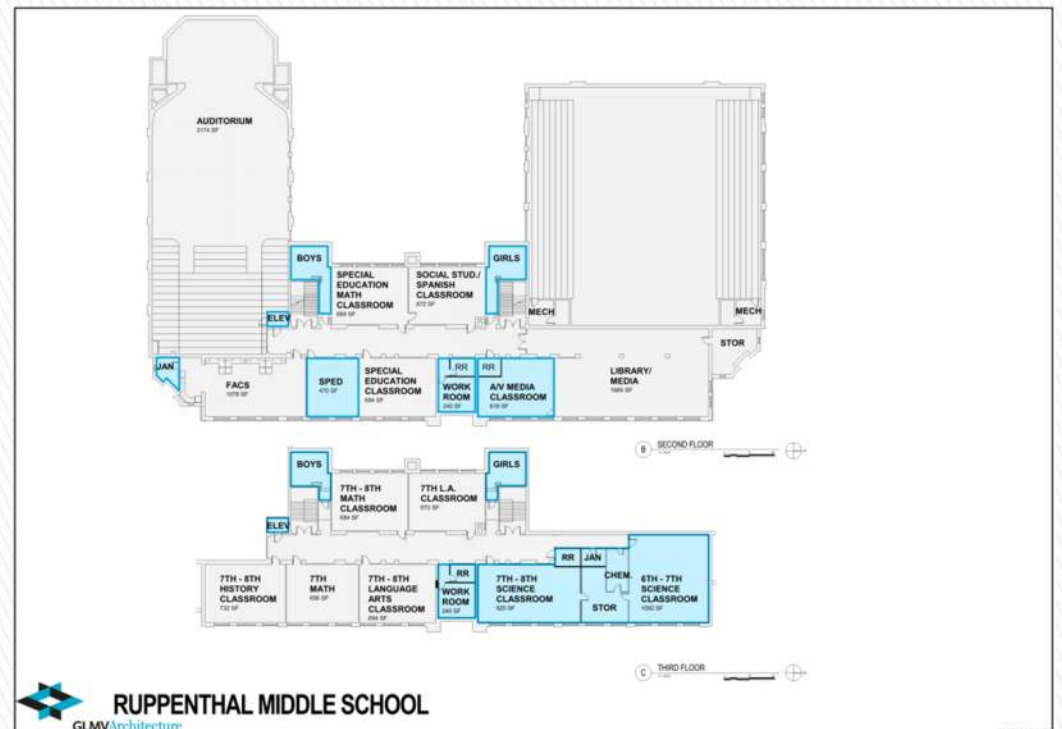
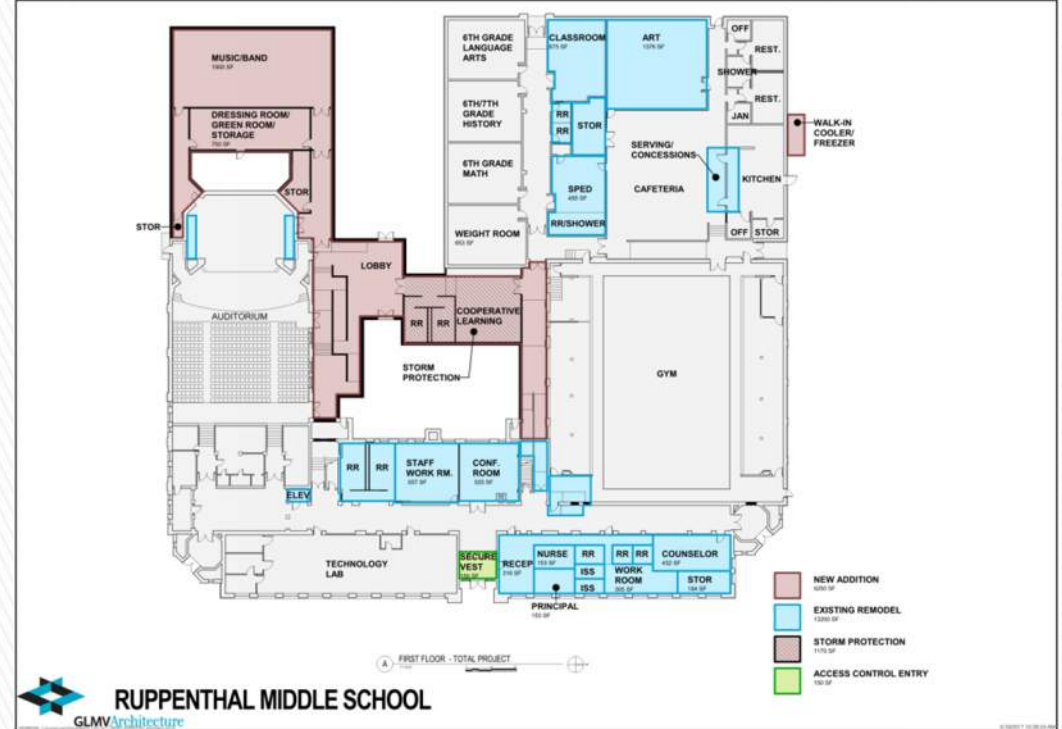
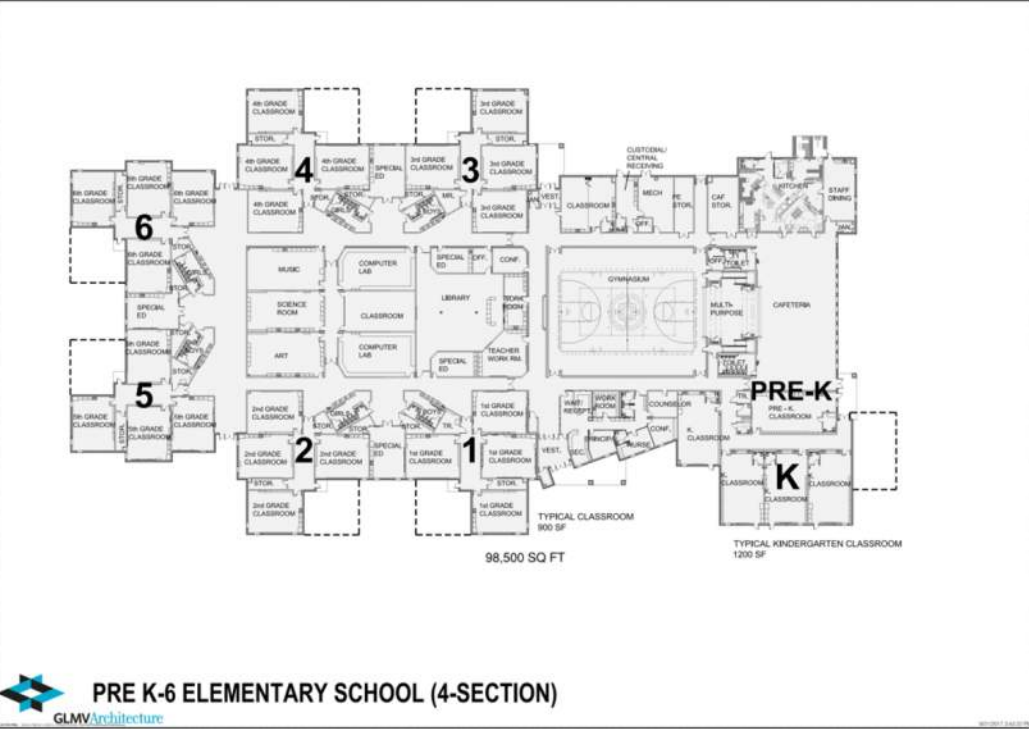
# SCENARIO A

This would consist of a new Pre Kindergarten thru 5<sup>th</sup> Grade building; Option 2 for Ruppenthal; and Option 1 for Russell High School. The estimated cost is \$38,600,000.



# SCENARIO B

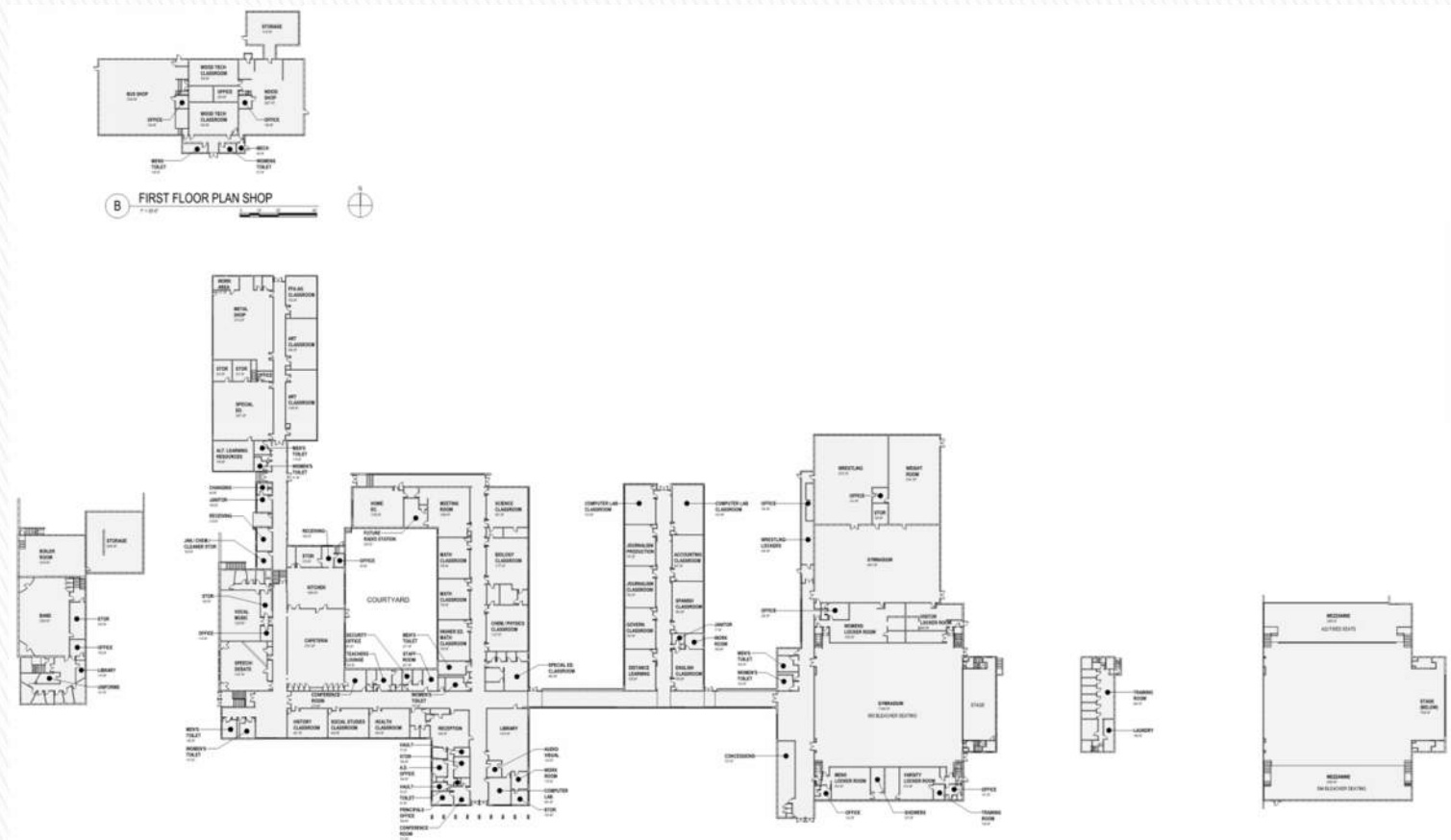
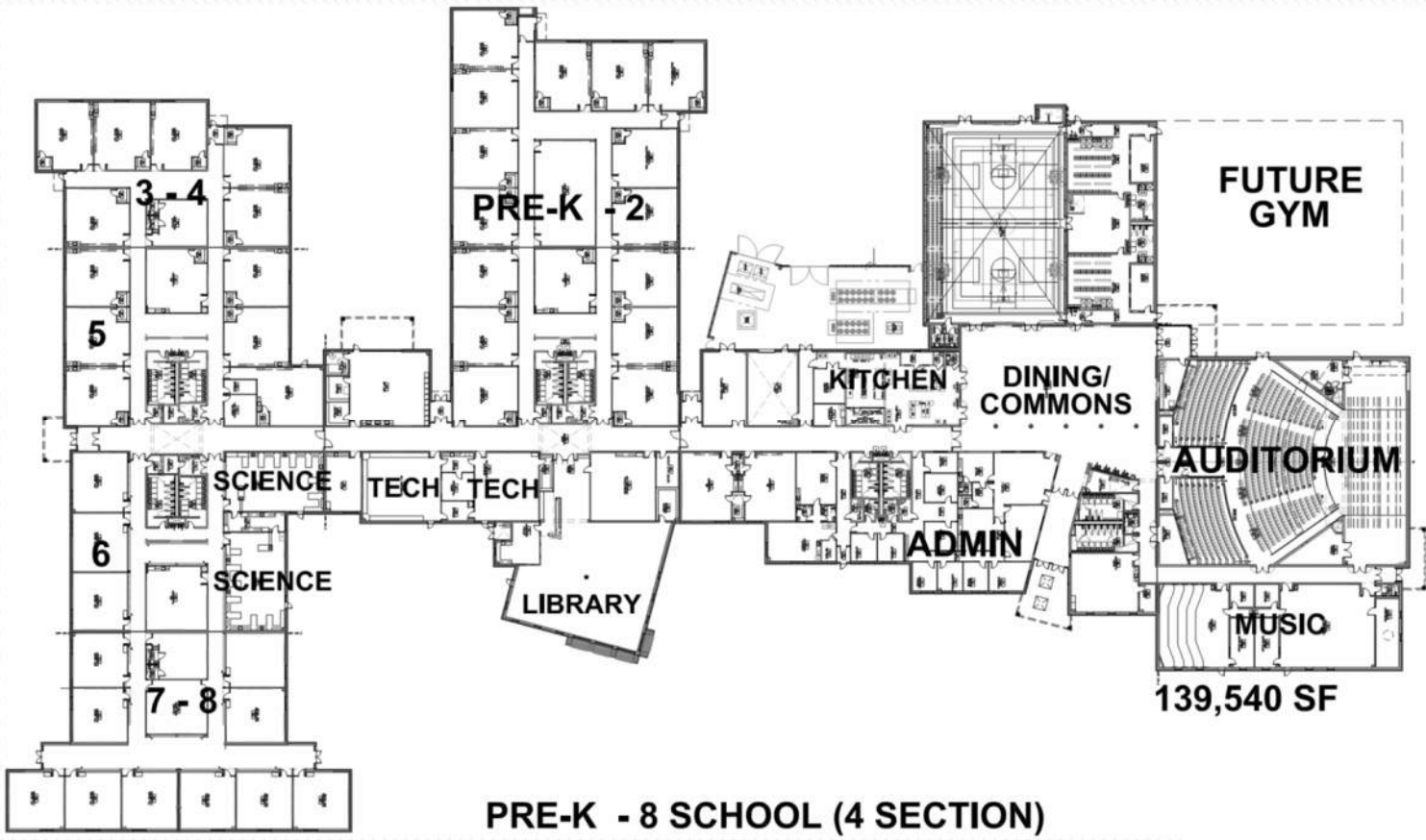
This would consist of a new Pre Kindergarten thru 6<sup>th</sup> Grade building; Option 3 for Ruppenthal; and Option 1 for Russell High School. The estimated cost is \$44,800,000.



# SCENARIO B

**SENARIO C**

This would consist of a new Pre Kindergarten thru 8<sup>th</sup> Grade building; and Option 1 for Russell High School. The estimated cost is \$47,700,000.

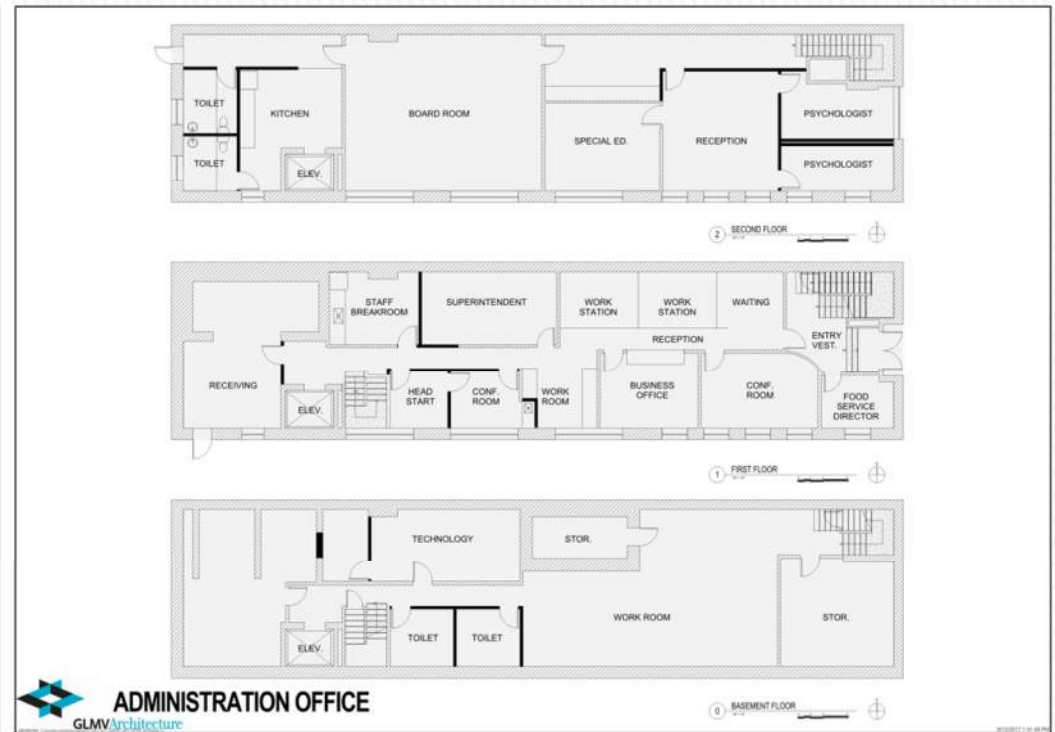
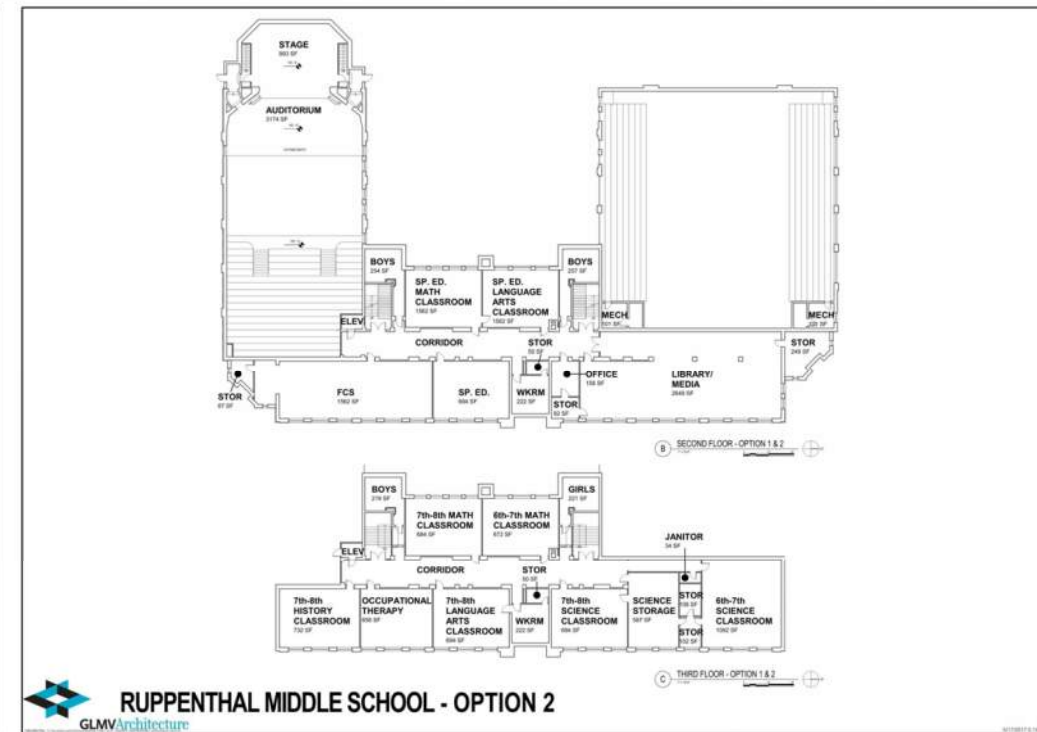
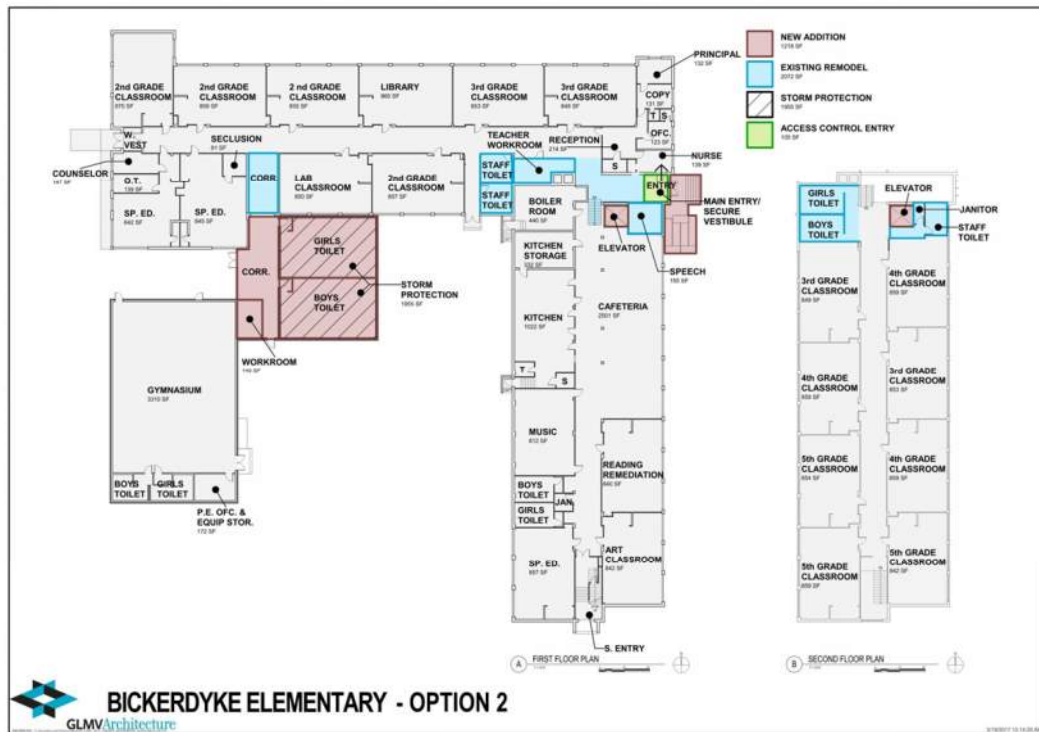
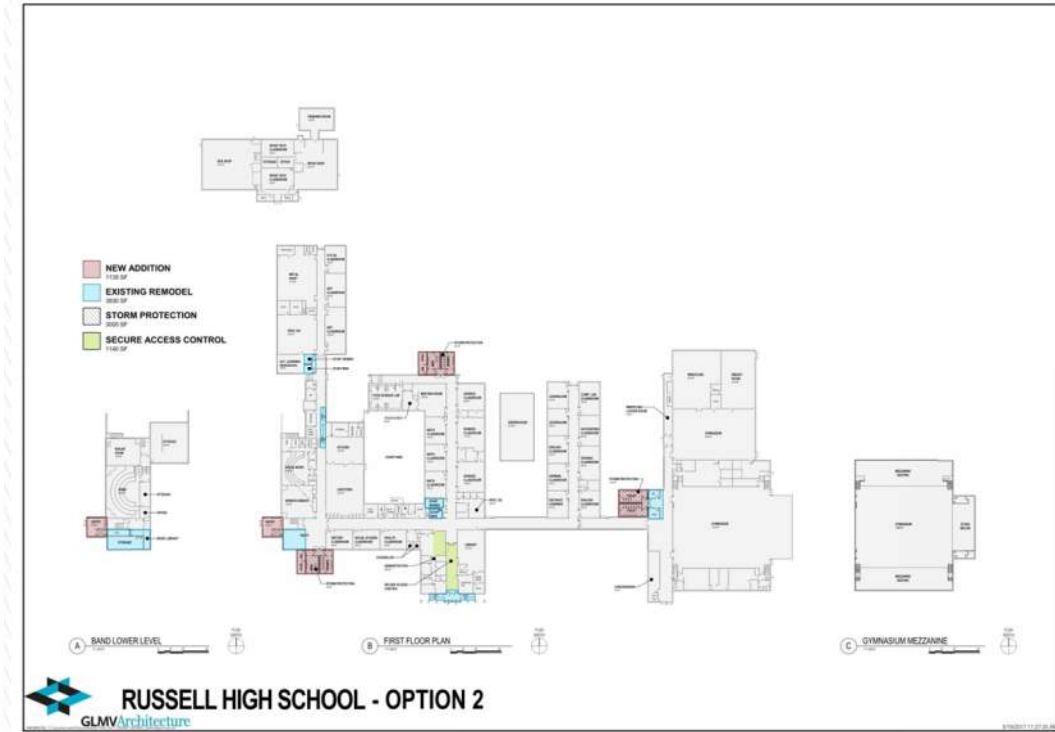
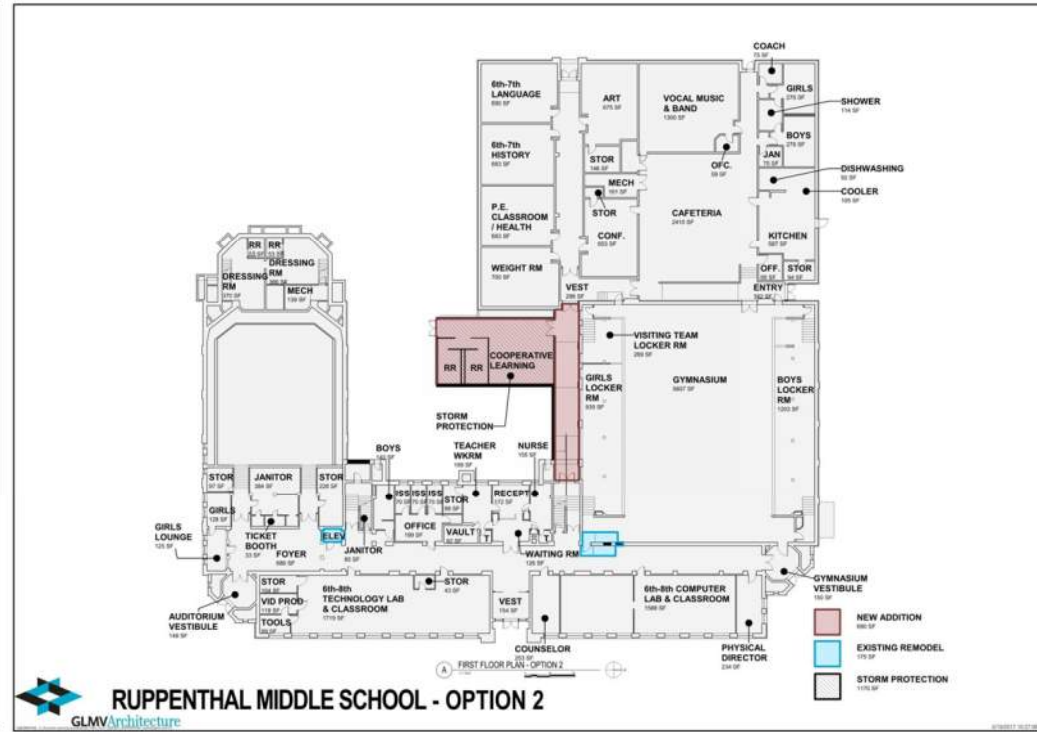
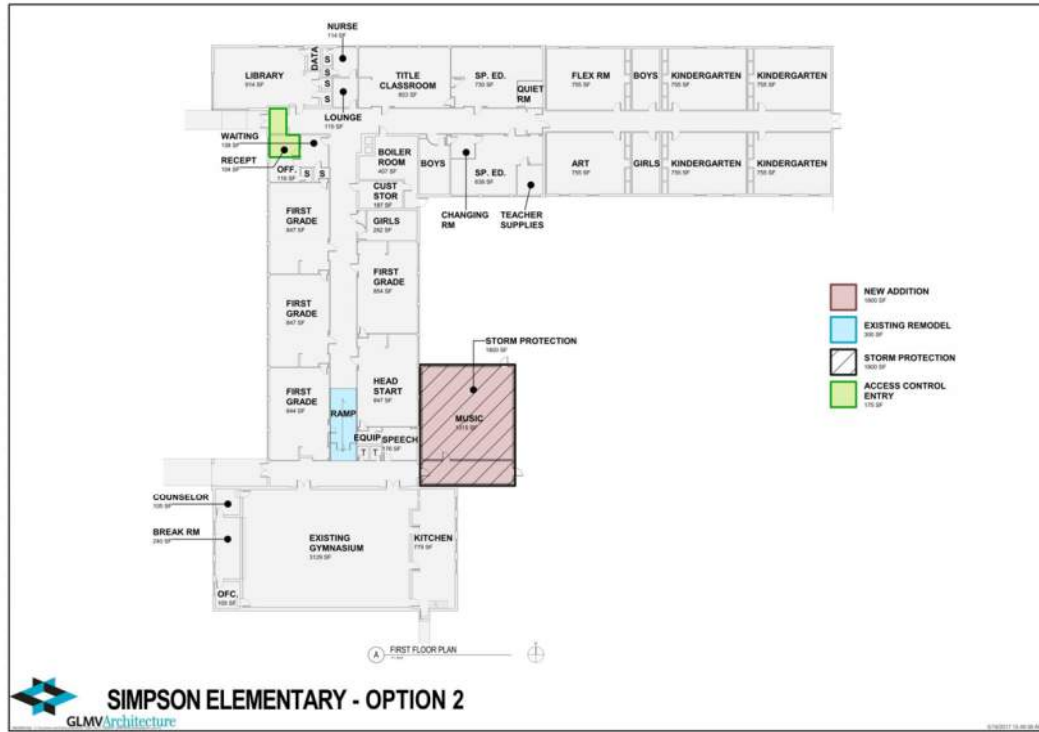


**SCENARIO C**



# SCENARIO D

This would be Option 2 as described above for all facilities. The estimated cost is \$25,800,000.



# SCENARIO D

# WE MAKE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

This Task Force struggled a great deal with determining the recommendations that would take care of the needs as we described above and knowing full well the tax impact among our constituents in this community. Russell has a history of providing education to the highest level possible and as a result has produced many prominent people here in town and in this country.

We are dealing with facilities that even though have been well maintained, are old and have a limited future even with the improvements we propose.

Whichever options we recommend come with a cost that will be paid for the next 25 years.

If the election is next May 2018, twenty five years from then both Simpson Elementary and Bickerdyke Elementary will be 91 years old! Ruppenthal will be 105 years old! Russell High School will be 80 years old. The latest building addition will be over 50 years old at that time.

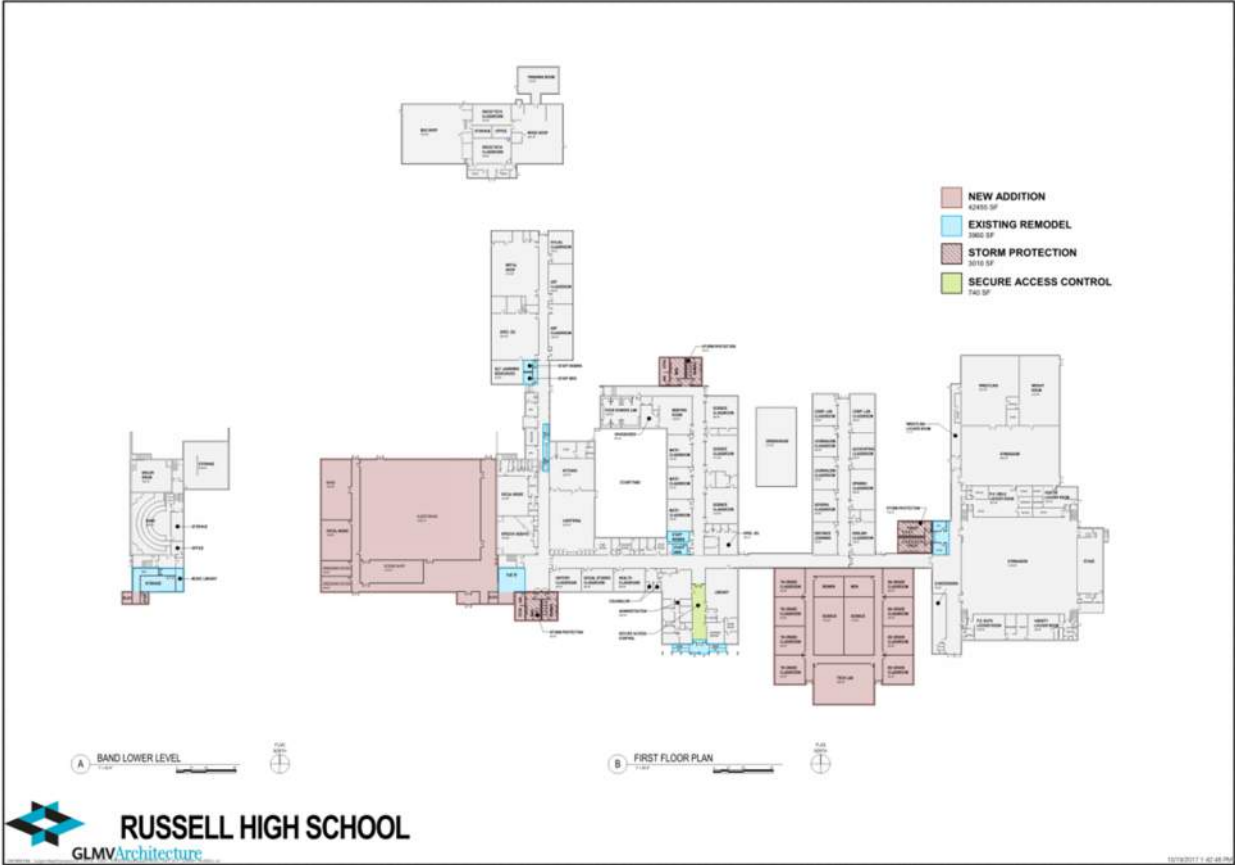
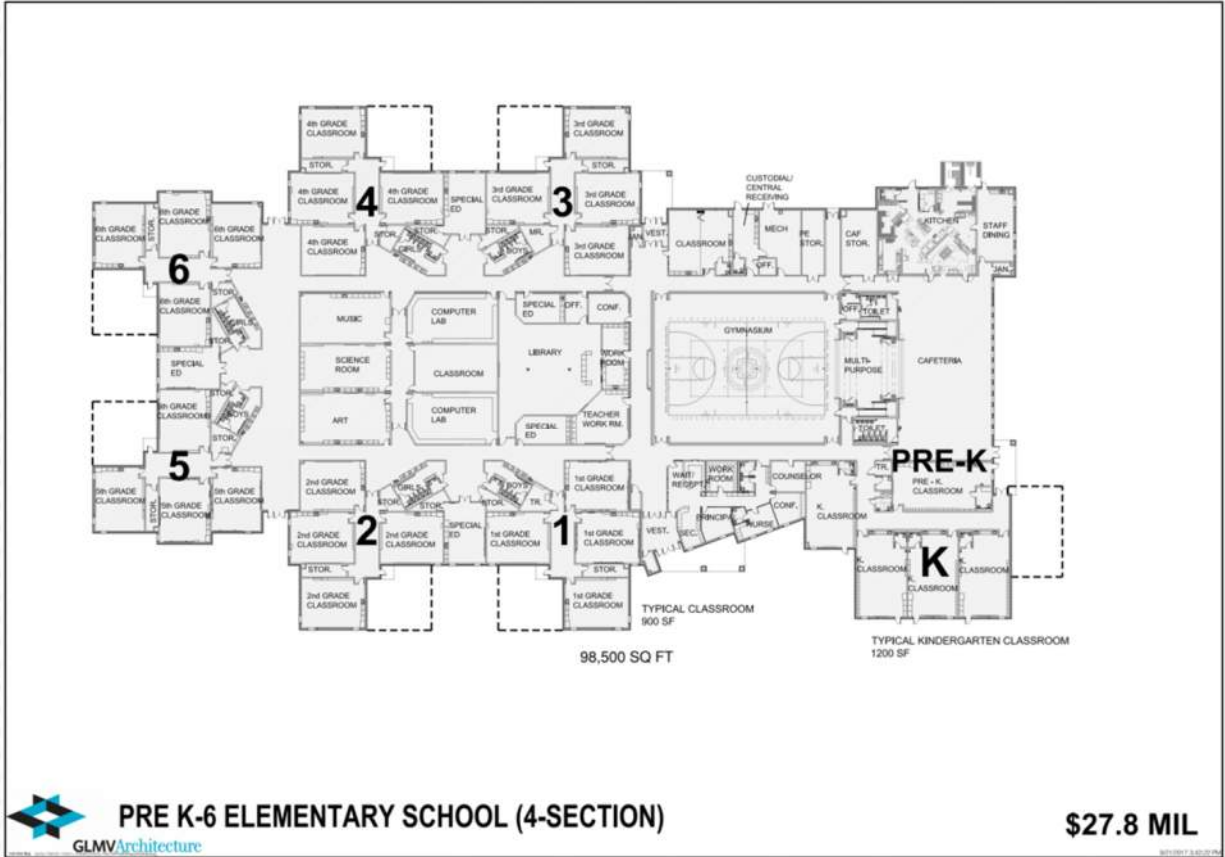
With that said, it is important that we are prudent with our expenditures for improvements.

## WE MAKE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

With that said the Community Task Force recommendations based on consensus of the members are:

1. Build a new Pre Kindergarten thru 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary School on a yet to be determined site.
2. Build additions to Russell High School with other Improvements for a 7<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Russell High School including a new auditorium.
3. Construct a new Central Office building connected to Russell High School or as a separate building.
4. Vacate from district use the Simpson, Bickerdyke and Ruppenthal buildings.
5. Keep the total costs of the project within \$50 million.

# RECOMMENDATION



## IN CONCLUSION

We submit these recommendations because they:

1. Address the storm protection, fire life safety, security and space issues;
2. Are the most feasible approach to meet the needs of the District;
3. Will provide students with appropriate learning environment and technology;
4. Will replace the elementary and middle schools which we believe are at the end of their useful life as educational facilities.
5. Are a more cost effective approach to comply with fire life safety and accessibility (ADA) requirements.
6. Are together less expensive in Cost of Ownership than the other scenarios/ options.

In addition we request of the Board to:

1. Be transparent on alternatives and open to the community.
2. Let the community have input.
3. Be clear of the taxes in simple form that are affected by the improvements.
4. Seek ways to reduce the tax burden i.e. grants, private donations, cooperative efforts with city/county.
5. Educate the community what are the needs.
6. Identify clear educational goals for these improvements.

# RUSSELL USD 407

We believe the benefits of these recommendations are:

1. More efficient use of staff and facilities will save money on operational costs.
2. Utility and maintenance costs will be lower.
3. These improvements will accommodate student and teacher needs beyond the life of the bond.
4. All grades levels will benefit.
5. The Russell Community will benefit with the opportunity of an auditorium venue.
6. Replacing aging buildings now is far less expensive today than that they would be in 25 years where construction costs could double.
7. These improvements will encourage growth in Russell in population and be a catalyst for new opportunities.
8. The district will be able to attract and keep quality staff.

We ask the Board of Education to take these recommendations today under advisement. We, the Community Task Force, propose to engage the Board of Education in a work session, in the very future, to further review our findings and the needs of Russell USD 407.

We believe as a community Russell is on the threshold of a very bright future. Russell USD 407 plays a critical part in our future.

This is the first step that will take us beyond that threshold.

Thank you.