



**Performance**  
Services

## **Wisconsin Heights School District: A Case Study in Design-Build**

In the fall of 2022, the Wisconsin Heights One Campus vision came to fruition. An elementary wing was added to the middle/high school, enabling all students and staff to be at one location. Read on to learn more about how this addition and renovation project was delivered on time and on budget.





Following a 2018 comprehensive facilities assessment, enrollment study, and ongoing community dialogue, the Wisconsin Heights School District sought to address failing infrastructure needs to accommodate current and future student enrollment growth.

The key to the project was determining what to do about its two aging elementary school buildings and address the challenge in a timely and cost-effective manner. After an extensive review of priorities and construction options, the District selected the Design-Build delivery method and Performance Services as the design-builder.



The **project goals aimed to create a modern and optimal learning environment**. The new addition and renovation project would address critical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment, including long-term maintenance and repairs, kitchen renovations, and restroom updates at the original Middle/High School building. In doing so, the District will reduce operating costs by operating fewer and more efficient school buildings and reducing bus transportation time and logistics, providing efficiencies to faculty and staff that divided their time between the buildings.

## Cost

*“Performance Services’ pricing for this project was very cost competitive and a big part of the selection decision. More importantly, working with PSI’s architect, we were able to create a design that the District was able to afford that also met our educational needs for decades to come.”*

**Jordan Sinz**  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR  
WISCONSIN HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT



After partner selection, the Design-Build team got to work with the District. Because the Design-Build process is focused on design-to-budget and team collaboration, Performance Services proposed two solutions to address their elementary schools, inviting the school and community for feedback. The first option included renovating all the schools, updating the entrances, kitchens, and restrooms, and upgrading the HVAC, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, roofing, and building controls. The second option was to create one unified campus by adding an elementary school to the existing middle and high schools.

The District and community determined that **the best option was a one-campus solution**. The final design included a new 80,000-square-foot building addition, new pre-K through 5th-grade classrooms, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, a media center, student collaboration spaces, administrative offices.

In addition, it included a new car drop-off loop to ease traffic congestion around the single campus and new playgrounds for elementary students. Lastly, the District wanted to ensure the middle/high school didn't fall behind the new elementary addition. So, the middle and high school buildings would also receive critical infrastructure, restroom, and kitchen renovations to ensure the District provided an optimal learning environment for all students throughout the District.

## ONE CAMPUS SOLUTION

*“A one-campus decision was great for us. It supports the culture of the community. Elementary kids can walk down the hall to join high school students for an activity such as reading or tech ed. We’ve also had a 3/4/5 grade concert during the school day. From a parent standpoint, I would have had kids in all three buildings and with this year on ONE campus. It’s also very convenient for parents for teacher conferences. It makes the most of our teacher and facility resources and is great for our students and parents.”*

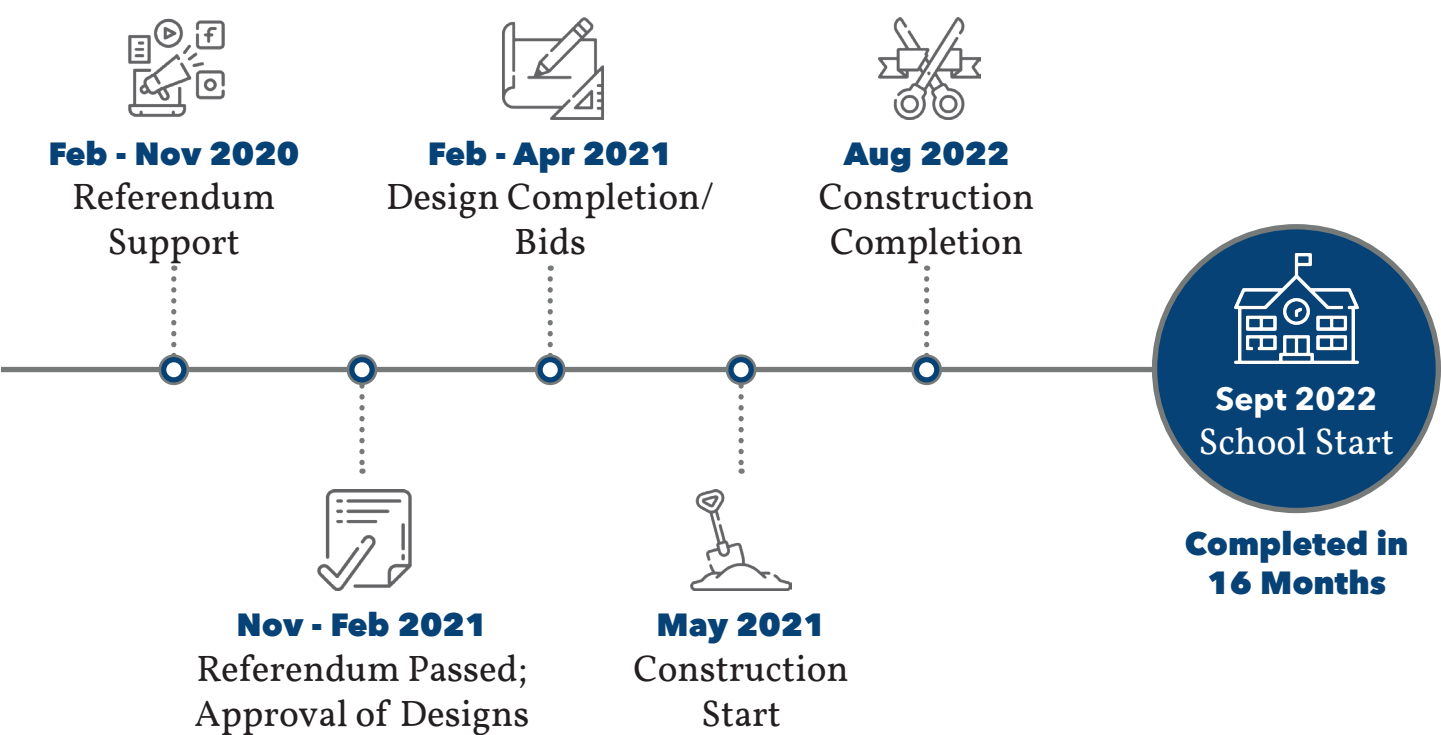
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**A referendum campaign followed.** With a proposed solution, the District was ready to begin its communication efforts to garner support for the referendum campaign about 12 months before the vote. The Design-Build team provided comprehensive communication services to help inform the public of the District’s challenges and opportunities. Key tactics included design charrette sessions, critical messaging development, active engagement at community meetings, architectural renderings, communication materials design, Community Conversations events, and video story production.

This inclusive and thorough approach helped build awareness, inform the community, and spread the word about the positive benefits the construction project could provide to the community. However, while various tactics were used throughout the 12-month campaign, it is essential to note that each was successful because they shared a consistent message. The District was facing critical needs and growth capacity concerns. Becoming a one-campus district solved these issues and provides the District with cost savings and operational efficiencies. The referendum team ensured that key messaging was simple and unvarying, regardless of the communication channel. This helped avoid confusion and create greater trust with the District’s proposed solution.

After months of hard work, Wisconsin Heights voters approved the \$27 million facilities referendum on November 3, 2020, with 52.8% of the vote. After the winning campaign, Performance Services began finalizing the construction and design documents and, in May 2021, broke ground on the One-Campus project. In collaboration with the Design-Build team, the District hosted a **groundbreaking community event to celebrate the start of an exciting project.**





## SPEED OF DELIVERY

“Without a doubt, Performance Services was able to deliver this project a full year before the competition said they could do it. Given that we were closing two elementary schools, the fast-track schedule was a huge part of our decision. We needed to start the 2022 school year in the new elementary addition. It was made clear at the start and throughout the project that PSI is a partner, and regardless of the complexity or challenges along the way, we were going to get the kids in at the start of the 2022 school year, and we did. They delivered on their promise and made it happen. I am grateful for the partnership and the outcome. I’ll forever look back on this experience with great pride and the positive impact for decades to come.”

**Jordan Sinz**  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR  
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Despite several challenges, the project's construction phase was completed on time. The first of which was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to ever-changing restrictions, associated cost escalations, and related supply chain delays, Performance Services worked with the District to ensure the designs and materials did not exceed the project costs. The Design-Build team constantly communicated with the District through every challenge to provide the best possible outcome. **The project was delivered with no change orders based on the agreed scope of work based on final bids and pricing.**



*Student Engagement During Construction*

Another major success was the ability to complete the construction during the school year. Despite having an occupied middle/high school, Performance Services completed the building with no impact on students and faculty. Working with the District staff, Performance Services' project management team understood education schedules and extracurricular events to ensure construction did not disrupt the school calendar. That meant working after hours, during the weekends, and through the summer break holiday to ensure construction activities were safe and as unobtrusive as possible.

Construction took a year and a half to complete, finishing in September 2022, just in time for the start of the school year. **The District hosted an open house and ribbon-cutting event** to thank the community for their support. The community was invited to tour the newly constructed addition and celebrate the new single campus with a tailgate ahead of the District's homecoming football game.



*Community Ribbon-Cutting*



# HIGH QUALITY

*“At the beginning of this process, we promised the community that we would create a modern learning environment that would serve the school district for decades. The buildings were filled with positive energy and excitement during the open house to experience the new, well-designed, and illuminated spaces. The natural light of the new elementary addition is a dramatic atmosphere difference from our old buildings.”*

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DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR  
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## Elementary School Highlights:

- EC-5 classrooms
- Gymnasium/Cafeteria
- Media center
- Administration suite
- Car drop-off loop
- Playground

## Middle/High School Renovation:


- Cafeteria and kitchen
- Corridor flooring and ceiling
- Restroom ADA accessibility upgrades
- Mechanical system replacement



Secure Entryway

Wisconsin Heights had previously used the traditional design-bid-build model for completing construction and renovation projects. They experienced the tension of managing separate contracts with separate entities, including finger-pointing and unpleasant and surprising change orders. On complex projects such as this one, the District recognized the inevitable issues and disputes that could arise between the architects, general contractors, and low-bid subcontractors. Instead of being stuck in the middle and risking higher costs, **the District was convinced Design-Build was the way to go for this project.**

COMPARISON OF PROJECT DELIVERY METHODS		
METRICS	DESIGN-BUILD VS. CM@R	DESIGN-BUILD VS. DESIGN-BID-BUILD
COST GROWTH	2.4% less	3.8% less
SCHEDULE GROWTH	3.9% less	1.7% less
CONSTRUCTION SPEED	13% faster	36% faster

Source: Design-Build Sourcebook, 2021


# ONE CONTRACT

“The most significant consideration in our selection decision was a single point of contact with one contract. The board and I did not want any buck-passing or finger-pointing. With Design-Build, the buck started and ended with the design-builder. For our situation, time was critical, so this delivery method with sole accountability for both design and construction was right for this project.”

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DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR  
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Art Classroom





*Media Center*



*Classroom Corridor*



*Classroom*

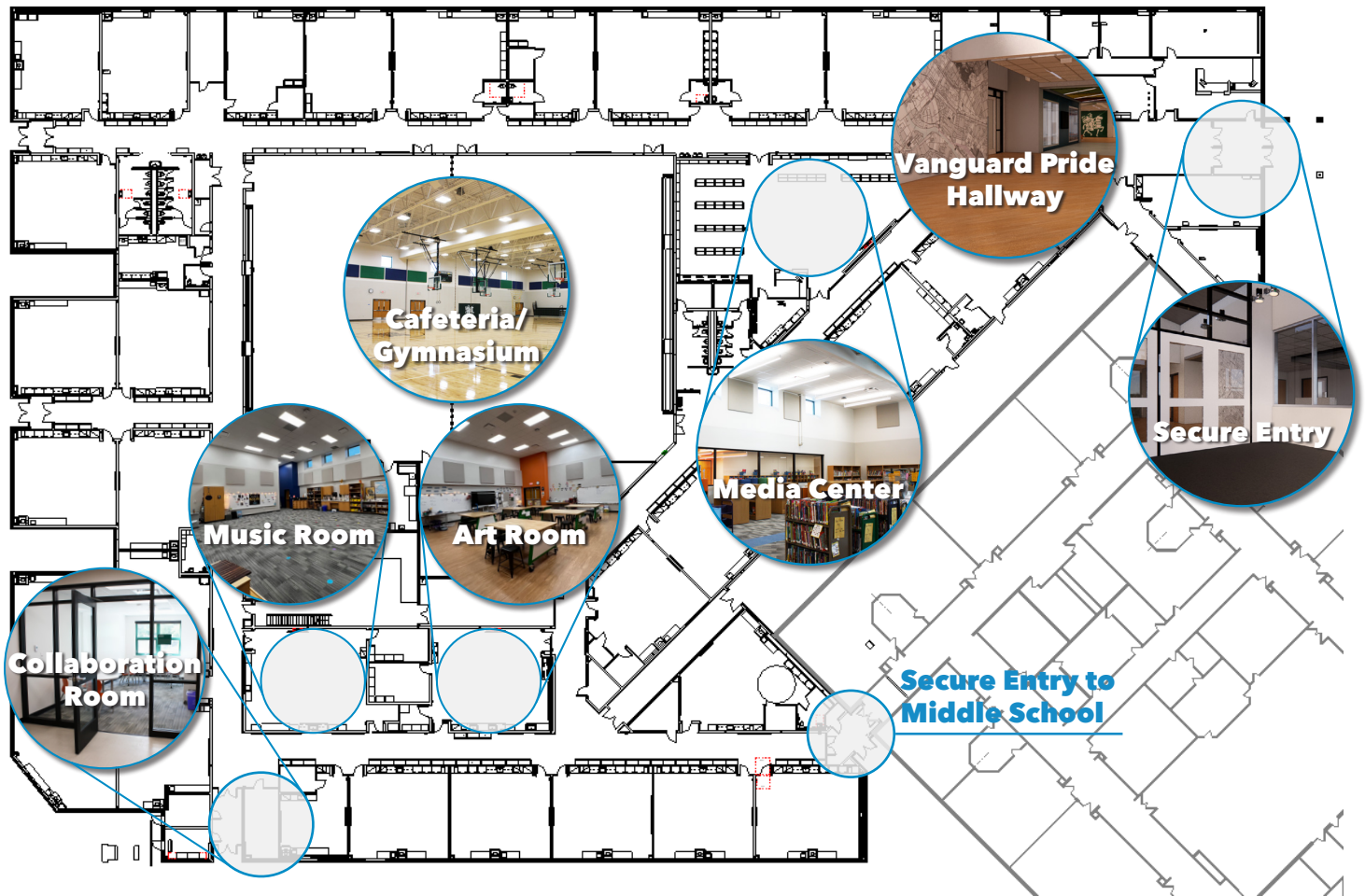


*Elementary Classroom*



*Elementary Corridor*













# Performance Services

## **Integrated Design and Construction | Complete Referendum Services | Solar Power**

Performance Services is an integrated design and delivery company that specializes in constructing and renovating education facilities to deliver optimal learning environments. The company works with and offers comprehensive referendum services for Wisconsin school districts and has provided facility solutions to clients since 1998. To learn more, contact us at [www.performanceservices.com](http://www.performanceservices.com).



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