

THE SCHOOL WATCH

OPUSD Community Newsletter

Fall 2018 Edition



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Special Edition Measure S is Underway!

Measure S is the school bond measure passed by Oak Park voters in November of 2016. Measure S allows OPUSD to issue \$60 million of school facility bonds in a series of issuances so that the tax rate remains around \$60 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation. \$15 million was issued in 2017, of which \$6.8 million was used to install the solar array structures at all of the school campuses. The balance has been used on continuing roof replacements, HVAC upgrades, major fencing upgrades at Oak Park High School and Brookside Elementary School, security cameras, new LED stadium lighting at Oak Park High School and other lighting upgrades at all sites, and for the architectural planning of the next phases.

The kitchen at Medea Creek Middle School is under remodel and should be completed within a month. Code changes required major upgrades there and we took the opportunity to upgrade the facility to provide a better space for the preparation of our scratch-cooked foods.

One of the major elements of Measure S is to replace aging portable classrooms with new buildings. Oak Park USD pioneered the use of the GrowthPoint classrooms made from recycled sea containers in 2013 with the construction of the 'I' building at Oak Park High School. OPUSD will issue \$17 million in bonds in November for Phase II that includes projects at Brookside, Red Oak, and Oak Hills Elementary schools and Medea Creek Middle School.

GrowthPoint STRUCTURES

This was the first such classroom building in the nation. These classrooms are manufactured in Los Angeles from shipping containers and exceed all state codes. In fact, they far exceed the highest level national LEED environmental standards by 55%. When fully complete they are made from 85% reclaimed or recycled materials. The buildings are 106 times stronger than building codes require. The framing systems can withstand 112 tons of compression force, which makes them a very safe place to be in an earthquake. They have white 'cool' roofs and highly efficient air conditioning systems that you might be more likely to see in more remote places that are stingy with electricity but provide outstanding cooling and heating. They are designed to last between 50 and 100 years.

For Oak Park, these are a clear choice. The GrowthPoint structures cost significantly less than a wood-frame

building. We also like the flexibility of sliding glass doors floor-to-ceiling windows that allow natural light into the learning space, which research shows enhances student learning.

Planning for Medea Creek and Brookside are furthest along with onsite construction expected to begin in February or March. Red Oak is just behind that with construction to begin a month or so later. It is possible that the new classrooms will be ready for occupancy in August of 2019 but our experience with school construction tells us that there are many unforeseen issues that can come up. Since these buildings are new and older buildings will be removed once these are occupied, there should not be a disruption in terms of providing necessary space for classes. There will, however, be construction going on at the schools during the school year. It is not possible to complete all the phases of the construction during summer break. Our team is highly experienced and student safety is always the first priority in this process.

Oak Hills will see work begin on remodel of the core building that houses the office, multipurpose room, library, and computer lab as well as other initial campus upgrades as well.

I invite you to browse through the drawings on the next few pages and know that the designs integrate the latest in what we know provides optimal learning spaces for students in school districts like Oak Park that value progressive teaching and learning strategies.

Dr. Tony Knight, Superintendent

GrowthPoint Structure at Oak Park High School

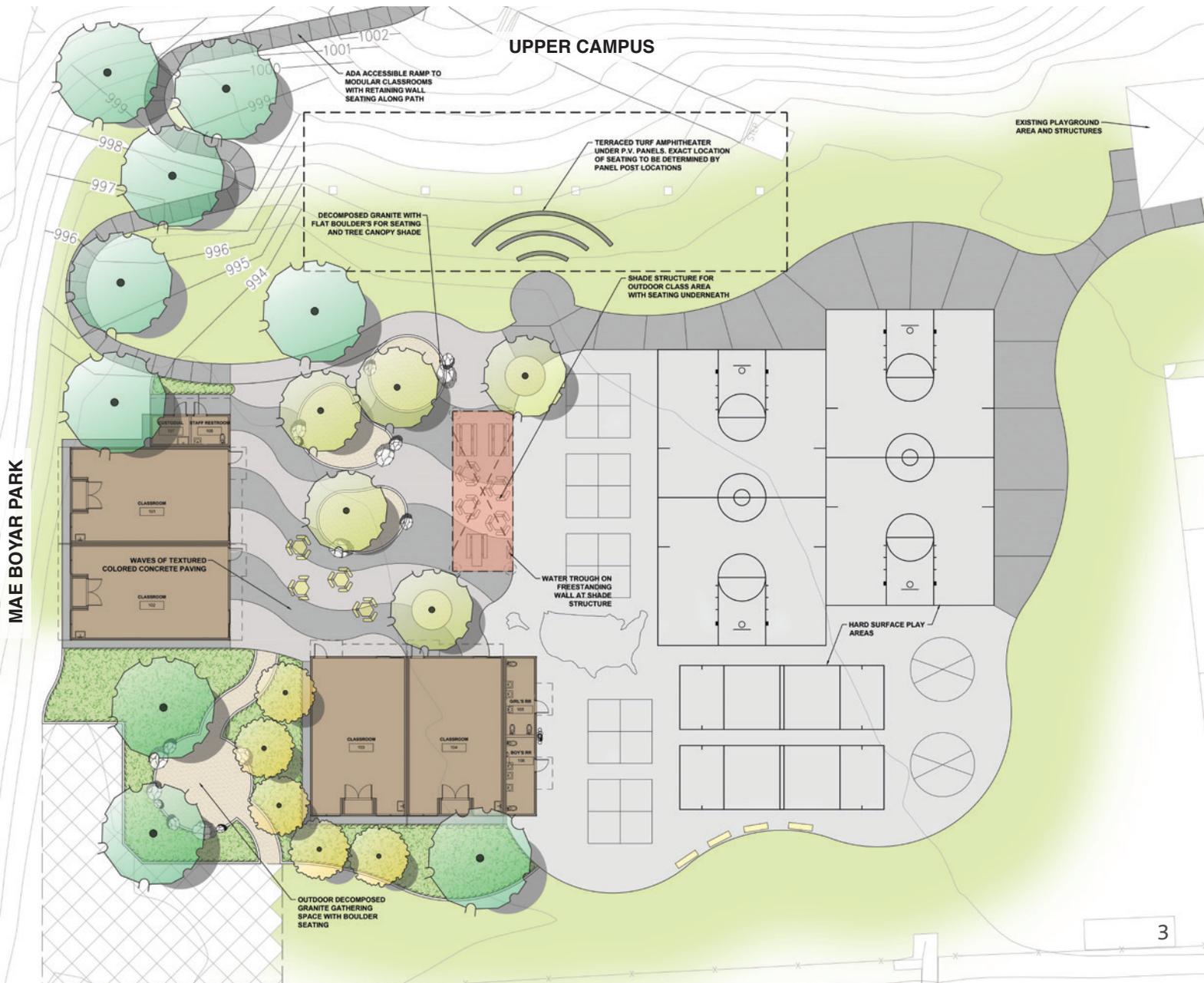


Brookside Elementary School and Medea Creek Middle School New Learning Studios

Oak Park Unified School District is making dramatic improvements to all of its campuses in innovative ways. Making use of shipping container technology, first debuted with a significant and sustainable classroom addition at Oak Park High School, new indoor/outdoor classroom clusters are being added District-Wide. The first of these projects are being developed at Brookside Elementary School, Red Oak Elementary School, and Medea Creek Middle School. Other initiatives at the other campuses will soon follow. Each classroom is made up of (3) containers, and are placed on the campus

so that the adjacent space can be used as outdoor learning spaces or play areas. Sliding glass doors allow the footprint of the classroom to extend past the 4 walls and inspire teachers to use the outdoors as another teaching space. The outdoor spaces are learning spaces in their own right. Equipped with a variety of outdoor seating and table arrangements, shade structures and trees, these playful spaces enliven the learning environment and enrich the possibilities for project-based learning and discovery.

Conceptual Plan for Brookside Elementary School



Brookside Elementary School

The new Brookside Elementary School learning studios will replace aging portable classrooms currently in use. The new classrooms and associated landscaping are configured to integrate into the existing campus. Situated at the southwest corner of the campus and connected via ramped walkways to the main campus up the hill, the four new learning studios are grouped in an 'L' shaped configuration and connected to each other with an outdoor learning commons. The 'container' architecture of the learning studios is enhanced with generous windows and sliding glass doors, colorful

siding and highly flexible furniture and technology. The configuration also incorporates the existing photovoltaic solar panel shade structure immediately to the north. Outdoor seating is being provided to enhance the use of this covered space. The existing play area on the main/upper level of the campus will be used for more new classrooms in a later project when the remaining portable classrooms are replaced in the second phase. These four classrooms will replace the four modular rooms located on the hill above the field.



Medea Creek Middle School

The new Medea Creek Middle School learning studios and landscaping are configured to encourage teachers and students to use the adjacent student garden. The new classroom cluster, situated adjacent to the playfield slightly uphill from the main campus consists of six learning studios grouped around an outdoor learning commons. By staggering the classrooms and introducing contrasting banding along the paved courtyard, indoor and outdoor learning environments are integrated. The courtyard is extended east to connect to the photovoltaic solar panel shade structure at the south end of the play field. Outdoor seating is provided there to create a small amphitheater. The outdoor classroom includes outdoor

furniture, Wi-Fi, a trough sink, and shade sail structure. The exterior colors reflect school pride and were taken from the school logo. Learning activities that take place indoors can also be done outside. The learning studio interiors do not have a "front of the room" and include a library corner. The learning studio will empower students to learn collaboratively and reflect our project-based learning philosophy. For that reason, different types of seating and reconfigurable furniture is critical to the design. Teachers are able to readily change the layout of the learning studio as lesson plans and activities change throughout the day.



Planned Projects for Oak Hills Elementary School and Red Oak Elementary School

Educational Concepts

As construction proceeds on various projects within Oak Park Unified School District, the planning and design of projects of equal educational significance are under way at Oak Hills and Red Oak Elementary Schools. Making use of similar shipping container technology that is being implemented at Medea Creek Middle School and Brookside Elementary School. Oak Hills and Red Oak will ultimately add new classroom clusters grouped around outdoor learning spaces to provide an enhanced experience based on project based learning and sustainable principals. Enhanced outdoor play spaces and the placement of new classrooms that are embedded in the landscape foster a 21st century learning experience. Generous

windows and sliding glass doors in all of the learning communities connect indoor and outdoor spaces seamlessly, expanding instructional opportunities. The outdoor areas between the new classrooms are designed as active learning spaces with outdoor seating, some of it built in, shade structures and demonstration planning areas. Stainless steel trough sinks enhance and support the range of possible activities there. The classroom spaces themselves are furnished flexibly so that teachers and students can, quickly and conveniently reconfigure furniture for different modes of learning. Portable flat screen technology, light, mobile furniture, and multiple projection surfaces ensure there is not a static 'front' of class.



Aerial view of Oak Hills Elementary School

Oak Hills Elementary School

Several improvements are planned for Oak Hills Elementary School. Aging relocatable classrooms will be eventually removed from the site and four new modular classrooms will be clustered at the east end of the reconfigured kindergarten play yard to replace the current temporary structures housing the Reggio Emilia inspired Oak Park Neighborhood School preschool program. Currently under design are a series of improvements and renovations for the core building containing the library, multi-purpose room, kitchen, dining, and administration areas. The renovations will result in an updated relocated kitchen, re-configured

multi-purpose room and library resource center with enhanced accessibility throughout. Noteworthy are the plans for the existing library and computer classroom. The educational concept for this space is to create a combined makerspace resource center that will be multi-disciplinary, highly interactive, and hands-on. Within the space, light flexible furniture and low storage shelving units will be employed to create varied activity zones, including a robotics building zone, a computer / research zone and a reading resource library zone. This new learning hub will be a prototype for future conversions at other sites within the District.



Red Oak Elementary School

As at the other elementary school campuses, the Red Oak Elementary School learning studios and landscaping are configured to encourage integrated indoor/outdoor learning. The new classroom cluster, situated on a portion of the playground just east of, and above the existing school will create a unique setting. Seven learning studios and a restroom and conference room with storage will be grouped in a single two-story building. Ramps and stairs will connect this new cluster

to the main campus. The four upper classroom will open onto an outdoor learning center on the hillside. Careful attention to planting, outdoor furniture and shade structures will ensure the outdoor spaces are intensively used as part of the curriculum. All eight of the portable classrooms located on the campus will be removed, which will allow for a new playground design to take shape that will increase playspace for children and open the campus.



Aerial view of artists rendering of Red Oak Elementary School's new Learning Studios



Solar arrays of OPUSD

Solar Panels Continue To Outperform

The solar arrays at the schools continue to generate power, saving the Oak Park USD general fund many hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. This summer they produced so much power that SoCal Edison sent us a check for \$50,000 in overproduction. Last year, they saved us over \$350,000 in electrical costs and we are off to a stronger start this year due to all of the sunshine! For further information and regular updates visit <http://opusdbond.org>.