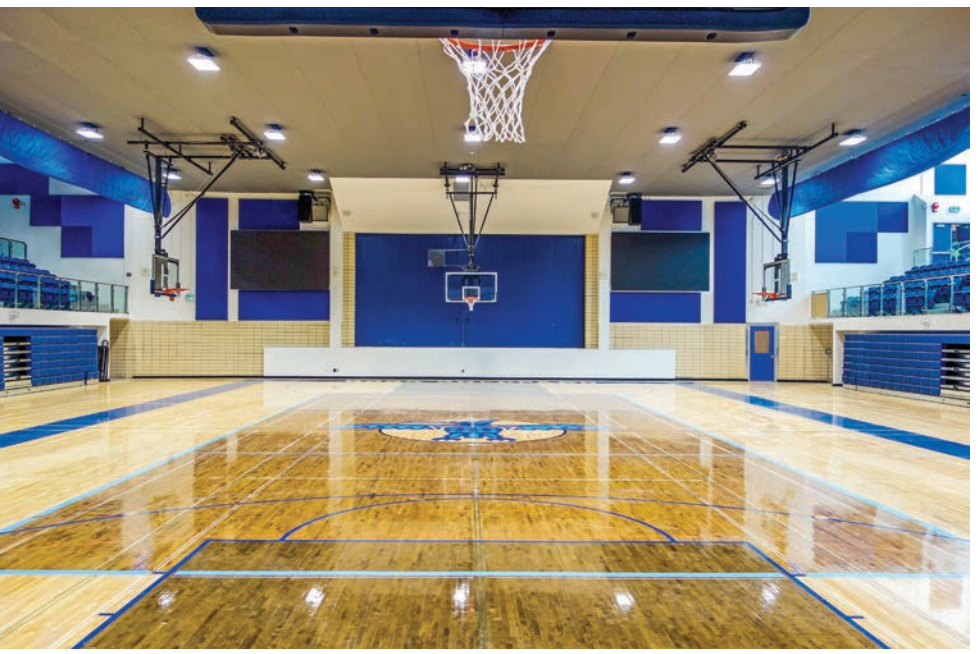
Ross Sheppard High School

by **PETER STERLING**









It's routine for schools across Canada to be replaced or upgraded, especially as 21st-century learning techniques take hold and spaces demand reconfiguration accordingly. So it may be inevitable that the 21st-century demands would eventually come into play at Ross Sheppard High School in Edmonton – and the Edmonton School Board has responded in a most spectacular way.

With a cost of $45-million, the Ross Sheppard project is the biggest renovation by the School Board to date in terms of size as well as expense. The facility accommodates 1,950 students, is one of 90 public school buildings in Edmonton neighbourhoods that are over a half a century old (Ross Sheppard is in fact 60 years old), and the upgrades will not only bring its total area to 245,000 square feet, it will also provide a new gym, fitness centre, and performance area (the latter two components occupying the space of the old gym).

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY THE WORKUN GARRICK PARTNERSHIP

The renovations, designed by architect The Workun Garrick Partnership, will also see a new music space, mechanics, and each classroom outfitted with the latest learning technologies. Moreover, the upgrades will improve comfort and building energy efficiency overall: the old school had aged to the point where poorly sealed window frames were allowing snow to drift into classrooms in winter and bees to enter in summer (this is in addition to many classrooms having limited power plugs and outdated Internet connections).

The architects did, however, recognize many benefits of the old school design that worked in the renovation's favour. For example, the site itself was big enough to accommodate the new gymnasium; the hallways were wide instead of claustrophobic, and the ceilings were higher than is the case in many public schools, thus imparting an open, airy ambiance. Al Degroot, senior project co-ordinator with the school district, told local media, "The older schools were built on a different plan where it wasn't dictated as to what size of classroom you could have, each one was a one-off design."

It took The Workun Garrick Partnership a full year to design the renovation project, and among its many design decisions was the resolution to locate the new gym at the back of the school, and also gut the existing library completely and transform it into a soundproofed music room.

Although the renovation was broken into multiple phases, Ross Sheppard was to remain operational for the estimated three-year construction period. Degroot said of the need to co-ordinate the construction schedule with the movement of students, "You have to make sure the two jive like gears. The major logistical challenge is to get construction done in a quick enough time to make it comfortable for the contractor, while maintaining an atmosphere that's conducive to the education of the students."

Construction began in June of 2015, and up to eight classrooms were emptied at a time to accommodate work crews and relocate students to other areas of the school. Once the classrooms were renovated, the students moved back in and the rooms they vacated were renovated. Throughout the facility, students quickly got used to gutted ceilings and temporary walls, and the noisiest of work such as welding was conducted after hours.

In describing its scope of work, mechanical and electrical consultants MCW Consultants states, "The modernization involves all major mechanical and electrical systems supporting the school infrastructure. New energy efficient equipment will be installed with respect to HVAC and plumbing, plus upgrades in power distribution, interior and exterior lighting and controls, data/telephone and IT, fire alarm, security, and CCTV systems are also included.

"Concepts such as condensing boilers, low-flush fixtures, LED lighting, and occupancy sensors have been integrated into the overall mechanical and electrical design."

As crews continued to work towards a fall of 2018 completion, Lorne Parker, assistant superintendent, infrastructure, at Edmonton Public Schools, summarized the ambitious and complex Ross Sheppard revitalization by telling media, "Not much has been done in that school for some time, so this is going to make a significant change in the structure of the school and learning environment, and it's going to set us up to serve that community for many years." **A**

LOCATION
13546 111 Ave NW, Edmonton, Alberta

OWNER/DEVELOPER
Edmonton Public Schools

ARCHITECT
The Workun Garrick Partnership
Architecture & Interior Design Inc.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Chandos Construction Ltd.

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
Protostatix Engineering Consultants Inc.

MECHANICAL/ ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT
MCW Consultants Ltd.

TOTAL SIZE
245,000 square feet

TOTAL COST
$45 million

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