

From Empty Seats to Extraordinary Spaces

Rethinking School Facilities in the Era of Declining Enrollment

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

From Extraordinary Seats to Extraordinary Spaces



ANDREA PIPPIN

LEED AP, ALEP

LPA DESIGN STUDIOS



JOMAY LIAO

LEED AP BD+C, ALEP

LPA DESIGN STUDIOS



MICHAL HEALY

FACILITY DEVELOPMENT
AND PLANNING DIRECTOR

SANTA CLARA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1

Explore how declining enrolment can create opportunities to rethink facilities planning and prioritize investments that maximize positive student outcomes.

2

Identify ways to repurpose underutilized spaces to support evolving needs.

3

Examine how outdoor environments and reimagined playgrounds can extend the classroom experience and create engaging opportunities to learn through play, even within limited budgets.

4

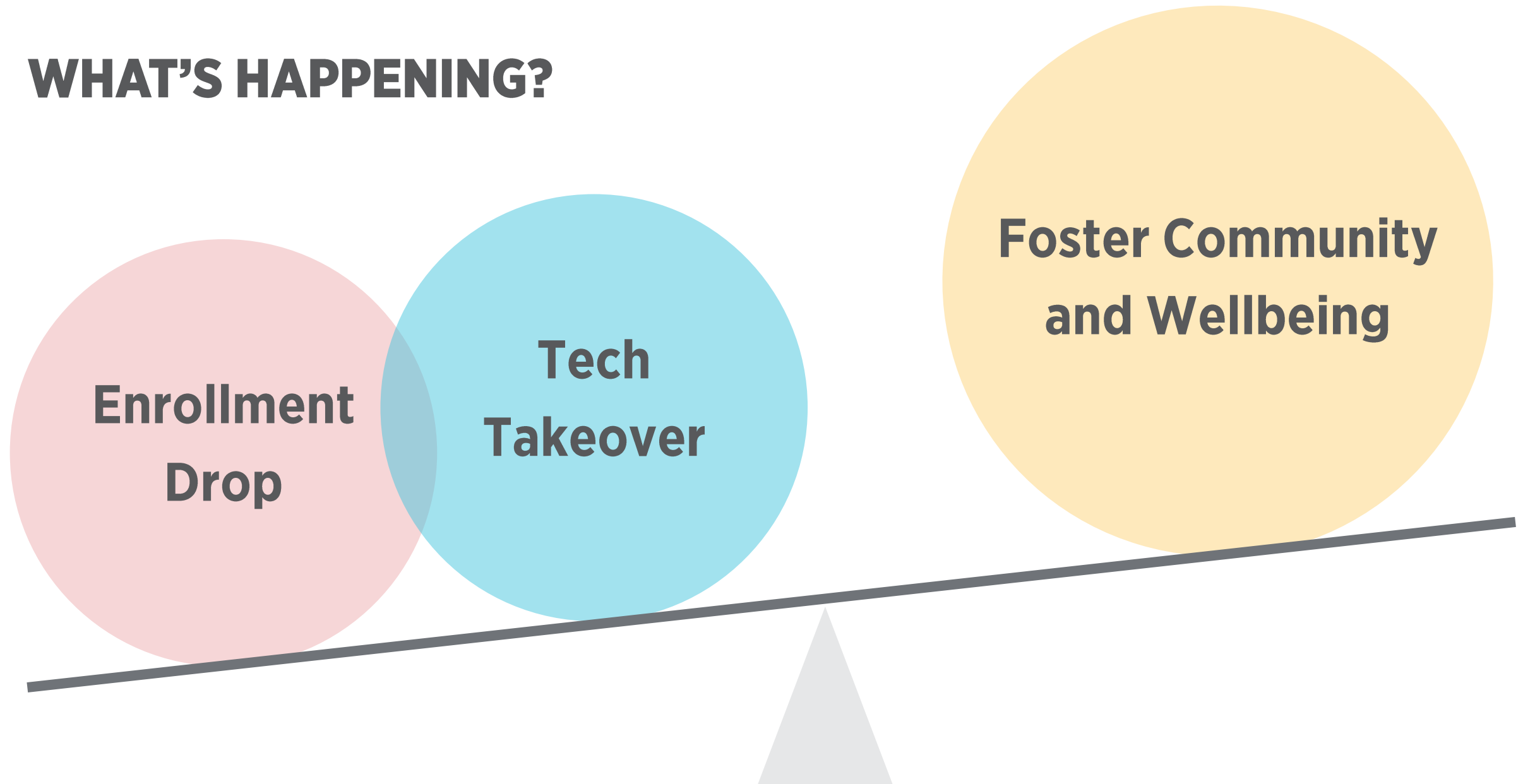
Utilize gap analysis between existing facilities and educational specifications to guide investment decisions, including quantifying the impact of outdoor learning environments in overall site prioritization.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Describe environments that spark curiosity and engaged learning for you.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

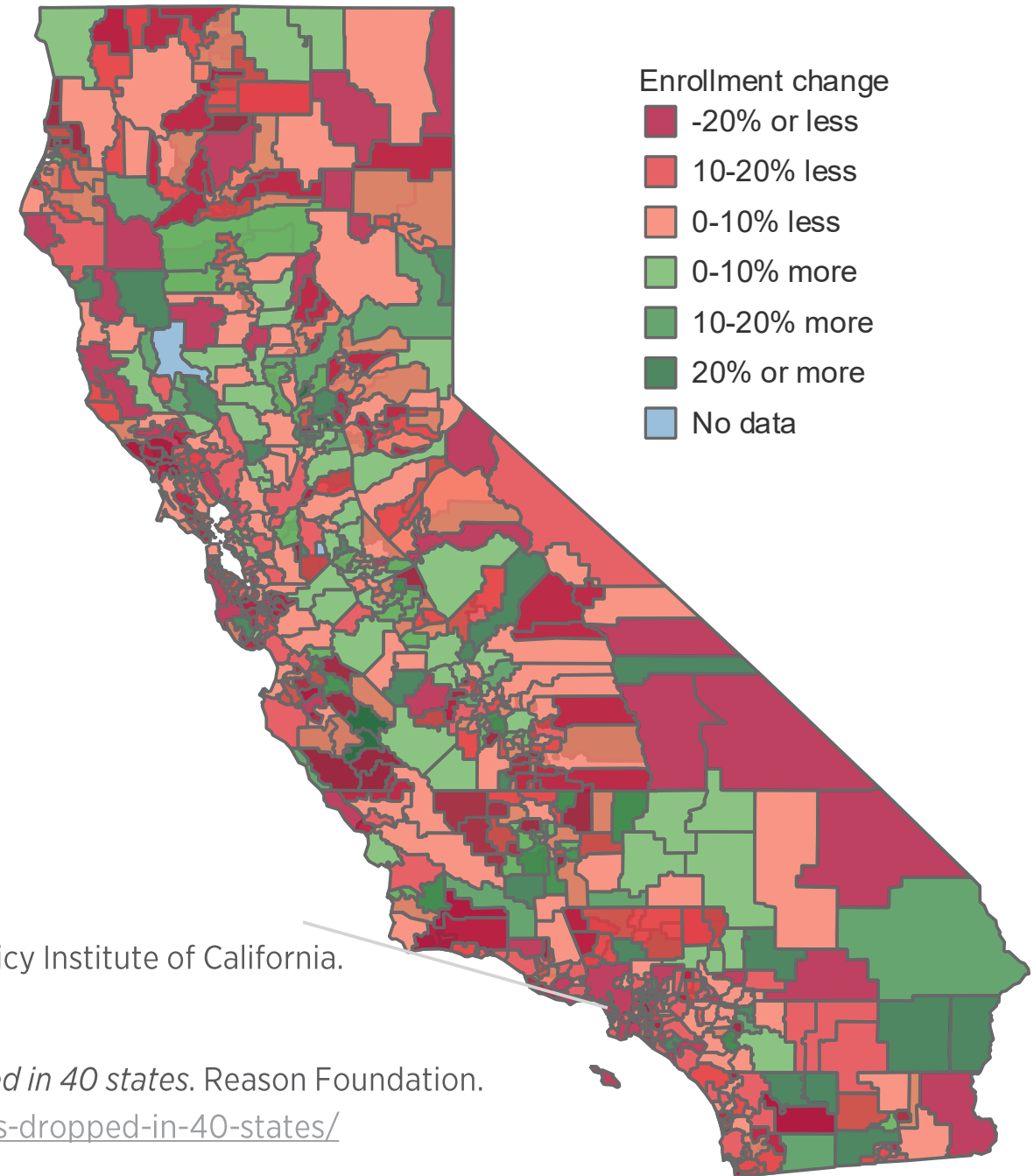
About 70% of California's school districts have faced declines, largely among coastal districts. ¹

Nationally, K-12 enrollment in 40 states dropped by an average of 3.8% or almost 1.5M students between 2019 and 2024. ²

Sources:

(1) Deng, B., & Hill, L. (2026, January 20). *California's K-12 students*. Public Policy Institute of California.
<https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-k-12-students/>

(2) Schwalbach, J. (2026, July 21). *Why K-12 public school enrollments dropped in 40 states*. Reason Foundation.
<https://reason.org/education-newsletter/why-k-12-public-school-enrollments-dropped-in-40-states/>



Open classrooms absorb other functions like storage, student services, etc.

This aerial site plan illustrates the layout of a school campus. The plan is bounded by Corda Drive to the west and Monrovia Drive to the south. Key features include:

- Buildings and Classrooms:** Numerous buildings are labeled with room names and numbers, such as ELA, SS, ELL, OPEN, ST, T, J, and SCI. Specific buildings include a large central building with a green roof (PRINC), a purple building (LIB), and a yellow building (GYM).
- Parking Areas:** Several parking lots are shown, including a large one at the top left and another at the bottom right.
- Recreational Areas:** A large green field (PRINC) and a basketball court (HARDCOURT) are located in the upper right section.
- Other Features:** A star symbol is placed near the bottom center, and a yellow dashed line indicates a path or boundary.

ADVANCEMENTS IN AI TECHNOLOGY

Technologies:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Augmented Reality (AR)
- Virtual Reality (VR)

AI Learning Environments:

- AI-Enabled Learning
- AI-Integrated Learning
- AI-First Learning



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

In what ways will AI, immersive technology, and virtual learning change the learning environment?

THIRD SPACES

“...the places outside of the **home** (the first place) and the **workplace** (the second place) where people go to **converse with others** and **connect with their community.**”



Source:

University of Chicago, English Language Institute. (2023, November 1). *Third places: What are they and why are they important to American culture?*** [University of Chicago — Third Places](#)

THIRD SPACES

As a part of the campus, within an **interconnected learning ecosystem**

Classrooms → structured instruction

Third Spaces → connection + collaboration

Studios → creativity + making

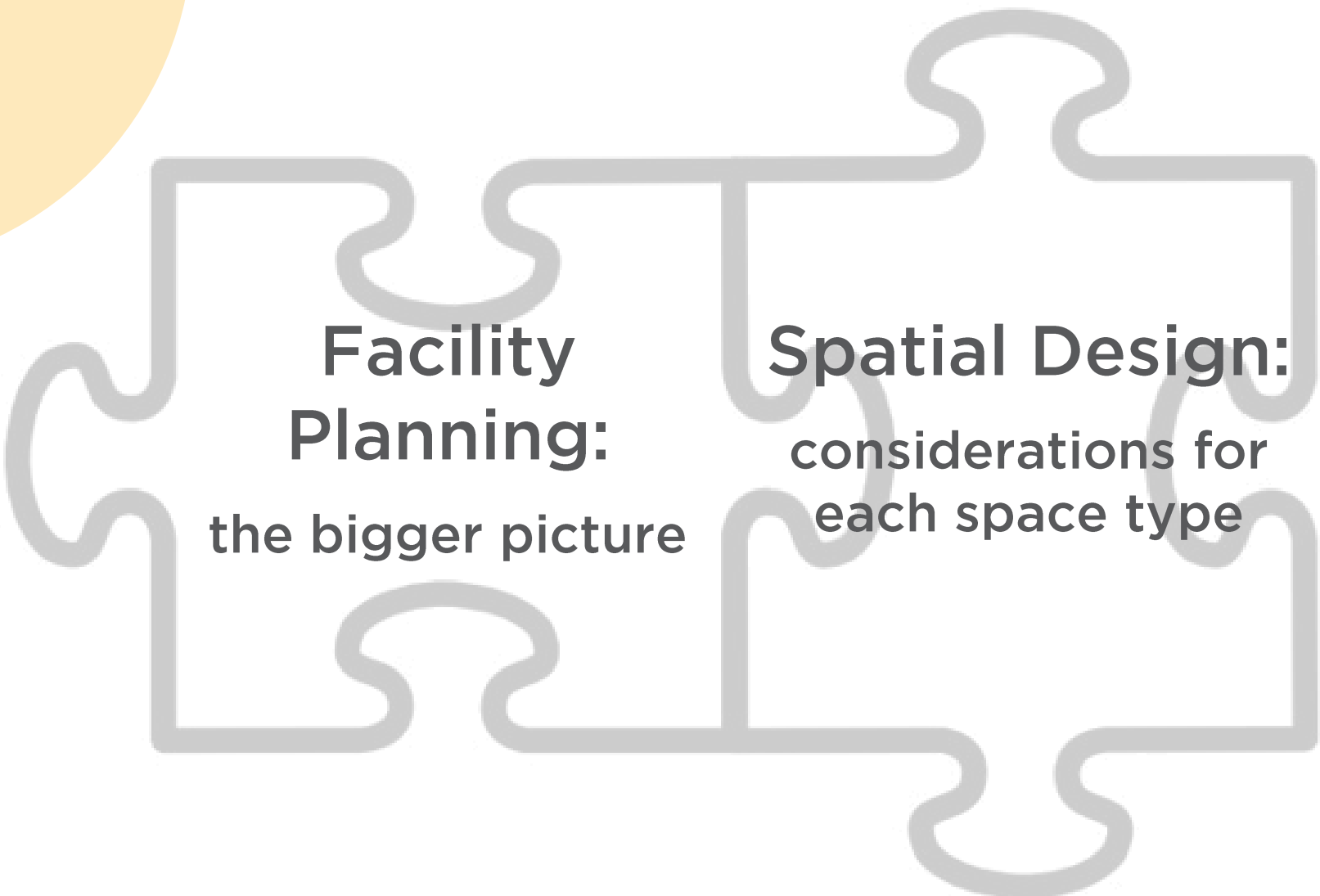
Labs → discovery + experimentation

Commons → community + exchange

Outdoor Spaces → exploration + wellness

Real-World Spaces → authentic experiences

WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT SPACE DIFFERENTLY



**Facility
Planning:**
the bigger picture

Spatial Design:
considerations for
each space type

FACILITY PLANNING

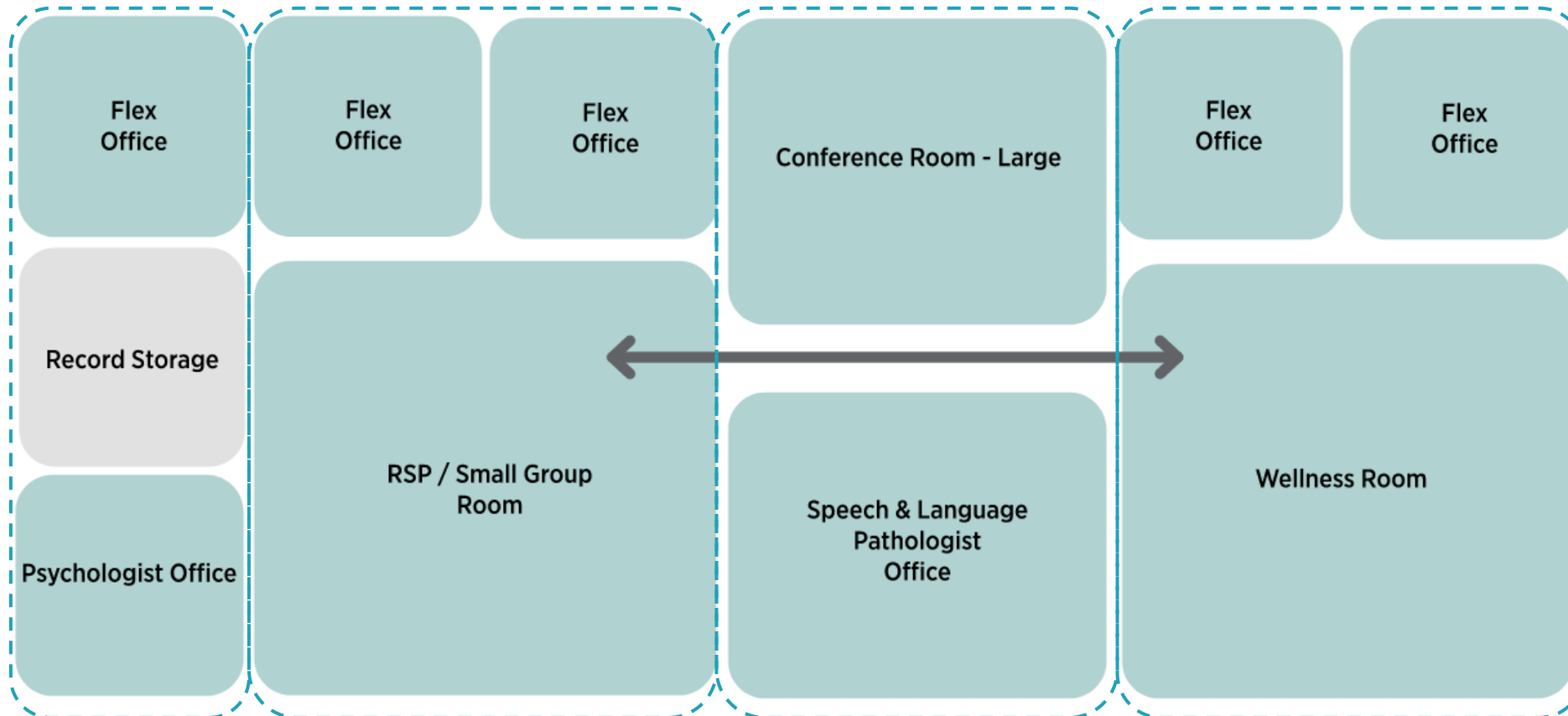
How can spaces be used most efficiently?



GAP ANALYSIS

Achieve efficiency with right-sizing.

This Learning Center takes the footprint of 3.5 classrooms.



Previous area:

9,120sf

Now:

3,360sf

= 6 classrooms

are now open

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

What does “capacity” mean when learning can happen indoors, outdoors, virtually, in workplaces, and throughout the community?

What is your level of efficiency?

Small: 1-2 classrooms

Medium: Classroom wing

Large: Whole site

Small
You've free'd up 1-2 classrooms
Now What?

DESIGN LAB

Creativity and Making, Discovery and Experimentation



Storage, Work Surfaces, Access to Power and Tools



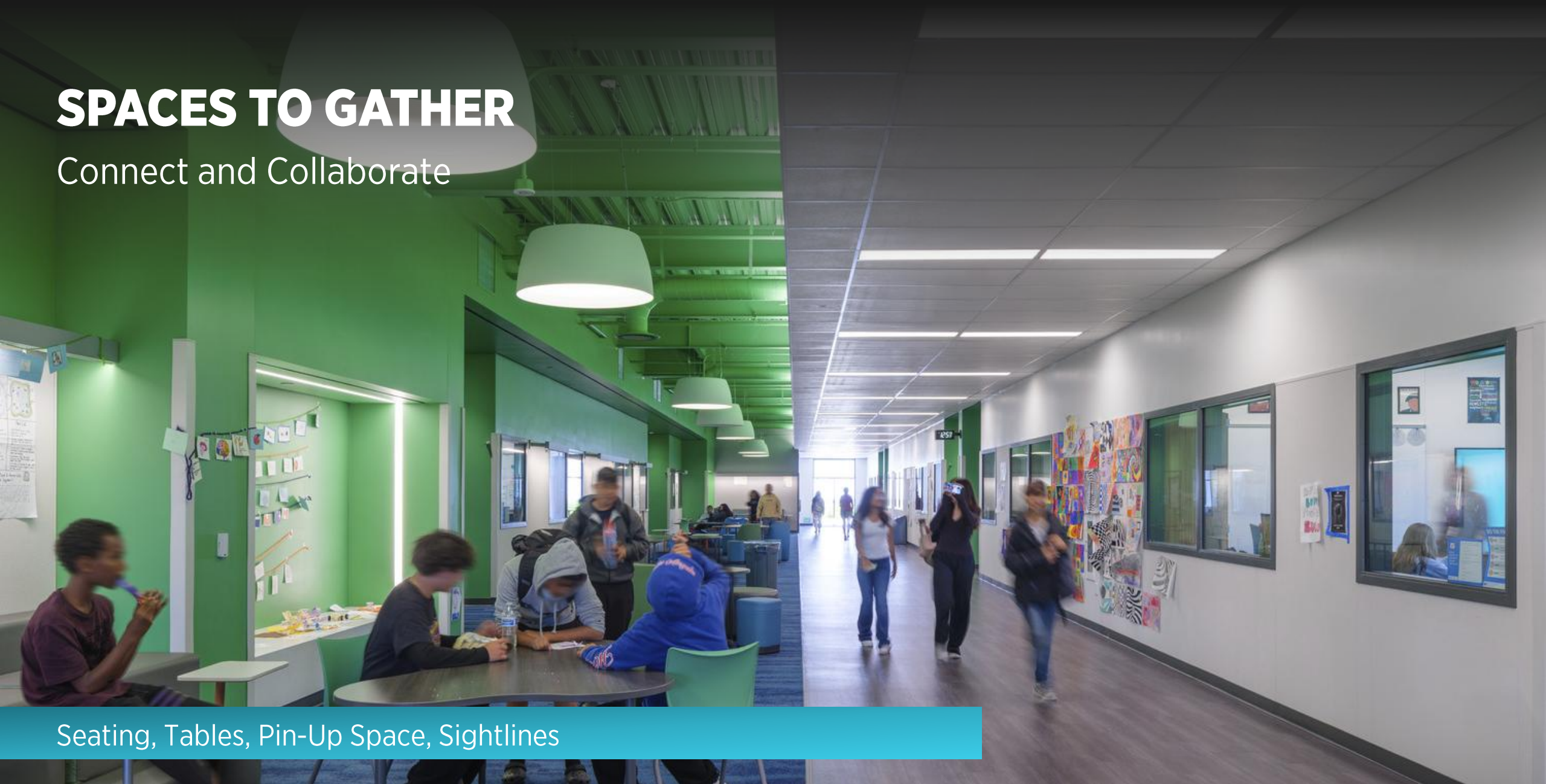
PATHWAYS LAB

Experiential Learning through Virtual Reality Technology

Reliable WiFi, Equipment

SPACES TO GATHER

Connect and Collaborate



Seating, Tables, Pin-Up Space, Sightlines

SPACES TO GATHER

Connect and Collaborate



Natural Elements, Connections to Other Spaces

STUDENT DINING

Connect and Collaborate



STUDENT DINING

Connect and Collaborate



STUDENT DINING

Connect and Collaborate



Honor Elementary School, East Central Independent School District

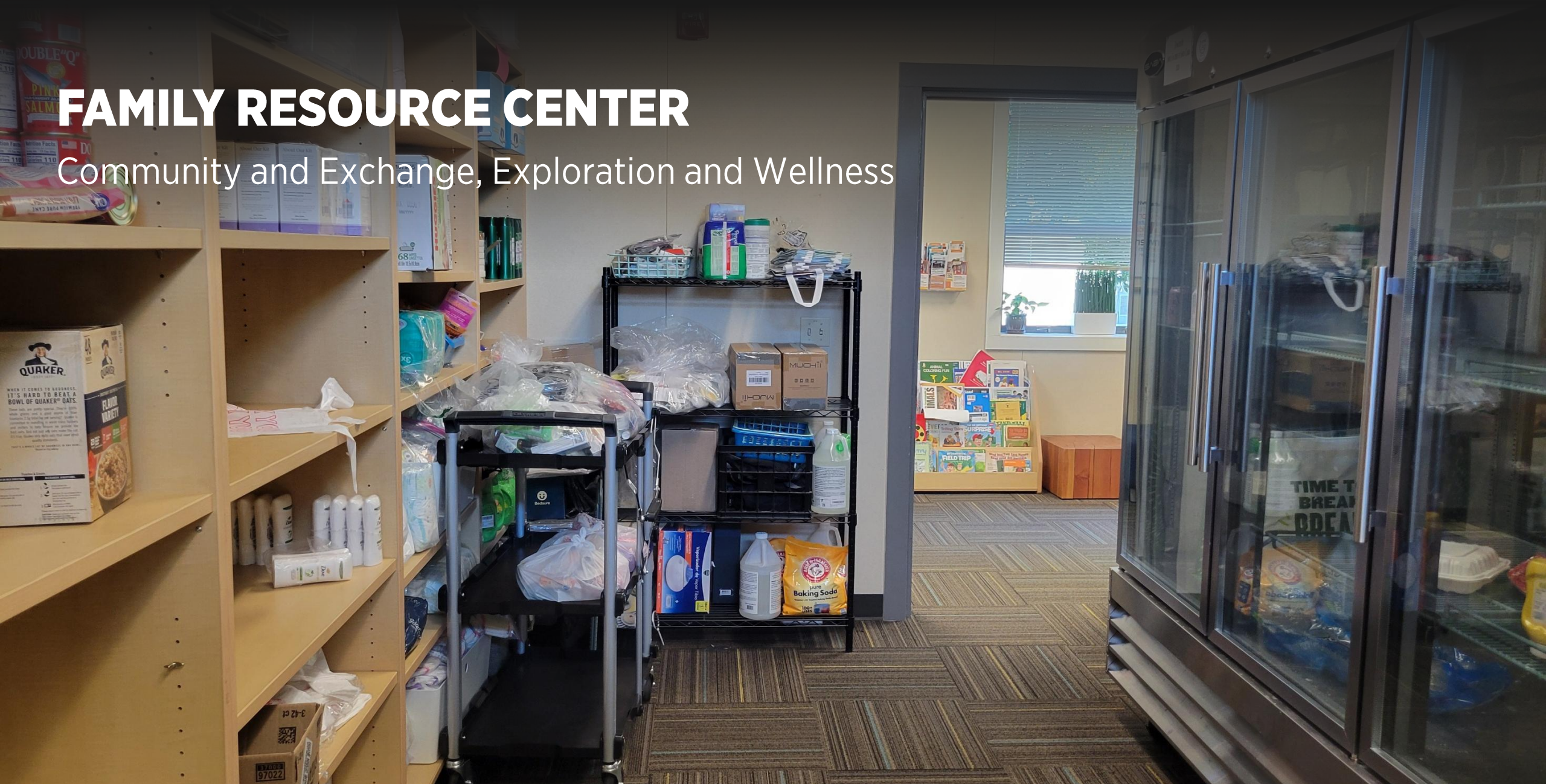
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Community and Exchange, Exploration and Wellness



FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Community and Exchange, Exploration and Wellness



Medium
**You've free'd up
an entire classroom wing**

Now What?

REIMAGINE OUTDOOR SPACES

Exploration and Wellness, Connection and Collaboration



REIMAGINE OUTDOOR SPACES

Exploration and Wellness



REIMAGINE OUTDOOR SPACES

Exploration and Wellness, Connection and Collaboration



Kathleen MacDonald High School, Santa Clara Unified School District

REIMAGINE OUTDOOR SPACES

Structured Instruction



REIMAGINE OUTDOOR SPACES

Structured Instruction



REIMAGINE OUTDOOR SPACES

Discovery and Experimentation



Tarbut V' Torah School, Orange County Jewish Campus

REIMAGINE OUTDOOR SPACES

Exploration and Wellness



Large
**You've free'd up
an entire campus**

Now What?

TEACHER AND STAFF HOUSING

A Deeper Support of Your School Community



Casa Del Maestro, Teacher Housing, Santa Clara Unified School District
KTGY. (n.d.). *Casa del Maestro*. KTGY. <https://ktgy.com/Work/casa-del-maestro/>

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

What else might need to be reconsidered in long-range planning?

The background of the slide is a photograph of a modern building's facade, featuring a series of parallel, slanted architectural elements that create a strong sense of depth and perspective. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, with a gradient from deep blue at the top to a bright, hazy glow at the bottom right.

Thank You