



# My Ravinia

## Why Ravinia Needed Renovation: A Century-Old School, a Future-Ready Mission

By Elliott Miller, Dr. Michael Lubelfeld & Ben Finfer

Ravinia Elementary School has long been a cherished cornerstone of Highland Park's educational and architectural heritage. But after more than 100 years of use — and decades of patchwork improvements — the building could no longer meet the needs of today's students or tomorrow's expectations. Accessibility challenges, outdated HVAC systems, uneven floors, limited classroom space, and insufficient safety features all pointed to one clear need: a full-scale modernization.

To truly appreciate the significance of what is happening at Ravinia School today, we must first understand the remarkable journey that brought us to this moment. The story begins not with triumph, but with a community grappling with difficult decisions about the future of its schools.

In 2016, North Shore School District 112 faced a critical crossroads when voters rejected a massive \$198 million referendum proposal to build a single large middle school. The failure of this referendum sent shockwaves through the district and forced a period of deep reflection about how to move forward. Rather than retreat or abandon their commitment to providing excellent educational facilities, district leaders chose a different path — one that would ultimately transform not just buildings, but the very relationship between the school district and the community it serves.

The turning point came in 2018 with new leadership that brought a fundamentally different approach to facilities planning. Instead of top-down decision-making, the district embraced transparency, community engagement, and fiscal responsibility as its guiding principles. Dr. Michael Lubelfeld, who became superintendent during this transformative period, understood that rebuilding trust with the community was just as important as rebuilding schools.

The district launched an extensive Long-Range Planning Committee process that engaged hundreds of



Ravinia School construction scenes, December, 2024 - June, 2025  
Photo by Elliott Miller

community members in meaningful dialogue about educational priorities and facility needs. This wasn't merely a public relations exercise — it was a genuine effort to listen, learn, and build consensus around a shared vision for the future. Through countless meetings, surveys, and community forums, a new approach emerged that would prove both financially responsible and educationally transformative.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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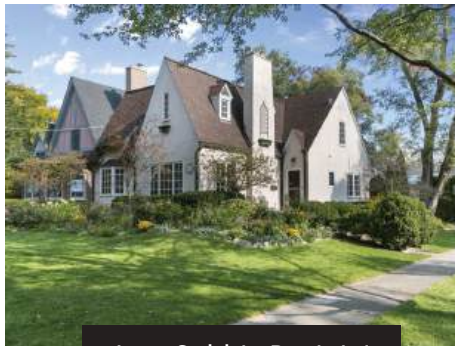
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## Why Ravinia Needed Renovation: A Century-Old School, a Future-Ready Mission (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 1)*

Thanks to overwhelming support in the 2022 referendum, Ravinia is now undergoing a \$40 million renovation designed to bring 21st-century (and possibly even 22nd-century) learning into a school that began in the 19th century and was built in the early 20th century.

Back in 2018, we had a thorough physical condition assessment done for Ravinia School. Areas rated “fair” to “poor,” meaning work should be completed within four years, included plumbing distribution pipes, mechanical exhaust systems, cooling coverage, exterior walls, asphalt/concrete restoration, exterior sealant/flashing, roofing deficits, casework, major equipment and classroom HVAC, lighting/power, fire alarm, and fire protection coverage. From an assessment of core learning spaces, out of 27 elements, Ravinia scored fair to poor in 25 of them! The school needed an update! Core learning spaces encompass the physical features, furniture, equipment, and technology found throughout classrooms, libraries, art and music rooms, dining areas, gymnasiums, and student support spaces — all designed to support health, comfort, and effective learning. In virtually every core learning space, the Ravinia School got a D or an F in terms of a traditional grading scale. The time had come for major interventions at Ravinia School.

Another major need for transformation can be found in looking at how schools are designed for the educational knowledge and research of the time. Ravinia School had undergone several transformations from the 1910s, 1920s, 1930s, 1960s, and 1990s, but that's still a really long time ago. Consider if you will that Public Law 94-142, from 1975, called for the inclusion of educating children with all types of learning styles, including disabilities. If schools were not designed to support children with multiple learning styles and multiple learning needs, and teachers with multiple specialties, then how could the physical site and physical plant of a school keep up with new research on how children learn? The answer is that it could not.

One of the significant needs for improvement in the new Ravinia School was a modernized approach to neuroscience about how children learn, for example. Instead of all of the classrooms being large for 18 to 25

children, as they were in the old building, the new approaches to education call for multiple sizes of classrooms and offices. If a reading specialist, for example, will facilitate learning for five students at a time, she doesn't need a full-size classroom — she needs a small office designed for five.

From an educational perspective, the modernized Ravinia School will provide students with learning environments that support the most current pedagogical approaches. The flexible classroom spaces, advanced technology infrastructure, and improved lighting and air quality create conditions that enhance engagement, creativity, and academic achievement. Research consistently demonstrates that the physical learning environment significantly influences student outcomes, and Ravinia School's renovation positions students for success in ways that extend far beyond test scores.

*(Continued on page 7)*

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## Market Talk: an interview with Michael Weiss from Braeside Market

By Bonnie Wegner

### What inspired you to start this business?

As a local real estate developer and longtime Highland Park resident, I've always believed that development should do more than just fill a physical space and should enrich the fabric of the community around it. When we built Brae House Apartments in the Braeside neighborhood, our goal wasn't simply to create a building, but to create a place that feels connected, welcoming, and rooted in the needs and rhythms of the neighborhood.

From the beginning, we envisioned the commercial space on the ground floor as more than just a storefront. We hoped it would become a community hub where neighbors could grab coffee, bump into friends, attend small events, or simply feel at home. During construction, we were approached by several potential tenants, mostly office users. But while those offers may have made sense on paper, they didn't fit the spirit of what we were hoping to build. We were holding out for something that would add real value to the neighborhood—not just fill square footage but bring people together.

When it became clear that the right tenant wasn't going to present itself, we decided to take a more active role in shaping the space into what we had always imagined. That's what led to the creation of Braeside Market: a locally owned coffee shop and neighborhood market designed specifically for our community that is about fostering connection and serving as a modern-day gathering place where neighbors feel known and welcome.

### What products/services do you offer?

At Braeside Market, we offer the best of both a neighborhood café and a convenient market—all under one roof. Our café serves up daily favorites like locally roasted coffee from Passion House, handcrafted lattes, matchas, teas, and more. Our all-day menu features satisfying breakfast and lunch options, including breakfast burritos, waffle sandwiches, avocado toast, hearty grain bowls, fresh salads, and signature sandwiches like our turkey club and chicken melt.

We also offer refreshing smoothies, acai bowls, and frozen yogurt for a lighter bite.

Beyond the café, our market is stocked with a thoughtful selection of snacks, sweets, household essentials, beer, wine, and seltzers. You'll also find a curated assortment of grab-and-go meals and charcuterie boxes—perfect for Ravinia concerts, picnics, or just an easy, elevated meal on the go.

### Do you own any other markets?

No, Braeside Market is the only market owned by Michael Weiss. However, the café and market operations are run in partnership with Infuse Hospitality—a team with extensive experience managing successful cafés and markets in Chicago. Their operational expertise and deep industry knowledge have made them an invaluable partner in bringing Braeside Market to life and ensuring it runs smoothly, efficiently, and with a strong focus on quality and community.



*(Continued on page 30)*

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## Why Ravinia Needed Renovation: A Century-Old School, a Future-Ready Mission (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 4)*

Every classroom has been reimagined in the new Ravinia for modern teaching and learning. Flexible furniture, improved lighting, upgraded technology infrastructure, and collaborative spaces are replacing outdated layouts. Improved HVAC systems — powered by an innovative geothermal HVAC system — will provide healthier air and better temperature control throughout the year.

The successful integration of cutting-edge geothermal technology with historic preservation shows that sustainability and heritage preservation are not competing values, but complementary goals that can be achieved simultaneously. The careful restoration of architectural details designed by the Pond brothers, Van Bergen, and Jensen, combined with the installation of the nation's first DCL geothermal system in a school, creates a learning environment that is both beautiful and environmentally responsible.

With new classrooms, Ravinia will grow to support three full sections per grade level, ensuring smaller class sizes and more individualized support. This allows teachers to better tailor instruction, build stronger relationships with students, and meet diverse learning needs more effectively.

These updates aren't just about bricks and mortar — they're about equity, access, and educational excellence. Every child deserves to learn in a safe, welcoming space designed for how students learn best today. Ravinia's transformation reflects a broader community commitment to that vision. ■

**Ravinia School Renovation: Before & After**

	<b>Before (Pre-2023)</b>	<b>After (Fall 2025)</b>
<b>Building Age</b>	Core facility built in 1913; last major updates decades ago	Restored historic structure with full modernization
<b>HVAC System</b>	Outdated, inefficient, and inconsistent climate control	Sustainable geothermal HVAC with improved air quality and comfort
<b>Accessibility</b>	Multiple ADA compliance issues; uneven floors	Elevator installed, fully ADA-accessible throughout the building
<b>Classroom Capacity</b>	Limited space; undersized for growing enrollment	Expanded to 3 sections per grade with flexible, modern classrooms
<b>Safety &amp; Security</b>	Lacked secure entry, cameras, and modern fire systems	Secure vestibule, upgraded surveillance, and new fire safety systems
<b>Technology Readiness</b>	Outdated infrastructure for digital learning	Future-ready tech infrastructure and learning tools
<b>Kitchen Facilities</b>	No central food service capabilities	New addition with production kitchen serving the entire district
<b>Learning Environment</b>	Static classroom layout; dated lighting and materials	Bright, collaborative spaces with dynamic design and natural light



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## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved<sup>1</sup>

By Elliott Miller, historian and owner of Ravinia Books, Antiques, etc

### Introduction

The schools of North Shore District 112 have been in need of repairs and improvements for years. In 2022 district voters supported a ballot question that would allow the district to issue \$114.4 million in obligation bonds to fund renovations across all ten district schools, which included upgrades to security, air quality systems, accessibility fixes and general modernization to five of the schools. Lincoln and Elm Place schools were closed in 2016. This leaves the district's oldest and perhaps most cherished, Ravinia Elementary School, which is set to reopen to students and staff at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

District 112 is also making history by providing the first-ever installation in the U.S. of a specific geothermal system known as Direct Closed Loop (DCL). This innovative technology will improve energy efficiency, reduce long-term costs, and create a more comfortable learning environment for students and staff, all while protecting the planet.



2024-25 Ravinia School additions: new kindergarten (left), lunch server room (right), and stairs & elevator (top).

<sup>1</sup> Much of the information in this article is based on my interviews and online research, my prior RNA newsletter articles about Ravinia School, and also "Ravinia School Highland Park, Illinois. Recordation" Prepared by Benjamin Historic Certifications," Susan Benjamin and Deb Carey McIlvain: <https://dnrhistoric.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dnrhistoric/preserve/recordation/highland-park-ravinia-school.pdf>

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## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

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### A Brief Architectural History of Ravinia School

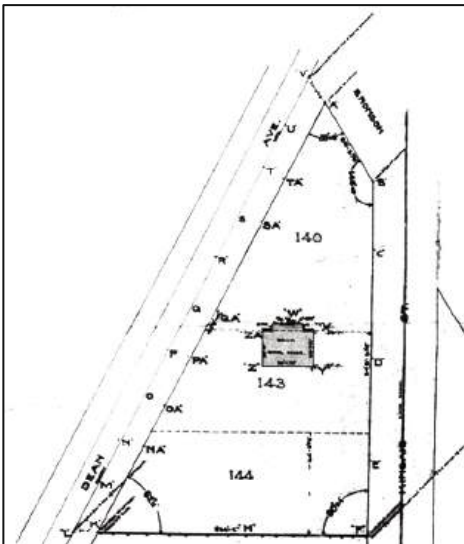
The predecessor of Ravinia School was South School, a one-room framed school house, located at Green Bay Road and Roger Williams Avenue. It was constructed around 1859. By 1896 there were too many students at South School, and it was decided by one vote by residents to purchase land at Dean Avenue for the new school. In 1897 the funding of \$2,700 for a new school house was approved.

### The 1897 Ravinia School House

The new site for the Ravinia School House was at Dean and Roger Williams Avenues. Designed by Chicago architects, Brainerd and Holsman it opened in September, 1897. The exterior of the new building was of beige Chicago common brick with a hipped roof. Its entrance was on the north side. It appears from the only known photograph of the school to have three arched windows on each side. The interior was yellow southern pine. An article in the Highland Park News when the school was opened stated "It is admirably planned, one large room, 48 desks and plenty of floor and blackboard room; desks all face north, abundantly lighted... There is a large entrance hall and two cloak and hat rooms.



A ca. 1912 Washington's Birthday celebration in the 1897 Ravinia School House.



**Left:** A 1912 survey locating the original 1897 Ravinia school house at the corner of Dean Avenue.

**Center:** The 1897 Ravinia School House (left) and the 1913 Pond & Pond School Building (right) as seen from Dean Avenue.

"As to the location, they have a fine lot, triangular, with the house at the base, and the apex some 300 to 400 feet away gives ample playground, with shade trees, etc. The outbuildings and rear yards are admirably arranged..." ("The Ravinia Dedication" Highland Park News, September 17, 1897)

**Right:** In Ravinia at that time, there was no running water. Water came out of a pump well, and toilets were pits in "outhouses" located behind the school.

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## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from 10)*

### The Architects Who Designed Ravinia School and Grounds, 1913 to 2025

As the population of Ravinia increased from 1900 to 1930, a larger school was needed. Beginning in 1913, noted architects were hired to design wings of the school. The Chicago firm of Pond & Pond designed the 1913 and 1925 additions. The current auditorium was designed by John Van Bergen, assisted by Lawrence Buck, replacing the original school house; and in 1998, Millennium Hall was built by Perkins and Will. The current renovation and expansion project was being done by Wight & Company, architects, and Gilbane Construction.



Irving Kane Pond of Pond and Pond (1857 - 1939) was most responsible for the appearance of Ravinia School by designing the 1913 addition and the 1925 main building, which set the standard for the appearance of the rest of the school. Pond began his architectural career as a draftsman in the offices of William LeBaron Jenney, who played a major role in the development of the skyscraper, and then worked as the head draftsman in the office of Solon S. Beman during the construction of the planned Pullman community.

The Ponds gained acclaim as the architects of Jane Addams' Hull House, and three of their buildings have been declared National Historic Landmarks. The Pond brothers worked together for more than 40 years, and their buildings are considered to be among the best examples of Arts and Crafts architecture in Chicago. "Irving long afterwards noted that he learned much about architecture and building construction from this early job, especially how to achieve maximum visual effect at a modest cost through variations in brickwork and coursing, plus changes in surface planes and rooflines."



Jens Jensen (1860 – 1951), who developed the site plan for Ravinia School, is widely recognized as a dean of American landscape architecture. Like Olmsted as well as the firm of Cleveland & French and the work of Ossian C. Simonds, Jensen avoided formal design; rather, he was inspired by the organic forms of the natural landscape.

Jensen left his job as Superintendent of Chicago's West Park System and, in 1909, built his summer house and studio on Dean Avenue at the Cary Avenue ravine. He offered to landscape Ravinia's parks and school. Jensen Park, recently restored, is an example of his naturalistic approach to landscape architecture.

Jensen coauthored a manifesto in which he talks about his philosophy on school landscaping: "We believe that the setting of our school building and its surroundings should bid smiling defiance to all that may be harsh and forbidding in the environment. Each school should have its ample playgrounds screened with native trees and shrubs. There should be grass plats dotted with wayside flowers..."

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## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from 11)*



John Van Bergen (1885 – 1969) designed two additions to Ravinia School--in 1927 and 1938. He was also a member of the School District's Buildings and Grounds Committee. Van Bergen became interested in architecture, and, through family ties with Walter Burley Griffin, was hired as an apprentice in the famous architect's office in Chicago. Griffin had worked for Frank Lloyd Wright before starting his own practice in 1905. Van Bergen was the last employee hired by Wright at his Oak Park studio. His excellent sense of proportion and use of stratified stonework resulted in structures which are so visually striking that they are often mistaken for the work of more well-known Prairie-style architects. Van Bergen also designed Braeside School, one of the few Prairie-style schools.

Perkins & Will is an esteemed architectural firm that was hired by what was then School District 108 to design an addition that became known as Millennium Hall. Completed in 1999, this addition included several classrooms, a large multipurpose room, and a greenhouse.

Their motto is "Captivating school environments that cultivate young minds." Perkins and Will's Lisle Elementary School in Lisle, Illinois architectural awards include: Distinguished Building Merit Award, AIA Chicago Design Excellence Award, 2020, Primary and High School Interior Design Best of Year Award, 2020, and Best Project, K-12 Education ENR Midwest Award, 2020.

### **The Current Renovation Project Team, 2024-25**

The Chicago architecture and planning firm Wight & Company's school projects include Lincoln Elementary School, the oldest and most accessibility challenged school in Elmhurst; Edison Elementary School, also in Elmhurst; Field Elementary School -- a Student-Centered School Designed for Diverse Learning Modalities, and Adlai E. Stevenson High School's Wellness Center. According to its Web site, Wight's emphasis is to apply its "interdisciplinary expertise and team experience promise design and delivery excellence, innovative solutions and unprecedented savings of time and budget." Wight goes on to state about education:

The new education environments embrace different learning modalities and enable flexibility for future changes. Since today's students learn by doing as a much larger part of their day, space for active learning was needed in grade-level "neighborhood" suites and public areas.

The scale of the academic "neighborhoods" allows students to feel part of a much smaller group within the greater whole. Ownership to a neighborhood is further strengthened by the unique feeling of each grade level design. Accent paint, millwork finishes, carpet patterns and custom signage announce living room entries. Furniture selections give students choices and provide comfort in their daily activities.

The delivery of a modern education requires more one-on-one and small group interactions as well as access to social, emotional learning resources and speech, occupational and physical therapy. These specialist interactions are distributed throughout the grade levels with the same positive spirit that is attributed to core learning spaces.

Gilbane is a Chicago construction company that was hired to handle the current construction project along with Wight. Gilbane's recent school projects include East Prairie School District 73 -- New Pre-K-8 School, Skokie, IL; Adlai E. Stevenson High School east building addition; and Reed Custer Community Unit School in Braidwood, IL -- a new K-5 school.

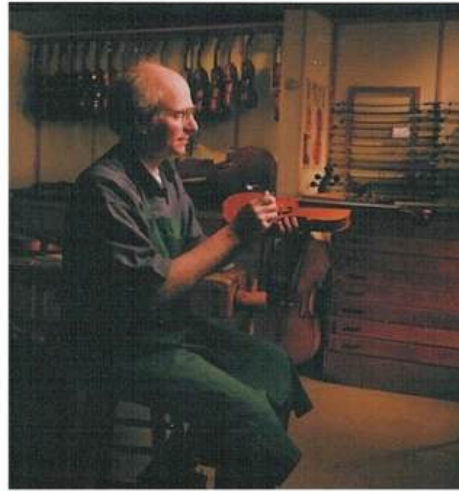
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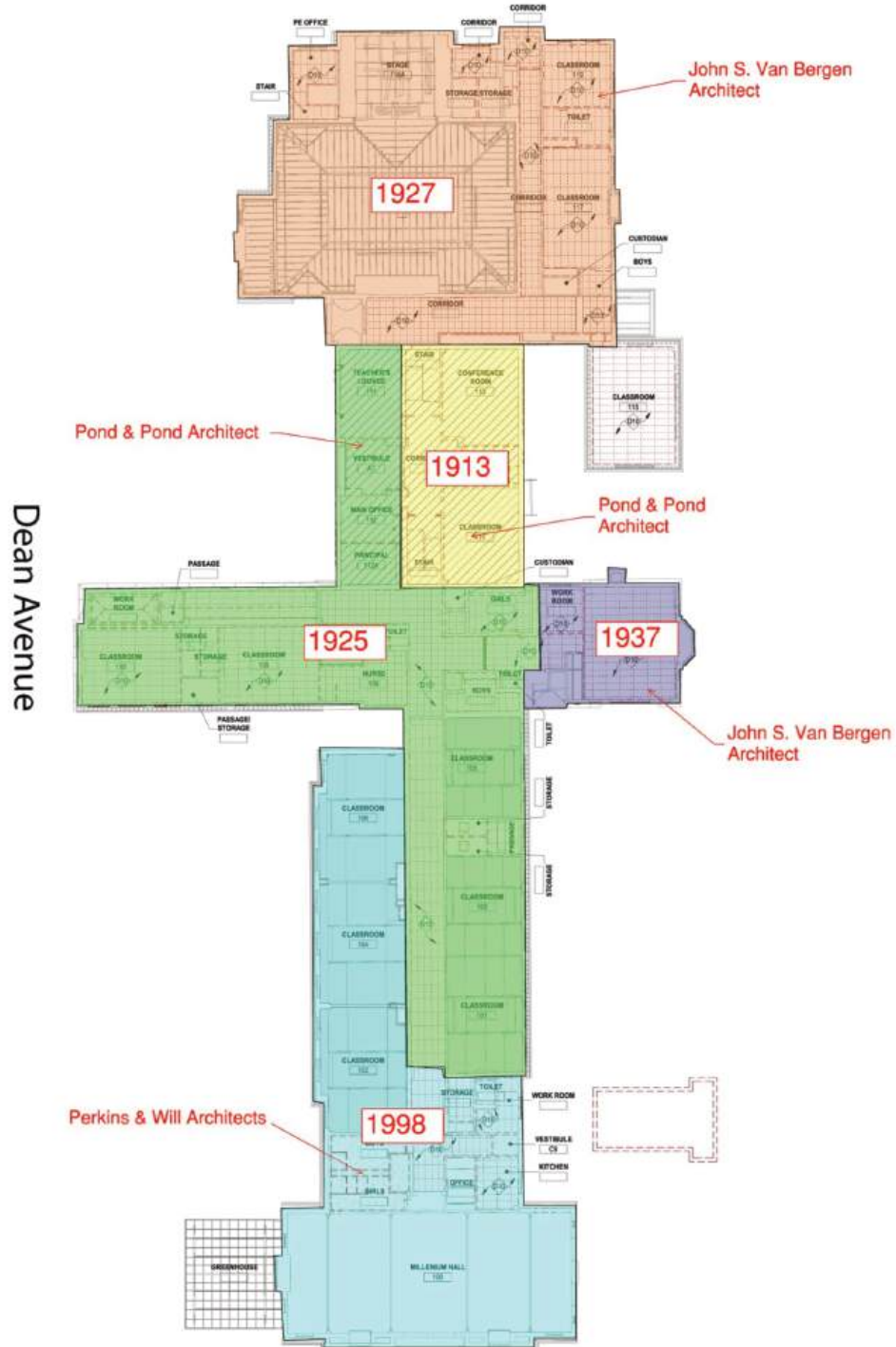
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## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 13)



First floor plan of Ravinia School additions, 1913 – 1998

(Continued on page 16)

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 15)*



*Irving Pond's front façade of the Ravinia main building, 2023 -- before the current renovation.*

The main building designed by Pond & Pond featured a double-staircase to enter the school vestibule -- one side for the girls and the other side for boys, as was the custom of the 1920s. In addition to traditional materials, such as brick, Pond also employed traditional forms such as gabled roofs. His designs embraced geometric simplicity without embellishment, a tenet of the Arts & Crafts Movement.



*A Ravinia School classroom, 1913. Including fireplaces in classrooms was Irving Pond's idea of making a comfortable environment for young children in a classroom that feels like home.*

*(Continued on page 17)*

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 16)*

### Classrooms of the 1920s and 30s



*These stereoscope images illustrate Ravinia School classrooms, music and art rooms from the 1920s and 1930s. At the time, they were appropriate school facilities, but they desperately needed updating. As the years passed, updates were made, but a complete overhaul was now needed. Images from Illinois Digital Archives.*

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## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 17)*

### Jens Jensen's Landscape of Ravinia School

Jens Jensen, the noted landscape architect, whose summer house-studio was on Dean Avenue, volunteered to landscape Ravinia's parks and school.



*Jensen's preliminary landscape plans for Ravinia School, ca. 1925.*



*Two scenes of Jensen landscapes around Ravinia School taken in 1944. Left: The north side of the school with a raised area that was Jensen's players hill, located behind the back stage of the auditorium. Jensen liked to add outdoor play and concert facilities to his landscapes. Right: The rear of the school with stone paths instead of sidewalks. Neither of these features exists today.*

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## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

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### The 2024-25 School Renovations

The past school additions were attractive and functional in their day, but technological and educational demands have changed over the past hundred years. As the building evolved, floors were disjointed, resulting in multiple levels, and while the various architects did their best to design complementary wings, accessibility issues were created. Also, classrooms needed updating with the latest technology such as Interactive touch-screen displays, and additional kindergarten classrooms were needed.



*Groundbreaking in front of Ravinia School, June 11, 2024*

*(Continued on page XX)*

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 20)*

### Major Changes to Ravinia School

As the renovations are nearing completions here is the current state of the school today.



*Concept of the New Ravinia School front façade, 2025 (The front is still under construction)*



*As the renovations approached completion, this is how the front of the school looked on July 3, 2025.*

*(Continued on page 22)*

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 21)*

### Renovated Classrooms

In June, 2025, a line of moving vans arrived at Ravinia School, delivering classroom furniture for the newly-renovated classrooms. This made Ravinia School ready for the teachers to move in.



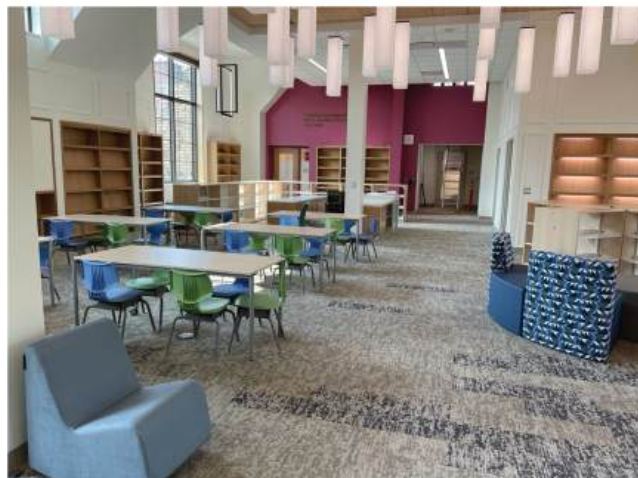
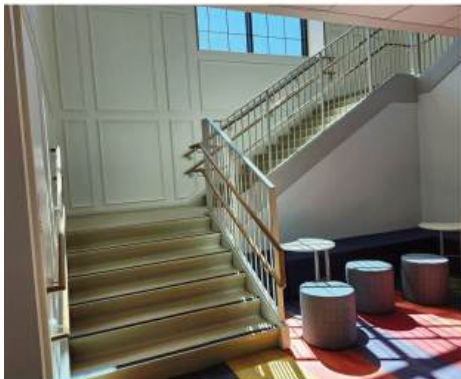
*(Continued on page 23)*

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 22)*

### A New School Entrance

The new school office is to the right as you enter; Rocky Raccoon hangs out on the left greeting the students. Straight ahead a new stairway leads up to the library – a bright, two-story environment.



*(Continued on page 24)*

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 23)*

### Some Common Spaces

From top left: A new conference room has replaced the front stairs, a nook off a hallway, the new kindergarten wing hallway, and the new lunch serving room off Millennium Hall.



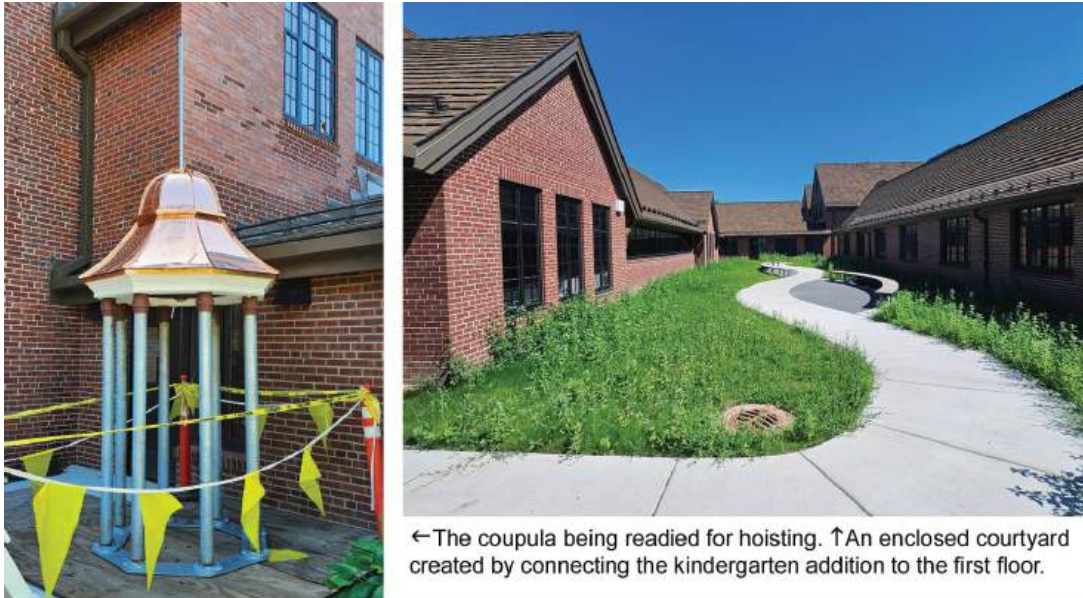
*(Continued on page 25)*

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 24)*

### Exteriors

Here are some scenes outside the school including the enclosed courtyard created by new kindergarten wing.



The new main stairway and elevator and stairs addition as seen on the right in the rear of the school. The brick and gable elements were made to match Irving Pond's work.

*(Continued on page 26)*

## Ravinia School: A Legacy Preserved (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 25)*

### In Conclusion

During the renovation of Ravinia School, the historic architecture was respected while outdated features were updated to meet modern education standards. Following Irving Pond's style of façade, red brick was used for the additions; gables mimicked Pond's roof elements and windows, including two huge clerestory ones, were squared and paned. Roof shingles were installed that are guaranteed for 30 years. The double entrance stairs, an archaic feature, were removed, replaced by a conference room and a more secure entrance to the school.

Improvements made to the interior transformed classrooms into more efficient learning environments for teachers and more comfortable space for children. Dimmable LED lights were installed, paint colors were coordinated, and some bricked-over windows were found and cleared of obstructions for greater light. The school will be accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In one year, a lot has been accomplished.

The building has been completely transformed into a modern, student-centered learning environment. Ravinia School is an exemplary community school. It has served the Ravinia neighborhood for over 100 years. It is through these renovations that continuity is ensured from our generation to future generations. ■

Like conjugating verbs, renovated Ravinia School offers elements of the past, present and future.

-Jeffrey Stern



# Ravinia Reimagined: A School Built on Strategy and Vision

*By Ben Finfer, District 112 Director of Communications and Community Relations*

When the newly renovated Ravinia Elementary School reopens its doors this fall, it will mark the completion of a major step in Phase 2 of District 112's Long-Term Facilities Plan. It will also mark the realization of a vision. Every element of the design, from flexible classroom layouts to sustainable energy systems, reflects the values, goals, and direction set forth in North Shore School District 112's newly adopted Strategic Change Agenda. While the architecture may be new, what's happening inside the building is even more transformative: the creation of a learning environment that is built from the ground up to inspire, innovate, and engage.

Approved by the Board of Education in March 2025 after nearly a year of community input, the Strategic Change Agenda outlines a bold path forward. It redefines what it means to be a public school district by organizing work around three key goals: Student Success and Well-Being, Community Relationships and Partnerships, and Staff Attraction and Development. These priorities are framed by a foundational belief that NSSD112 must operate as a learning organization that is an evolving, responsive system designed to meet the needs of every learner. And that belief comes to life at Ravinia Elementary School.

## **A Learning Organization — In Brick and Mortar**

Our Strategic Change Agenda asks us to think differently about what we teach and how we structure the systems that support learning. That means rethinking space, time, relationships, and tools. The new Ravinia School embraces this mindset with an environment designed to promote flexibility, creativity, and collaboration.

Learning organizations thrive on adaptability, and the new building is full of spaces that can shift and flex with evolving teaching practices. Classrooms are equipped with movable furniture, writable surfaces, and modern technology infrastructure that supports hands-on, student-centered learning.

Shared spaces encourage interdisciplinary teaching and team-based planning, empowering educators to design dynamic experiences tailored to students' interests and needs. This physical flexibility reinforces the district's emphasis on empowering teachers as designers and leaders in the learning process.

## **Goal Area 1: Student Success and Well-Being**

At the heart of the Strategic Change Agenda is our commitment to every child's academic, social, and emotional success. The new Ravinia School reflects that commitment in tangible ways. Natural light fills every room. Noise-reducing acoustics create calmer, more focused environments. Classrooms vary in size and layout to support small-group instruction, intervention services, and inclusive learning models.

Improved air quality through a state-of-the-art geothermal HVAC system ensures a healthier, more comfortable learning experience throughout the year. Equitable access is built into every corner of the school, including ADA-compliant floor alignments, a new elevator, and specialized resource rooms that serve diverse learning needs. Safety upgrades, including a secure entry vestibule and new fire monitoring and suppression systems, create peace of mind without sacrificing the school's welcoming atmosphere.

These features are about creating the conditions for deep, sustained learning. When students feel safe, supported, and seen, they are more likely to take academic risks, engage meaningfully, and thrive.

*(Continued on page 28)*

## Ravinia Reimagined: A School Built on Strategy and Vision (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 27)*

### **Goal Area 2: Relationships and Partnerships**

Strong relationships form the backbone of effective schools. Our Strategic Change Agenda emphasizes authentic partnerships with families, staff, students, and the broader community. The renovated Ravinia building was intentionally designed with these connections in mind.

New common spaces will host everything from parent-teacher conferences to community meetings, while open, transparent design elements invite families into the life of the school. Bilingual signage and accessible navigation features ensure all visitors feel welcome. Staff workspaces are positioned to foster collaboration, and dedicated rooms allow outside service providers, counselors, and specialists to support students more effectively.

Just as the Strategic Change Agenda was built through deep community engagement — more than 225 people participated in the planning process, including over 80 students — the Ravinia renovation is the product of years of input from educators, parents, architects, and facility experts. It stands as a symbol of what is possible when schools and communities work in true partnership.

### **Goal Area 3: Attract, Develop, and Retain Quality Staff**

Great schools need great educators. That's why the third goal in the Strategic Change Agenda focuses on attracting and developing high-quality staff while being good stewards of public resources.

At Ravinia, both priorities are clearly reflected.

With upgraded teacher planning rooms and breakout spaces for collaboration and coaching, the new facility offers staff the tools and environment they need to grow and succeed. Professional learning can now happen in the same types of flexible, tech-integrated spaces that students use, modeling a culture of continuous improvement.

Meanwhile, the building's Dynamic Closed Loop, or DCL geothermal HVAC system — the first of its kind installed in a U.S. school — reduces long-term operational costs while aligning with the district's commitment to sustainability. The decision to renovate and modernize a historic facility, rather than demolish and rebuild, preserved valuable resources and honored the school's rich heritage. These choices reflect the Strategic Change Agenda's call for smart, future-focused resource use that benefits students today and tomorrow.

### **From Vision to Reality**

The transformation of Ravinia is a powerful example of alignment in action. It shows what happens when a school district sets a clear, community-informed direction and uses that vision to shape every decision, right down to the type of windows installed or the placement of a hallway bench. It proves that strategic planning is more than just a document on a shelf. It is a living commitment that can take physical form.

*(Continued on page 29)*

## Ravinia Reimagined: A School Built on Strategy and Vision (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 28)*

And the work doesn't stop here. As students and staff settle into their new space this fall, the building itself will become a tool for implementing the Strategic Change Agenda. School improvement plans will draw on the Agenda's themes. Professional learning communities will use the space to foster innovation. Families will engage with their school more deeply, and students will benefit from environments designed to help them shine.

### A Foundation for the Future

Ravinia's renovation is more than a construction milestone — it's a launch pad. It signals what we value as a district and how we intend to live those values every day. The Strategic Change Agenda reminds us that systems shape outcomes. Now, with this modernized school, we have a system that's ready to shape a brighter future for every child who walks through its doors.

Because at its core, a school is never just a building, it's a promise. And thanks to the combined power of strategic planning and community vision, Ravinia is a promise kept.

To learn more about the Strategic Change Agenda, visit [www.nssd112.org/strategic-agenda](http://www.nssd112.org/strategic-agenda). ■



## Market Talk: an interview with Michael Weiss from Braeside Market (Cont'd)

*(Continued from page 5)*

### **How did you settle on this location?**

As someone who has lived in Highland Park for years, Michael Weiss saw an opportunity to create something meaningful for the Braeside neighborhood. When developing Brae House Apartments, he recognized that the ground-floor space had the potential to be more than just another retail unit and could be a real asset to the community.

At the time, there weren't many local café options nearby, and there was a clear need for a place where neighbors could casually gather, grab a coffee, or pick up quality food and everyday essentials. Rather than lease the space to a traditional office tenant, Michael chose to take a more active role in shaping something that felt personal, intentional, and beneficial to the neighborhood.

### **Will there be anything else coming? Produce? Growth or expansion?**

While there aren't plans for expansion, we're always looking for ways to improve and evolve based on what the community wants and needs. We'll continue to bring in new products that make sense for the space. Items we believe people will enjoy and find useful. If something doesn't resonate, we're not afraid to pivot. We're constantly learning and adjusting to better serve our customers.

We've also recently refreshed our outdoor green space, creating a welcoming area for guests to relax and gather, especially during the summer months. Our focus is on keeping the experience fresh, thoughtful, and community centered.

### **How have you been perceived so far?**

The response so far has been incredibly positive. People are genuinely excited to finally have a local spot in the neighborhood. A place they can walk to, grab a coffee or bite to eat, and feel part of the community. It's been especially great to see how many kids stop by after school and how naturally it's become a family-friendly

destination.

We've always hoped Braeside Market would feel like an extension of the neighborhood, and the early feedback tells us we're on the right track. That said, we're constantly listening and open to suggestions. Community input is so important to us and we want this to be a place where everyone feels welcome and excited to spend time, whether they're popping in or hanging out for a while.

### **Who works for you?**

Our team at Braeside Market is staffed by our operating partner, Infuse Hospitality, who have been instrumental in helping us find the right talent to bring this space to life. They've done a fantastic job assembling a team that's not only skilled, but also genuinely welcoming and community focused.

Leading the charge is our General Manager, Josh Colling, who has been essential in getting the market up and running smoothly. From training the staff to organizing daily operations, Josh has helped create the warm, efficient environment our customers experience every day.

### **Are you on premise?**

Yes—Michael Weiss, the owner, is very involved and stops by the market most days. As a local Highland Park resident, he's deeply connected to the community and takes pride in being hands-on with the space. Whether it's chatting with customers or checking in on how things are running, he's regularly on-site and engaged.

Day-to-day operations are also overseen by our General Manager, Josh Colling, and the team from Infuse Hospitality, who help ensure everything runs smoothly and stays true to the vision of creating a warm, local gathering place.

*(Continued on page 31)*

## Market Talk: an interview with Michael Weiss from Braeside Market (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 30)

### Ravinia Festival offerings?

Yes! We recently launched a special lineup of offerings just in time for Ravinia season. As of June 6th, our charcuterie boxes are available for pre-order through the Braeside Market app, and we also aim to have fresh boxes stocked in-store every Friday for weekend concertgoers.

In addition to charcuterie, we've created a dedicated shelf filled with picnic essentials—think stylish cooler bags, cozy blankets, travel wine bottles, wine mugs, and plastic cups. Plus, we've got a great selection of grab-and-go food options that are perfect for packing up and enjoying on the lawn.

### Target customer?

Our target customer really spans all ages—it's a true neighborhood spot. We see everything from kids stopping in for candy and ice cream, to parents grabbing their morning coffee or household essentials, to concertgoers picking up picnic supplies for Ravinia shows.

Our goal is to be a welcoming, go-to destination for everyone in the community. Whether you're starting your day, planning a night out, or just popping in for a treat.

### Were any other names considered?

Yes, a few other names were initially considered—some that played off music more or leaned into a local train station. But in the end, Braeside Market felt like the right fit. We wanted the name to reflect the neighborhood it's rooted in and clearly communicate that we're more than just a coffee shop. The word "market" helped capture the full range of what we offer, from coffee and food to snacks, wine, and everyday essentials. ■



**Ravinia Neighbors Association  
Membership Form  
2025 - 2026  
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Neighbors—Add your  
Voice!**

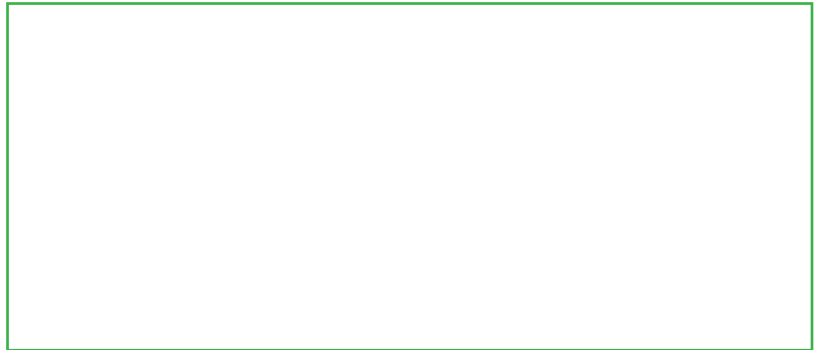
The Ravinia Neighbors Association is one of the oldest and largest neighborhood organizations on Chicago's North Shore, serving the community since 1998.  
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To sign up, simply scan the QR code below and follow the directions or, go to  
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If you have questions. Please contact Doug Purington: [doug.purington@att.net](mailto:doug.purington@att.net)  
Regular RNA meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of every month.

**Our next meeting is to be in-person on Tuesday, August 12<sup>th</sup>.**