



MIKE BROWN / THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

A brick mason lays cinder blocks for one of the education wings on the site of the new Collierville High School under construction near the intersection of Sycamore Road and East Shelby Drive. The more than \$90 million project broke ground in May and is expected to open its doors to students in 2018.

# New \$93.5 million Collierville High School set to open

Opening in August 2018, the 450,000-square-foot building features an open courtyard and the latest technology

**JOHN STAMM** SPECIAL TO THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

The architects designing Collierville's new high school were given a challenging mission. Make it different, not a typical school. Be sure there's a Collierville flavor.

"At that point of time, we really didn't know what that meant," said Sal Feraci, partner of the Renaissance Group, which worked jointly with Fleming Architects.

But soon they would.

The architects were included in Collierville Schools' expansive efforts to listen and learn from administrators, teachers, students and parents, plus the public in online surveys, what would be needed to provide a quality education.



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A construction worker looks over plans as a footing is being poured on the site of the new Collierville High School under construction near the intersection of Sycamore Road and East Shelby Drive.

Off the main hallway is an auditorium with tiered seating for 1,000 and classrooms for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). A library/media center with a large window faces the central courtyard with a 1,000-seat cafeteria to the right, and career and technical education facilities on the left.

The academic area covers two floors with subjects each assigned a wing.

"One of the main things we did in the design," said Feraci, "is to give people a real sense of place within a huge facility. So that when you walk out into a main corridor, either look right or left and you can get yourself orientated fairly quickly and get to where you need to go."

Simpson said the 3,000-seat gymnasium with two practice gyms reflects town history as its rounded roof is similar to the vaulted roof of the historic high school gymnasium.

"There are little things in the school that harken back to the history of the town," he said.

The infrastructure will have a wireless network for an initiative called "1 to 1." Each student will have a device, likely a laptop, to use in classes, connecting with teachers' smart boards and monitors. Fewer textbooks will be needed. There'll be no lockers. Terry said they learned 20 percent of students don't use one, and for those who do, it's usually once a day. The hallways, however, remained 14-feet wide to help traffic flow.

Security is less of a concern because students won't need to leave the building unless going to the nearby athletic facilities, which include a 5,000-seat football stadium and field house.

Feraci said they got a head start on expansion by designing for a 3,500- student capacity instead of the planned 3,000. Enrollment is 2,397 this year with 3,000 projected in six or seven years.

"Everyone has had an impact," said Terry. "It's a very collaborative project that I think we're all going to be really proud of."



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A brick mason lays cinder blocks for one of the education wings on the site of the new Collierville High School. The new facility is designed to accommodate 3,500 students and will feature an auditorium with tiered seating for 1,000 and a 5,000-seat football stadium. The school also will have extra-wide hallways and the latest in technology.

"For the architects, I think it was very eye-opening," said Mike Simpson, Collierville Schools' director of operations.

What they learned shaped their design for a distinctive \$93.5 million school being built for the future but also acknowledgment of the past with touches of town history.

It could attract the attention of other school systems in the region, maybe even nationally, and Greater Memphis. Lakeland school officials want their own high school, and Germantown is considering building an elementary or K-8 school.

"What's involved in the school makes it more unique than probably any school in this part of the country," said Michael Terry, Renaissance Group partner. "It's a lot different from any school we've done from about every aspect."

The price tag is less than the reported \$99.04 million, which included a \$5 million contingency fund and \$4.2 million for road improvements that the town instead is paying.

Scheduled to open in August 2018, the 450,000-square-foot building at E. Shelby and Sycamore features an open courtyard, latest in technology, extra-wide hallways and lots of natural light. Security and functionality were emphasized.