



City of Hudson AHBR Informal Submittal

Western Reserve Academy: Arts and Innovation Center

February 2, 2026

Project Summary:

The existing Knight Fine Arts Center (KFAC) building is a two-story auditorium and classroom facility fronting North Oviatt Street. The primary public entrance is located on the south side of the building and is served by an existing parking lot and drop-off area. The facility encompasses a 20,867 gross square feet footprint and consists of the original auditorium building constructed in 1985, along with a classroom wing added in 1992 to the north. Subsequent improvements include renovations to the lower level of the classroom wing in 2015 to accommodate the Wang Innovation Center (WIC) program, as well as a dedicated entry addition completed in 2016.

KFAC houses a 400-seat auditorium and associated support spaces with a dance studio and art classrooms located on the upper level of the classroom wing. Wardrobe storage and maintenance are accommodated within the finished attic of the classroom wing. Proposed modifications to KFAC are limited primarily to HVAC equipment replacement. Minor interior alterations are anticipated only at locations where the proposed addition interfaces with the existing structure. No exterior modifications to the existing KFAC facility are planned.

Since its inception, the WIC programs have experienced exceptional success at WRA. Of the current student body of 439, approximately 405 students participate in WIC programs. This sustained level of engagement has clearly demonstrated the need for a dedicated expansion to fully support the program. While the building footprint will increase, neither student occupancy nor staffing levels are expected to change. The expansion is intended solely to provide safer, more diverse, and more targeted instructional environments. Additionally, campus enrollment is governed by external oversight and affiliation requirements that limit enrollment based on on-campus housing capacity; therefore, no increase in student population is anticipated.

WIC is a technology-focused makerspace equipped with advanced tools, systems, and software. The program currently occupies approximately 6,000 square feet within the lower level of the classroom wing. The space is organized around three core creative functions: planning, prototyping, and building, housed respectively within a multimedia design space, a prototyping lab, and a workshop. As the curriculum has expanded, these areas have increasingly become multi-purpose, overloaded, and congested with equipment, limiting their ability to effectively meet program demand.

In response to this need, WRA launched a fundraising initiative to support the expansion project. The proposed Arts and Innovation Center addition is designed to address the spatial and functional limitations of the existing facility. A central component of the primary donor's vision is the incorporation of contemporary architectural elements that visually express innovation and reflect the creative,

technology-driven curriculum offered within. These modern design elements are integral to WIC's mission and constitute a core aesthetic requirement of the project.

The expansion is proposed as a two-story addition comprising of an 8,047 gross square feet footprint, located immediately west of the existing classroom wing and fronting Brick Row. The primary massing and secondary architectural elements are classically proportioned to complement the scale, materials, and character of adjacent campus buildings. In response to donor criteria, two contemporary design features have been thoughtfully integrated into the overall composition. While modern in expression, these elements are intended to appear sleek and minimal, incorporating reflective surfaces that mirror the adjacent Brick Row greenspace and surrounding Western Reserve architecture.

The proposed addition will both enhance the existing WIC makerspace curriculum and expand program offerings. The design includes an at-grade student entrance facing Brick Row. The upper-level program of spaces include an AI lab, a food science lab, café, and a digital media lab, all of which represent new or expanded components of the WIC curriculum. A central design and instructional feature is the multi-use stadium seating area that connects the upper and lower levels. This space is intended to function as a flexible learning environment, a student display gallery, a collaborative gathering area, and a centralized communication hub utilizing multimedia technology. The lower level will house key instructional spaces including a robotics lab, print room, and metals shop—each providing critical expansion to existing WIC program capabilities.