

OVERTON BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY INCUBATOR

CITY AREA	South Side
NEIGHBORHOOD	Bronzeville
DEVELOPER	Washington Park Development Group
ARCHITECT	Perkins + Will
PROJECT TYPE	Commercial
PROJECT STATUS	Proposed
EST COMPLETION	Not before 2021

Anthony Overton Elementary School, vacant since 2013, is poised for transformation into a new tech business hub for Bronzeville. The new owner-developer of Overton Elementary, Washington Park Development Group (WPDG) received a welcome infusion of cash in 2018 to help finance the debt on this \$10 million project. Roughly \$1.5 million from Benefit Chicago, a MacArthur Foundation-backed initiative, is [going toward](#) Overton's revitalization. Four other closed schools on the South and West sides are beneficiaries of another \$3.5 million in funding from Benefit Chicago. Additional funding from tax credits and other sources is needed to carry Overton across the finish line.

One of 50 CPS schools shuttered in 2013, Overton Elementary was designed by Perkins + Will in 1963 and recently added to the National Register of Historic Places. Overton was a highly progressive design in its day, with light and bright corner classrooms in three wings connected by glass-walled skywalks. It has great bones, which WPDG recognized when they purchased it from the city of Chicago in 2015. The developer's initial plan was to convert the school to live-work spaces, but the cost of adding numerous bathrooms and kitchens proved prohibitive (some attractive schoolhouses on the North Side have found investors eager to convert them to [market-rate apartments](#), but the vast majority of closed schools continue to languish). The new strategy at Overton reimagines the building with offices and co-working space for up to 40 start-up businesses. This builds on the entrepreneurial legacy of Bronzeville and the school's namesake, one of the most successful African American businessmen of the early 20th Century.



Photo by Erix Allix Rogers



Courtesy of Perkins+Will

Further reading:

[5 shuttered CPS schools to be transformed under new plan.](#)

Kelly Bauer, Block Club Chicago, December 11, 2018.

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