

## BIG PROJECT, BIG MONEY,

Cost overruns and shifting priorities plagued Phase I of work to modernize city schools — and Phase II is off to shaky start

THE \$1.3 BILLION BET EXPANDED 4-PAGE SPECIAL REPORT

# BIG PROBLEMS

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Like an extended episode of *House of Cards*, Rochester's \$1.3 billion program to modernize city schools is laden with political machinations and conspiracy theories. • Who knew? • The program, which got underway in 2006, is meant to bring the city's aging school buildings into the 21st century in three phases of construction over 15 years. It is the most costly public works project in local history. • The first phase of work, in which \$325 million has been spent, is ending now. • The second phase, which will see \$435 million more in work, may start soon. • A six-month investigation by the *Democrat and Chronicle* has found that good work was done in Phase I but it was also beset by cost overruns, truncated projects and mid-stream reallocations of tens of millions of dollars. • Critics complain that poor planning led to money being wasted. \*As Phase II was ramping up, politicians got more involved, and today, the future of Phase II is in limbo. As Frank Underwood would say, "*Nobody's a Boy Scout. Not even Boy Scouts.*"

