



Facilities Planning Frequently Asked Questions

General

1. How did the District involve the community in this process?

The Board of Education asked the District to establish a Facilities Planning Committee, which met approximately 20 times after its inaugural meeting in September 2016. More than 20 community members were on the FPC. The co-chairs of the FPC also reported regularly to the Board about the committee's progress.

The District held three community workshops in February that were open to all residents. Attendees saw a presentation on the options being considered and provided feedback. In addition, a community survey was sent to all District residents, along with MCPASD staff, in April 2018. More than 3,300 individuals completed the survey, which was administered by School Perceptions. The margin of error for all of the results was plus-minus 1.7 percent. The Board has used the results, along with the recommendations from owner Bill Foster, to guide what potential referendum questions would be on the November 2018 ballot.

2. Did the FPC consider one large referendum to address needs at all three levels?

The FPC considered options at all three levels with potential costs ranging from under \$100 million to \$220 million. The survey results indicated approximately 66 percent of respondents favored a referendum up to \$130 million and 55 percent favored a referendum up to \$160 million. A referendum to address the needs at the elementary, middle and high school levels would cost more than \$200 million.

3. When will the next phase (middle school) be necessary?

Enrollment at the middle school (grades 5-8) level is projected to be slightly more than 200 students over capacity by the 2022-23 school year. The current plans suggested by the FPC ranged from adding space at Glacier Creek to keeping some fifth-graders at a new elementary school to building a new middle school on the site adjacent to Pope Farm Conservancy and just south of the proposed elementary school.

The results of the community survey offered in April were inconclusive about what to do at the middle school level. The community prioritized the space needs at the high school and elementary level on the survey so the referendum will focus on the greatest needs.

However, a future phase will likely include a middle school option to deal with growing enrollment at that level. The District will continue to develop short-term plans to deal with enrollment challenges at the middle school level. There will be a time in the not-too-distant future, whether that is 2, 4 or 6 years, when a referendum will be necessary to address the middle school level.

4. Did the District consider phasing its facilities plan over time rather than a single referendum?

The options currently being considered constitute Phase 2 of the District's long-range master facilities plan. Phase 1 occurred after the successful referendum in 2012, when Kromrey was rebuilt and expanded and Glacier Creek was expanded. Phase 3 will take place when the middle school level is addressed again along with other needs.

5. What is the District's plan if the referendum doesn't pass?

The District continues to grow. In the short term if a referendum fails class sizes will increase and spaces not intended to be used for classrooms or other instructional purposes will be repurposed. MCPASD might also be forced to purchase portable classrooms, which put a strain on any district's operational budget. It would also be necessary for the District to redraw internal boundary lines.

The District would also likely go to referendum again in 2019 or 2020. New state statutes limit school districts to two referendum questions annually.

6. When did the District begin planning for this referendum?

Enrollment discussions involving District officials and the Board of Education take place annually over multiple months. The District knew when the 2012 referendum passed that sustained enrollment growth was likely and increasing capacity in existing buildings or building new schools would be necessary in 5-10 years. The Board asked the District to convene a Facilities Planning Committee made up of community members in August 2016. The FPC met for the first time a month later.

7. When will the new facilities be completed?

If the referendum passes in November, construction on the new elementary school and the cafeteria at Park Elementary in Cross Plains would begin in the summer and it would open in time for the start of the 2020-21 school year.

Construction at the high school will be done over two phases, much like what we did at Kromrey. Phase 1, which would add a three-story addition to the north, would open in time for the start of the 2021-22 school year. Once that phase is completed and students can use the space, demolish of portions of the old building would begin along with light and heavy renovation in other parts. Phase 2 would open in time for the start of the 2022-23 school year.

Once CSCS students are moved over to the expanded MHS, work would begin on the current CSCS building to convert it into an Early Learning Center. It would open in time for the start of the 2022-23 school year as well.

8. What is being done to ensure the safety and security of students and staff?

The District has been a leader in safety and security for years. MCPASD was one of the first districts in Wisconsin to have secured entrances at all of its buildings and to put cameras throughout schools. The District has also worked with law enforcement and others to assess what must be done to make sure our students and employees remain safe and be proactive in our efforts.

The operational portion of the referendum includes one-time purchases to upgrade surveillance systems, badging systems, maintenance equipment and software and entry way upgrades.

We also have student and family engagement specialists to assist us in fostering positive relationships. We do understand that we also have to keep our educational community safe from outside threats. With that, we are work hard to consistently assess the safety of our schools from outside threats both physically and emotionally.

Our staff have been trained in a number of programs that focus on building positive relationships with students as well as understanding and teaching students that have come from diverse backgrounds. Some of these trainings are but not limited to Equity Institute, Responsive Classrooms, Trauma Sensitive Schools, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, crisis training, threat assessment training, self-regulation and mindfulness. Staff also receive training annually about what to do in a crisis.

The District also recently was awarded a safety grant from the state to harden our buildings, maintain our security system of communication and cameras. MCPASD plans to submit a second grant application to the state in the fall.

Enrollment Growth

1. How quickly is enrollment projected to grow?

Enrollment across all three levels is expected to grow by about 2 percent annually over the next decade. Since the start of the 2011-12 school year, K-12 enrollment has grown by approximately 750 students – or more than 12 percent -- the highest in Dane County.

2. I understand that several District schools are at or near capacity, but what does that really mean in terms of the day-to-day learning and working environment in those schools?

Three schools – West Middleton Elementary, Middleton High School and Clark Street Community School – are over capacity. Six of the District’s remaining seven schools are within 91-98 percent of their operating capacity.

As schools increase in capacity, class sizes also increase and-or spaces that weren’t intended to be classrooms are used as such. In addition, if the referendum fails, the District would need to consider purchasing portable classrooms, which are a strain on any district’s operational budget.

In addition, while schools may have classrooms to accommodate their current enrollment, they don’t have enough cafeteria, gymnasium, library or hallway space to handle their current numbers.

3. How accurate are the enrollment growth projections being used by the District?

The District hired an independent organization – MD Roffers Consulting – along with using UW-Madison’s Applied Population Lab – to forecast its future enrollment. Each study is confident that based on continued residential development and the attractiveness of the District, MCPASD will continue to have sustained growth over the next decade.

4. Can the District simply accommodate growing enrollments by increasing class size?

The District has guidelines to determine class sizes at every level. The MCPASD class sizes are, on average, near the middle among all Dane County school districts.

Raising class sizes to accommodate growth presents challenges as well. Many of the current classrooms weren't built to handle larger numbers of students. Larger class sizes also pose additional challenges for teaching staff and make it tougher for students to get individualized attention.

5. Can the District relieve pressure from growing enrollments by rejecting non-district resident students attending under Wisconsin's open enrollment law?

Yes, the District can limit how many open enrollment students it takes annually. The District has limited new open enrollment students for many years. There were 106 students – which is less than 1.5 percent of the entire K-12 student population -- who open-enrolled in MCPASD from other Districts in 2017-18. That is about 60 fewer students than 2012 when MCPASD last went to referendum.

Elementary School

1. I'm concerned the elementary school is too big.

The proposed new elementary school would have capacity for 525 students. That number was based on having 5 sections in each grade (K-4) with an average of 21 students per classroom. The District has determined that is the maximum capacity it wants at an elementary school.

Of the District's six elementary schools, four – Elm Lawn (497), Northside (466), Sunset Ridge (485) and West Middleton (443) – have capacity for more than 400 students.

2. Rather than building a new elementary school, is the District able to solve enrollment growth by redrawing boundaries and rebalancing students across all the elementary sites?

The District was 117 students under capacity at the elementary level in 2017-18 and projects to be 66 students under capacity in 2018-19. By the following year, the District will be over capacity at the elementary and by 2022-23, 281 students over capacity.

If the District was to redraw boundaries in the short term, it would mean some students would no longer attend their neighborhood elementary school. In order to truly relieve overcrowding at schools over capacity, entire sections of students in a grade level would need to go to a different elementary school. Simply moving a few students here and there doesn't open any classroom space in those schools that are over capacity.

3. Rather than building a new elementary school, could the District build additions onto one or more of the existing elementary schools?

The FPC considered additions at West Middleton, which is currently over capacity, and Park, which is projected to be over capacity in the next few years. An addition at West Middleton would have increased capacity to 525, but that would have provided only temporary relief as enrollment is projected to be well over that in that attendance area by 2027-28. The Park project is expected to be part of a future phase when space to deal with increased enrollment makes that more pressing.

In addition, each project was estimated to cost more than \$10 million apiece. The FPC determined building a new elementary school with capacity for 525 students was a better financial investment. And while additional classrooms would have increased capacity at Park and West Middleton, it would have also further taxed core spaces in those schools.

4. Why does Park Elementary need its own cafeteria?

While adding a cafeteria at Park doesn't increase capacity, it is an equity issue. Park is currently the only elementary school in the District that doesn't have a separate cafeteria and gymnasium or all-purpose room. The current gymnasium is not available for about 2 hours each day, which causes challenges when constructing a schedule and making sure students have enough physical education time.

5. Why is the District building temporary classrooms at West Middleton?

Enrollment is projected to be more than 520 students at West Middleton in 2018-19. The school needs 25 classrooms next year and only has 22. By building a section west of the school with space for two classrooms, the District will only have to convert one space inside the current building into a classroom to make room for 25.

The plan is should a referendum be successful, a committee would be formed to look at boundaries that make sense and would relieve overcrowding at every elementary school while also keeping neighborhoods together. The new structure at West Middleton would then be used for District storage or for other purposes by the school.

Middle School

1. Why isn't the district addressing middle school capacity needs in November?

The FPC looked at multiple ways to address middle school capacity needs. Those options were included on the community survey. Ultimately, there wasn't one option that had the support of a majority of residents. In addition, the amount supported in the community for a survey did not make it possible to currently address space issues at all three levels.

2. When might middle school needs be addressed?

It is important to remember the middle schools were addressed in 2012. The rebuilt Kromrey has capacity for more than 1,200 students, while Glacier Creek now has capacity for more than 1,000 students. Kromrey is projected to have close to 1,200 students in 2018-19, while Glacier Creek is projected to have around 1,025 students.

The District will continue to monitor enrollment growth at the middle school level.

Phase 3 of the District's long-range master facilities planning includes addressing enrollment challenges at that level, whether it be through an addition to Glacier Creek, a third middle school or another option.

3. What might be the short-term solutions for continued growth in grades 5-8?

In recent years, the District has approved more alternate school assignments so that students who live in the Glacier Creek attendance area can go to Kromrey. This has helped keep Glacier Creek's enrollment closer to capacity. The District will continue to look at this annually, provided it doesn't result in Kromrey facing overcrowding issues.

4. How would crowding in the hallways be addressed at Glacier Creek?

Administration and staff have worked on schedules and looked at daily pinch points. The school has created specific traffic patterns to reduce the number of students passing in a single hallway. Alternate passing times will also be considered and students are monitored by staff in the hallways during all passing times.

High School

1. Why not build a second high school?

The FPC considered a second high school. Ultimately, there were concerns that programming would not be equal between the two schools or that programs currently offered would not be available in two schools of roughly 1,500 students each.

Also, by the time the District purchased land and built a second high school, the cost would be approximately \$160 million or more. There are still infrastructure issues at Middleton High School, which means \$200 million would likely be needed just at the high school level. Pursuing that option would cost also cost significantly more than the community indicated they would support without providing any relief to the elementary space needs.

2. I'm concerned a 3,000-student capacity high school is too big. How will the District ensure high school students receive the attention and assistance they need to be successful?

The current plan for the rebuilt and expanded high school would result in fewer large spaces by having multiple smaller spaces, such as commons areas, eating spaces, student services areas, and library and media spaces.

A number of things are already in development that help personalize the experience for students and help them build connections. These include an advisory program, where students are assigned an adviser for four years; Link Crew, which helps freshmen transition to the high school and have an upperclassmen as a mentor; All-School Resource, which is an opportunity every other day to spend extra time with a specific teacher for support; the same counselor for all four years; invitation-only conferences; campus support staff who work hard to know every student in the building; and student groups that provide an increased sense of identity, community and belonging.

3. Where will students, staff and visitors park as the high school population increases?

A new parking lot will be built north of the current building. Another lot will be added south of the high school. The current plan would result in the nearly the same number of parking spaces that are currently available. We are working with students and staff to come up with additional solutions, along with investigating possible off site park-and-ride shuttle options.

4. What will happen to Clark Street Community School (CSCS)?

CSCS, the District's project-based, charter school for students in grades 9-12, will have its own area inside Middleton High School. It will continue to provide cutting-edge opportunities for students. We believe as we continue to develop partnerships with our business community this will result in even more opportunities for our students.

The current CSCS building will be converted to an Early Childhood Center, bringing together those programs that are currently located in three different MCPASD buildings.

5. I understand the high school needs more space (capacity) to accommodate more students. But why is the District proposing to demolish classrooms and the cafeteria/commons area? Why not keep the existing classrooms and add a smaller addition?

MHS has aging infrastructure. There have been seven additions and numerous renovations since it originally opened in 1929. There are fire alarm issues, flooding on the south side of the building, sewage issues adjacent to Franklin Street and several undersized classrooms. All of these issues would be addressed in the areas considered for demolition.

6. Is the current high school facility limiting the number and/or type of courses available to high school students?

There were 194 course offerings at MHS, including 23 advanced placement courses, in 2017-18 and that number is expected to increase to about 220 in 2018-19. However, while we have comprehensive band, orchestra and choir programs, the space available for those offerings is quite small, especially considering the growth in the number of students who wish to take those courses. Another example is the Family and Consumer Science area, which has inadequate space for the number of students participating and also outdated equipment.

7. Enrollment is projected to increase at the high school. What happens when the newly renovated high school reaches capacity?

If the high school is rebuilt and expanded, enrollment is projected to surpass 3,000 students at MHS by 2027-28. The District will continue to monitor enrollment trends as the high school nears capacity. The District will engage the community in another comprehensive facilities planning process to determine the best next steps.

Process

1. How did the District ensure that community members had a voice in facilities planning process?

The District invited community members to apply to be on the Facilities Planning Committee. More than 60 community residents applied and about 20 were selected. The others received regular communications about the work of the FPC over the 20 months that the group met.

In addition, the District held three community forums in February 2018 where residents could learn about the options being considered and offer feedback. More than 60 residents attended the sessions. A community survey was sent to all District households in April 2018 and more than 3,300 individuals completed the survey. The Board of Education has used the results to determine what referendum questions will be on the November ballot.

Costs/Tax Impact

1. What are operational costs and why are they a part of the plan?

Operational costs are recurring. They would pay for utilities and staffing needs associated with new buildings or expansions. Operational costs are currently projected at \$4.8 million. The District is proposing that \$2.8 million be implemented in 2019-20 with the full amount being taxed in 2020-21. An operational question will be separate from a capital question on the November ballot.

Some of the operational costs in the first two years would also be used for one-time safety and security upgrades and technology upgrades.

A \$4.8 million operational question would result in a tax increase of \$85 per year on a home valued at \$100,000. On the community survey 64 percent of all residents said they would support an operational referendum of between \$3 million and \$5 million to fund daily operations.

Operational costs would be greater if a second high school was built as the District would need staffing to support two high schools and pay for utilities for each one.

2. What are the capital-facilities costs for the referendum?

The Board approved a capital question of \$138.9 million on the Nov. 6 ballot. That would result in a tax increase of \$114 per year on a home valued at \$100,000. The District is assuming an interest rate of 4.3 percent. The loan would be for 20 years. On the community survey, 66 percent of all residents said they would support a facilities referendum of \$130 million.

The 2012 referendum finished ahead of schedule and on budget. Those two referendum questions were supposed to result in a tax increase of \$70 per year on a home valued at \$100,000. The District's mill rate went up 60 cents (or \$60 per year on a home valued at \$100,000) after two years when the tax increases were fully implemented.

3. What is the difference between construction costs and referendum costs?

Construction costs refer to what it costs to build a new school, while referendum costs include design fees, owner costs and contingencies. A school that cost \$204 in gross square feet in 2016, would cost approximately \$223 per square foot due to inflation now.

For example, the proposed new elementary school adjacent to Pope Farm conservancy has construction costs of approximately \$25 million, which works out to about \$225 per square foot. The referendum costs for the new elementary school are \$33.8 million.

The site also has an impact on the referendum costs. There are restrictions on the Pope Farm land due to restrictions including grade changes and roads.

Boundaries

1. Will there be attendance boundary changes?

District officials have repeatedly offered the same message over the past two years. If a referendum fails, there will need to be boundary changes to relieve overcrowding at West Middleton. If a referendum succeeds, there will need to be boundary changes to spread the elementary student population across seven schools instead of six.

2. Will the boundary changes be a part of the referendum question?

Boundary changes will not be a part of a referendum question in November. Rather, after the referendum is approved and the projects are definitely moving forward, the District will develop a committee made of community members to look at the current boundaries and make recommendations about changes.

Community Impact

1. Should the referendum pass, how will the District make these facilities into community assets?

Should the referendum pass, the District will explore innovative ways to open its new facilities to community members, businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs. The District believes its facilities should serve the entire community.

2. Will the Performing Arts Center still host community arts activities?

Yes, the Performing Arts Center will continue to host community activities. The PAC is currently used more than 325 days a year. During the community forums there were questions about would any new construction detract from the current exterior of the PAC. The architect at Eppstein Uhen Architects have worked to make sure the future construction will not detract from the PAC's exterior.

Voting

1. When will the referendum be held?

The two referendum questions are on the Nov. 6 ballot. The questions are on the back side of the ballot. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.

2. Where do I vote?

The location depends on the municipality and-or ward you live in. Find out where you vote on the [My Vote website](#).

3. When does absentee voting take place?

Absentee ballot applications are accepted until the Thursday, Nov. 1 by 5 p.m.

4. When does early in-person voting take place?

In-person absentee voting ends on the Friday before the election. It takes place from Oct. 2 to Nov. 2. Check the daily hours at your municipality offices.