



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Nancy Kunkler (262) 335-5459

nkunkler@wbsd-schools.org

West Bend School Board Reviews Facilities Assessment

West Bend, WI – At the West Bend School Board’s work session on December 11, a summary presentation on the findings of a recently-completed districtwide facilities assessment by Eppstein Uhen Architects (EUA) was presented and discussed. The West Bend School District has been undergoing a comprehensive review of its school district buildings and campuses since July 2023. This assessment is the first step in the long-range facilities planning process. There are three primary components of the assessment:

- **Building Conditions Evaluation:** A detailed examination of the current status of electrical, plumbing, mechanical, or other vital building systems, as well as exterior doors, windows, roofs, and site components such as parking lots, playgrounds, etc.
- **Educational Adequacy Assessment:** An analysis of how well the district’s facilities support teaching and learning objectives.
- **Building Capacity Review:** An examination of each building’s student capacity and how efficiently the district’s schools are being used today.

The district will share the facilities assessment and preliminary cost estimate findings with staff and the community in February and March and work to gather feedback about priorities. This input will then inform and guide the development of a long-range facilities plan.

“I want to reiterate that engaging district residents and staff is critical to developing a long-range facilities plan that our community can stand behind,” said Wimmer. “As this process unfolds, the district is committed to keeping our community informed and involved. We have not yet begun to consider potential facilities solutions and we firmly believe our plan needs to reflect community values and priorities. We hope a variety of district stakeholders join us as we continue through this process in the coming months.”

The districtwide key findings include:

Building Conditions

- Overall, despite their age, the West Bend School District buildings have been well maintained with consistent annual capital maintenance investments helping to maximize their current conditions. This is most evident at Silverbrook Intermediate and Badger Middle due to large projects within the last 15 years and recent mechanical upgrades at McLane Elementary and Decorah Elementary.
- Eight of 10 district buildings have significant sections that are more than 50 years old. Portions of the Jackson and McLane buildings are now close to 100 years old.
- Due to the age of the buildings, many of the basic building systems (roof sections, windows, doors, mechanical/electrical/plumbing systems) have reached or exceeded their anticipated useful life.
- Districtwide, interior finishes such as carpeting, flooring, and paint need significant repair or replacement due to many years of student use.
- The two West Bend high schools are contained in one building, which is very large in comparison to the other district buildings. Tackling large capital maintenance items on an annual basis is naturally more challenging in this building due to its overall size and scale.
- Jackson Elementary School has more significant ADA issues such as an inaccessible main entry and very limited parking, which contributes to making this building score the lowest overall.

Educational Adequacy

- Most district buildings lack advanced secure entry sequences (beyond locked doors, intercoms, and cameras) and/or redundant layers of safety and security throughout the building.
- Many district buildings and sites have issues with congestion, traffic queuing, and flow due to site limitations.
- Shared multi-purpose spaces such as gyms and cafeterias at some schools create high demand and congestion, and limit scheduling opportunities.

- Special Education programs are often served in former full-sized classrooms or other spaces not designed for this kind of instruction.
- Many classrooms at East and West High School are undersized and lack natural daylight, as well as at some of the elementary schools.
- Most schools have little to no breakout space for small and large group work or individual instruction, which limits teaching methods.
- Districtwide, furniture is typically worn, heavy, and inflexible.
- Library spaces throughout the district (with the exception of East and West High School) generally have not evolved over the last 30 years, remaining very traditional in structure and functionality.

Capacity

- In terms of space, all district schools are under capacity. There is room for additional students in all buildings.
- Buildings generally lack student common space and resource areas.
- High school classrooms are generally undersized for the number of students served.

Based on the facilities assessment prepared by EUA, Findorff is now developing preliminary cost estimates associated with identified building condition needs only (not addressing educational adequacy or capacity) and will present this information to the school board on January 22, 2024.

“Understanding preliminary cost benchmarks associated with basic building needs is important as we continue to move forward with long-range facilities planning,” noted Superintendent Jen Wimmer.

For more information about the facilities assessment and long-range planning process, please visit the district website at west-bend.k12.wi.us.