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Columbus City Schools Develops a Facilities Master Plan: A Nonpartisan Fact Sheet

May 5, 2016

Condition of Columbus School Buildings

- Columbus City Schools (CCS) operates 109 schools. Of those, 43 are new or completely renovated schools funded through bond issues approved by voters in 2002 and 2008. An additional three buildings are under construction, for a total of 46.
- Engineers and architects retained by the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) determined that the average age of Columbus school buildings is over 55 years old. OSFC uses a Facility Condition Index (FCI) to measure the condition of a building by comparing the cost of renovations to the cost of replacement. A higher number reflects a worse condition – when the FCI exceeds 66%, a building is recommended for replacement rather than renovation. Over 90% of the elementary schools, 100% of the middle schools, and 60% of the high schools would qualify for replacement or historic renovation.
- CCS reports that roof replacement needs are projected to be over \$47 million for nine buildings over the next five years. No state-matching funds are available for emergency repairs.
- OSFC's goal is to place every student in a new or renovated school.

Enrollment Trends

- Between 2000 and the 2014-2015 school year, K-12 enrollment in the district fell from 63,589 to 49,841, but overall enrollment has been stable the past five years, increasing slightly this school year.
- Current enrollment numbers are posted on the district's Digital Dashboard at <http://ccsdatazen.trafficmanager.net/viewer/content/dashboard.html>
- In response to falling enrollment, the school district closed five schools in 2014 and has closed over 20 schools since 2000.

Qualifying for State-Matching Funds

- OSFC will provide 30% matching funds to renovate or replace K-12 schools that are designed and built to a statewide standard.
- The state will not share the cost for prekindergarten classrooms, fixed-seat auditoriums, or some sports facilities. These have to be financed with local funds.

This fact sheet is available at www.KidsOhio.org and will be updated as new information becomes available.

Facility Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee

- An Ad Hoc committee of 50 neighborhood and community leaders was appointed by the School Board in January 2016. This committee is reviewing nearly 100 different options for a district-wide modernization plan, including changes in attendance boundaries, grade configurations, and building sizes.
- A list of members can be found at <http://www.dejongrichter.com/ccsoh/6-2/ad-hoc-committee-members/>
- A survey of more than 1,700 people found that a majority of respondents preferred a “traditional” grade configuration of prekindergarten-5 in elementary school, 6-8 in middle school, and 9-12 in high school. Currently, the district has more than a dozen schools with other grade configurations.

Timeline

- During May, the Ad Hoc Committee will begin narrowing options, drafting potential recommendations, and developing a timeline for a 15-to-20-year facility master plan.
- Columbus City Schools must finalize its master plan by July 11 if a school facility issue is to be part of a November 8, 2016, ballot issue. The district might consider combining a facility bond issue with an operating/permanent improvement levy in 2016, as it did in 2008. The district could also place a facility bond issue on a 2017 or 2018 ballot.
- In the past, Columbus has issued bonds – similar to a home mortgage and paid back through local property taxes – to pay for modernized schools. The District treasurer estimates that one mill is expected to yield \$8-\$9 million.

Opportunity for Comment

- In April, five community engagement meetings held throughout the city involved hundreds of parent, teachers, and neighborhood leaders who commented on draft options.
- There will be a second round of public meetings on May 23 and 24.
- More information is available at <http://www.ccsoh.us/FMPAdHocCommittee.aspx>