AUSD COMMUMNITY BULLETIN

What is a Facilities Master Plan?

Plus: Why do need one? And how are they developed?

Due to the age of our school facilities, the Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) is considering putting a bond measure on the ballot next year. That bond would pay for modernizing, renovating, and, in some cases, replacing aging school facilities across the district.

In order to plan for that potential bond (and get matching funds from the state), we need to have a long-term "Facilities Master Plan" in place. This plan will essentially provide a blueprint of what our schools will look like and how they will function for the next several decades. It will be based both on the facilities assessment work completed in 2012 and on deep community engagement around educational, technological, and safety priorities for the district's schools.

Facilities Master Plans (and the conversations around them) can sometimes get dense, as they involve issues of engineering, architecture, and pedagogy. To make it easier for our community to understand – and begin to get involved in – this very important next step for our district, we have created an FAQ about this process. We will send many more updates to the community over the next several months, so stay tuned for these bulletins. And please check the Facilities Master Plan page on our website often!

What is a Facilities Master Plan?

A Facilities Master Plan is a set of recommendations for how a school district will modernize, renovate, or replace its facilities. Such plans are not just about designing buildings, however. Aligned with both a district's education program and the community's needs, a good Facilities Master Plan presents an opportunity to create a well-considered plan for a school district's future, as opposed to putting a series of short-term, emergency measures in place on an as-needed basis.

Note: The state mandates that school districts have FMPs in place in order to receive matching funds for new construction.

How are Facilities Master Plans used?

Most Facilities Master Plans are developed in preparation for a bond campaign to raise money to improve a school district's facilities. A good Facilities Master Plan is vital for strategizing about how to structure that bond and gather community support for it. Here in Alameda, the school district is considering placing a bond for renovating school buildings on the ballot in November, 2014.

How are Facilities Master Plans developed?

Facilities Master Plans are created via a series of steps taken over the course of several months. Those steps include:

1. "Facilities assessment" – This is a comprehensive review of the state of all buildings across a district. (AUSD completed this step in January, 2012.)
2. "Demographic assessment" – Looking at demographic trends and planned developments in the community, demographic experts make projections for enrollment that are then compared to the current capacity of the school district. (AUSD completed a demographic assessment in 2010; this needs to be updated but not entirely redone.)
3. "Ed Specs" – A committee comprised of teachers, administrators, and district staff creates a long-range plan for the district's educational vision, goals, and programs, as well as a general plan for how facilities should support those goals and programs.
4. "Community Outreach I" – Parents, neighbors, district employees, and other community members have a chance to talk about what they'd like to see in their schools. How this input is gathered depends on the budget and the community, but often it takes place on a site-by-site basis (i.e., public meetings are held at the school sites so that parents, teachers, staff, students, and neighbors can meet with architects and talk about their ideas for site improvements). The architects then create individual campus plans based on the community's needs and concerns.
5. "Community Outreach II" – Community members meet in larger forums to prioritize the facilities work across the district. For instance, a community may decide that of all the work that needs to be done across a district, the most important priorities are safety, technology, and collaboration spaces. Or they may focus on science facilities, performance spaces, and aesthetics. Because every community is unique, the priorities for each community are also unique.
6. "Facilities Master Plan" – Drawing on community feedback, the prioritization process, and the direction of the Board of Education, the architects create a

comprehensive master plan that directs what work will be done when across the school district.

Don't we already have a Facilities Master Plan?

We have one plan that was created in 2002 (in preparation for a bond), updated in 2005, and then updated again in 2010. It does not include all the elements that a formal Facilities Master Plan should include. For instance, it lacks community input. It also lacks any school-specific plans for the future.

How long does a Facilities Master Plan take?

The full process can take 12-18 months. However, because AUSD has already completed some of the work, architects are now estimating that this could take about 6 to 8 months.

Who has final say over what our Facilities Master Plan looks like?

The community does. The Board of Education will make the final decisions on what the Facilities Master Plan should include, but the community gets a tremendous amount of say about what it wants for its schools. The architects respond to what the board and the community want. They will not impose a design on the district.

When does the actual design work begin?

That would not happen until after a bond is passed. But as part of the community outreach, architects will brainstorm with the community to talk about (and then produce visuals of) possible "design solutions" that could help improve and modernize our school sites and our educational programs.

Upcoming District Meetings:

Tuesday – October 8 – 6:30pm
Regular Board of Education Meeting
(City Hall)

Tuesday – October 22 – 6:30pm
Regular Board of Education Meeting
(City Hall)