



FACILITIES MASTER PLAN - GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Think Along - March 13, 2018

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

On March 13, 2018, the Facilities Department hosted a “Think Along” session with the [Facilities Master Plan Governance Committee \(FMP-GC\)](#) which is charged by the Board of Education to provide guidance to Saint Paul Public Schools on the district’s [Five-year Facilities and Maintenance Capital Implementation Plan \(5YP\)](#). The 5YP is a rolling plan prioritizing facility improvements for the District’s 73 buildings, 7.5 million square feet, and over 500 acres of land to provide students, staff and community members with high-quality, safe physical environments.

Each year, the FMP-GC provides input on emerging needs and factors that impact 5YP project priorities and budget decisions. Participants included principals, teachers, parents/guardians, a student, community members and SPPS staff representing key departments. The following summarizes participant input on this year’s discussion topics:

1. Outline how a **newly-acquired middle school** can best alleviate capacity shortages for middle school students in the city’s east side. (The [Crosswinds School](#) was recently purchased by the District to help alleviate the need for an additional middle school.)
2. Determine how **underused elementary facilities** might be maximized for the betterment of school communities and neighbors.
3. Further define **equity measures** to better determine how capital projects are fairly prioritized.

Middle School: Guidance on Growth and Alignment

SETTING SPPS MIDDLE SCHOOLS APART FROM COUNTERPARTS

To set the Crosswinds Middle School, and other middle schools, apart from their counterparts, participants suggested that learning needs should be met through varied and flexible spaces that are spacious and inviting. In addition, ample work stations and quality spaces should be provided that give students the room to explore and learn a variety of new skills and subjects. Considerations should also be given to accommodating both the significant physical growth stages of middle grade students and the emotional-developmental needs of transitioning from an elementary to middle school experience.

Participants also expressed the desire for the neighborhood to embrace schools and students to create a broader sense of family and community. Suggestions included reaching out to involve the community more directly in helping the school and providing consistent after-school programs to engender positive experiences and counteract negative perceptions.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR NEWLY-ACQUIRED MIDDLE SCHOOL

Considerations for a new middle school included ensuring pathway and programmatic alignment; keeping grade levels separate; and the availability and transportation to after-school programs. On a physical/space level, providing quality, “peaceful,” open-floor spaces were mentioned while recognizing the need to align the development of the physical environment to available funding. Equitable program funding was also discussed to ensure nearby programs such as Battle Creek and Parkway middle schools continue to thrive alongside Crosswinds.

MEETING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF EAST SIDE FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

Providing accelerated programs and mirroring successful charter school programs in the area were suggestions for meeting the needs of the East Side community. Taking time to better understand the unique character and cultural roots of the East Side to foster welcoming programs that embrace diversity were suggested, along with the need to address economic barriers.

Elementary School Buildings: Guidance on Maximizing Opportunities

HOW ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS MIGHT HAVE A LARGER ROLE IN COMMUNITIES

Thoughts on how elementary schools can be positioned to be more prominent in respective communities generated ideas around expanding program offerings such as community education and Early Childhood Family Education; providing facilities for recreation opportunities and community events; using elementary facilities for wrap-around services for the community; and targeting programs to seniors. Several comments addressed traffic and transportation considerations such as walk/bike to school programs and the need for safer traffic control methods around elementary schools. Leveraging partnerships with colleges and universities, along with the City of Saint Paul, were mentioned. Additional ideas included the use of grounds for community gardens and surveying neighbors for their ideas.

HOW TO BETTER SERVE UNDERUSED ELEMENTARY SITES

Ideas on co-locating district and non-district based programs included expanding popular gifted and talented programs to nearby underused facilities; expanding early education and child care programs; providing community health care services; partnering with libraries and parks; and providing spaces for cultural events, church groups, and programs for the elderly.

Ideas for increasing enrollment at underused schools included highlighting the advantages that SPSS has over charter schools such as successful, rigorous programs like gifted/talented and International Baccalaureate. Also discussed was the need to examine school choice as it relates to the unintended consequences that numerous magnet program options have on some community schools, which may put them at a disadvantage. The need to reinforce the surrounding community’s support of

neighborhood schools was mentioned; specific suggestions included creating community school identities and empowering community schools to reflect their neighborhoods.

Defining Equity Measures for the Facilities Master Plan

In developing additional equity measures to guide decisions on how to fairly prioritize projects, suggestions included examining how different students (based on culture, race, gender, etc.) react to design and facility environments, and the impact design might have on student behavior; evaluating how well facilities provide a welcoming and safe atmosphere; and evaluating the design's flexibility and resource distribution such as furniture and variation of types of spaces.



At the Think Along, 47 participants shared their thoughts on key questions impacting the annual update to the Saint Paul Public Schools' [Five-year Facilities and Maintenance Capital Implementation Plan](#).

Highest Hopes

The list of words below was generated by participants when asked to choose one word to describe their highest hopes for the “Think Along” session and how their input will impact facility decisions for Saint Paul Public Schools.

Aligned	Fun	Nurturing
All (healthy)	Fun/Interactive/Joy	Organized
Authentic	Future Focused	Participation
Belonging	Inclusion (4)	Preschool/Birth – 5
Better	Identity	Purpose
Care	Innovative	Respectful
Comfortable/Supportive	Inspiring	Safe/Equitable/Enrollment
Community	Intentionality	Self-Authoring
Engagement (2)	Joyful Learning for All	Sense of Place
Enrollment	Legacy	Transparency
Focused	Multi-Functional	Welcoming