

Facility Study and Master Plan
Executive Summary

Vernon Public Schools



FALL 2023



BACKGROUND

Friar Architecture Inc. was engaged by Vernon Public Schools to prepare a comprehensive 10-year facilities study and master plan for their seven schools and three additional District-maintained buildings.

The study was designed to answer three essential questions:

- 1.) Identify major facilities projects that will be required in the next 10 years. For the purpose of this analysis, the threshold for a major project was set at \$150,000
- 2.) Assess the condition of current buildings to plan for any major school construction and renovation projects to ensure they will meet the future needs of Vernon's projected student population. This includes a comprehensive determination of all schools' infrastructure and capacity.
- 3.) Provide an initial plan to move forward and prioritize projects based on this assessment and findings.

The information gathered can be used to guide decisions on school development and ensure the school facilities promote:

- Efficiencies of facility maintenance and energy savings
- Effectiveness of resources to ensure no school disruptions
- Targeting school populations to maximize State reimbursement of renovations.

STUDY METHODS

Friar Architecture partnered with Consulting Engineering Services (CES) to conduct this comprehensive assessment during the Summer of 2024. The study included:

- Inspections and walk-thru of each building with a multidisciplinary team
- Incorporation of data from the recently completed HVAC commissioning study
- Evaluating the Existing Conditions of the facilities in contrast with a 20-year life expectancy
 - Verifying all floor plans and assessing all building systems, including but not limited to, Architectural, Structural, Mechanical systems, Security, and Technology
 - Assessing compliance with current Codes and the Americans with Disabilities Act (Section 504)
 - Incorporating data from other studies, including: VPS Hazardous Material reports, the Roof Asset Management Reports by The Garland Company, and the Ventilation Assessments by Consulting Engineering Services.

A binder with detailed findings, analysis, and recommendations was created for each of the ten buildings. This effort resulted in a total facility study report of 1,728 pages.

ASSUMPTIONS

The study used the following assumptions and data to provide the conclusions and recommendations:

- A minimum 20-year useful life of the buildings and all systems based on State guidelines
- Compliance with applicable Building Codes based upon the proposed work
- Prowda Enrollment study dated January 2022
- NESDEC School Year 2023-24 Enrollment Projection Report
- Current (FY2024) construction cost reimbursement formula from the State of Connecticut Office of Grants Administration.

HIGHLIGHT OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.) The newest school in the Town of Vernon, Center Road School, was constructed in 1969. Many of the buildings will require considerable renovations and updates in the next ten years due to the age and condition of the structure and many of the original systems.
- 2.) Many of the mechanical systems will require replacement in the next ten years as they are original to the buildings and do not meet current industry standards for ventilation.
- 3.) Based on the enrollment studies and analysis of existing space, the District's enrollment and space needs are trending flat. There are no major increases or decreases projected for the next ten years. However, additional classroom space may be required if the District chooses to expand Pre-Kindergarten or other programs.
- 4.) Maple Street School is approaching the end of its useful life. The building is not compliant with current Building Codes and it would be cost prohibitive to upgrade the building to meet Code. The school is also not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and lacks an elevator allowing access between the floors. The site lacks adequate parking, and adjacent land is not available for expansion or further development. Additionally, due to the age and condition of the building, there are extensive mechanical and structural concerns that would need to be remediated. Maple Street School is currently ineligible for additional school construction funding from the State due to its lack of compliance.

- 5.) Consideration should be given to the consolidation of two elementary schools. The efficiencies of larger school buildings include reduced expenditures in the areas of staffing, transportation, maintenance, and energy as well as providing greater flexibility with enrollment variations between grade levels from year-to-year. Northeast School has the most space available for a potential addition to a current site.

OPINIONS OF PROBABLE COSTS

Based on the findings and recommendations of the study, initial estimates were generated for planning purposes. The projected Project Costs to undertake the collective recommendations for building improvements over the next 10 years amount to approximately \$120M in 2023 dollars, without escalation factored in.

In conjunction with the facility directors, the recommendations at each building were analyzed to identify individual Capital Projects of +\$150,000 over the next 5-10 years. The projected Project Costs for these individual improvement projects amount to approximately \$108M in 2023 dollars, without escalation.

Each building's report includes a comparison of the cost for the recommended work to that of industry standards for \$/sf repairs at a building of similar construction and size. Also provided is a comparison with the cost to replace the existing building with a new facility of similar construction and size, excluding site costs.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Our analysis has determined that there will be extensive needs for renovation, construction, and repairs at the subject properties over the next ten years. Included in the facility report for each building are the detailed assessment, initial cost estimates, and recommendations for prioritization of work.

Implementation of the Master Plan will require further strategy formation and timeline planning with the District to define the recommended projects, and align proposed capital expenditures with yearly budgets over a 5-10 year timeline. This would include development of the individual project budgets to incorporate projected escalation costs and forecast potential State Reimbursement.