

FAQ
Building Project 2024-2025
New School Kitchen, Cafeteria, MS Science Room, and Flow of Traffic

What is the school looking at doing with new construction?

Through strategic planning over the past 4 school years, the EPJ school district identified many needs in the district. We have prioritized the first phase of our program after failing a bond attempt in 2022. The first phase includes building a new kitchen and cafeteria (The cafeteria will be a multi-purpose space that also provides an elementary court for elementary practices), improving the flow of traffic on the east side of the school, and remodeling the old kitchen to provide a new MS science lab.

Why is the school looking at this project?

The school district has run needs assessments in the past few years in the community. Items identified consistently were: The need for a better kitchen/cafeteria space, the flow of traffic, and the need for some middle school renovations. Moving the kitchen and the cafeteria has the potential to free up space in the middle school as well as provide space for eating and changing lunch schedules. The traffic flow could change middle school drop-off locations and kindergarten drop-off. It may also provide more parking for events etc.

Does the district have a timeline for new construction?

The construction timeline typically depends on various factors such as weather conditions, permits, and unforeseen circumstances. However, we anticipate completion by the start of the 2025-2026 school year. We currently have accepted underwriters for certificates, have drafted documents to advertise for a Construction manager, and will provide documents of the view of the new cafeteria and kitchen.

Will the construction impact daily school activities?

We are committed to minimizing disruptions to daily school activities as much as possible. However, there may be some temporary inconveniences such as noise from the construction. We will communicate any significant impacts in advance.

How will student safety be ensured during the construction process?

Safety is our top priority. We have implemented measures to ensure that construction areas are securely fenced off and that students are kept at a safe distance from any potential hazards. Additionally, construction workers are required to follow strict safety protocols. These will be explained to the district and asked in interview processes when selecting the company.

Will there be any changes to parking or drop-off/pick-up areas?

There may be temporary changes to parking and drop-off/pick-up areas on the east side of the school to accommodate construction activities. We will provide clear signage and instructions to help navigate any changes.

How will the new lunchroom and cafeteria benefit students and staff?

The new facilities will provide a more comfortable and spacious environment for students to enjoy their meals. It will also allow for greater flexibility in scheduling and accommodate more students during lunch periods. When students are not utilizing this for lunch or breakfast the room can be transformed into an elementary gymnasium where students may participate in sports and recreational activities, practice fine arts, and may even provide space for potential after-school programming.

How can parents and guardians stay updated on the progress of the construction?

Regular updates will be provided through school newsletters, the school website, and other communication channels. Additionally, any significant developments will be communicated directly to parents and guardians via email. Updates will also be linked on the school superintendent's webpage. <https://www.epj.k12.sd.us/district/superintendents-message>

What about the other needs that are identified?

The district identified many needs to the tune of 24 million dollars in 2022. Since then, interest rates have tripled and the cost of construction has increased. The district is working on prioritizing many of those needs including but not limited to:

- 1) Middle School Renovations and/or additions (Phase 2)
- 2) Elementary Classroom renovations and/or additions (Phase 3)
- 3) Athletic Facilities makeovers (Wrestling Room/Wellness/expansion)
- 4) CTE Expansion/offerings
- 5) Potential Fine Arts expansion/solutions.

What has been done since the bond failed?

The number one most highlighted area of importance for the administration and the board of education was student safety. The board moved on to a safe secure project that created safe and secure entrances for both middle school/high school and elementary.

During this project, we learned that our public/school library visitors had direct access to the school during school hours and our elementary students also had to share a bathroom with high school-aged kids while working in the library. We created a new safe secure entry system for the library and provided a bathroom for the library.

The district also addressed security on the playground by adding a fence around the elementary playground and discarding an older swing set to provide more green areas for students to play.

Additional Parking was created by paving the north lot of the school district.

The district has secured additional parking and land for development to the west of the school in 2023 with the acquisition of the former nursing home property.

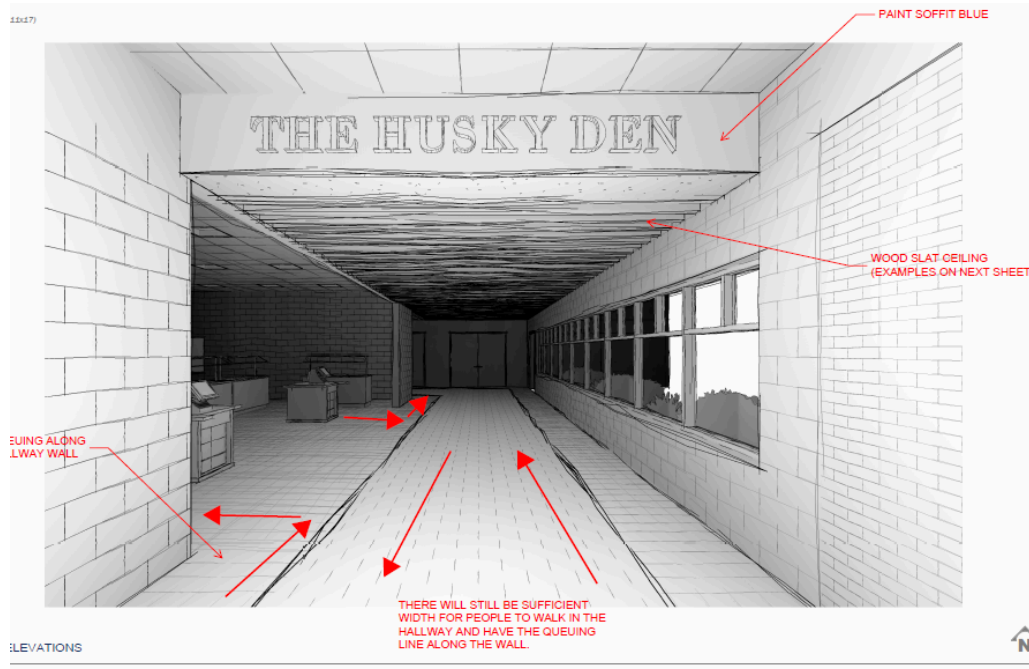
LED lighting was outdated in the gymnasiums and painting was an issue, so new paint has been applied to the middle school gymnasium and new LED lighting has been supplied to the middle school and high school gymnasiums.

The Middle School gym had its painting updated to brighten the space and rejuvenate the appearance of the area.

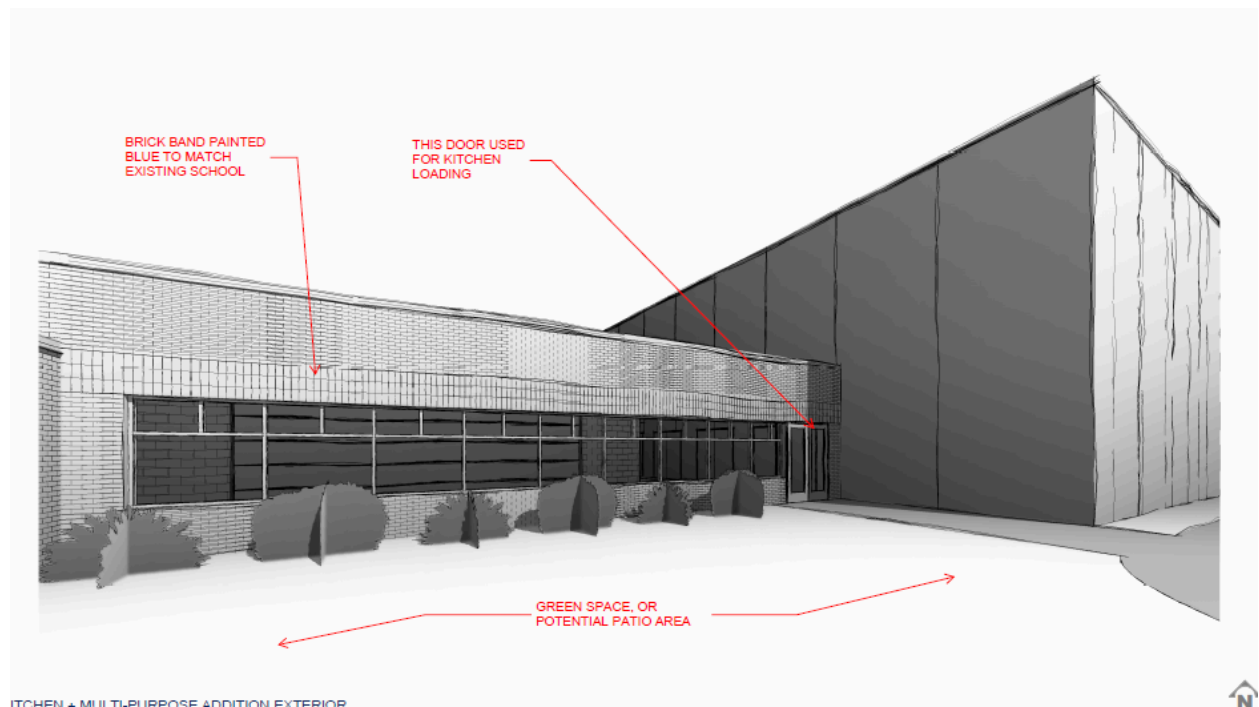
In addition to the Elementary secure entrance, the elementary office had a small update with a new desk for secure entry and a new secure storefront for the elementary conference room.

What will the new facilities look like?

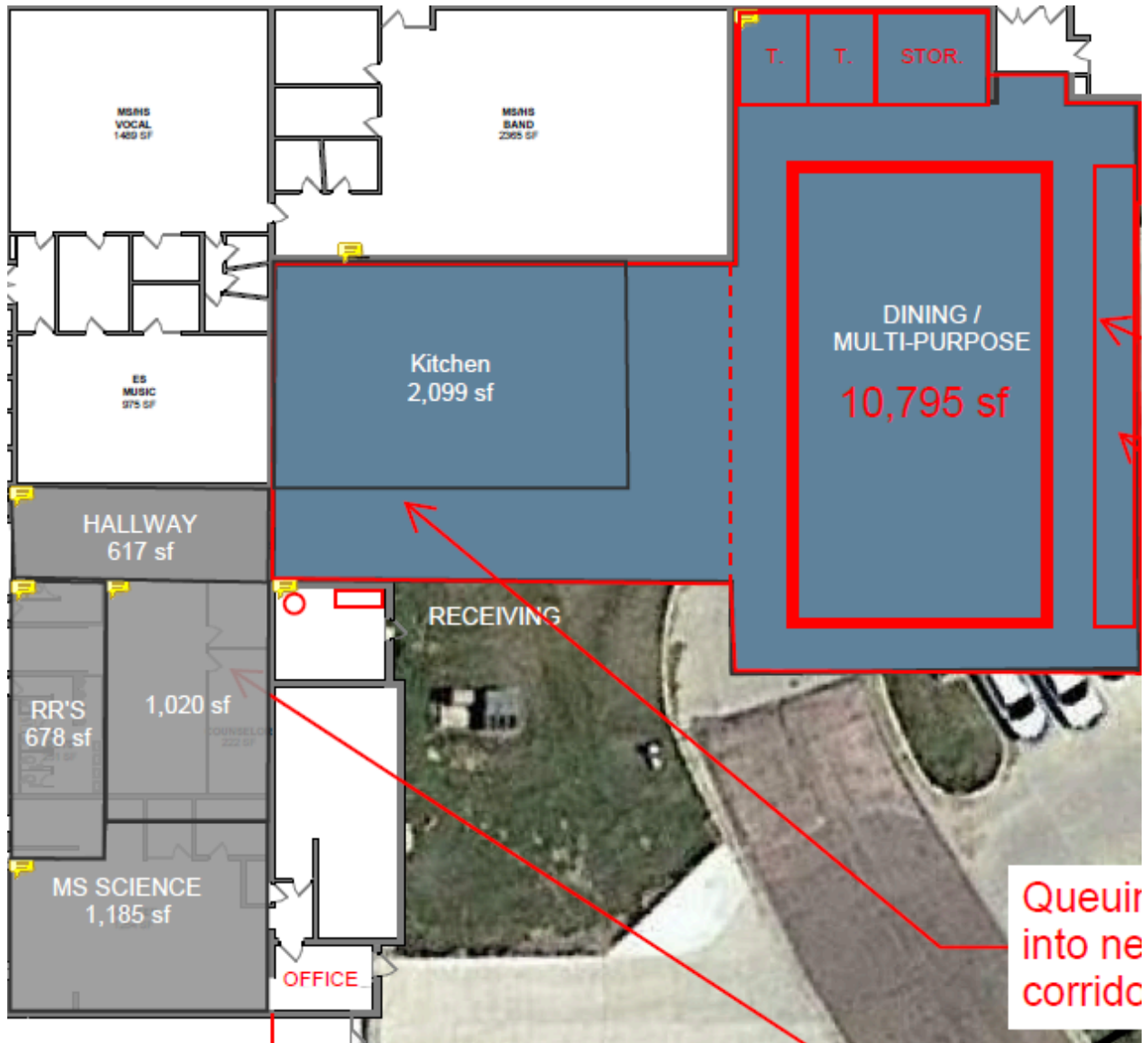
Entrance from the west of the kitchen



Outside appearance of new kitchen and multipurpose



This picture shows the location of the project, also a renovation for the old kitchen to become a middle school science room/ bathroom remodel in the middle school, and a potential office in the middle school for administration.



How will this project impact my taxes?

The school district will be using capital outlay certificates in funding this next project. This project will be funded from taxes already being collected by the school district. Every year the district can take up to 3 dollars per thousand dollars on an evaluation to fund their capital outlay accounts. This is where the money comes from for capital projects such as this.

Currently, the district utilizes 2.5 dollars per thousand dollars of evaluation. The maximum this could impact taxes would be if the district chose to move up .5 mills or 50 cents per thousand dollars. The chart below shows increases per .1 mills a district moves. With two concrete examples: One for an evaluation of \$200,000 and one for an evaluation of \$500,000.

Mill Increase	Per Thousand	200,000 eva	500,000 eval
.1 mills	\$0.10	\$20	\$50
.2 Mills	\$0.20	\$40	\$100
.3 Mills	\$0.30	\$60	\$150
.4 Mills	\$0.40	\$80	\$200
.5 Mills	\$0.50	\$100	\$250

This would not be a bonded initiative. The district evaluates district land assessments to determine this amount when budgeting yearly and has adjusted these levies for projects in the past. The ultimate goal is to minimally impact our constituents. The district is projecting an initial mill levy change of .3 mills to 2.8 mills.

Who can I contact if I have additional questions or concerns about the construction process?

- For any further questions or concerns regarding the construction process, please contact Philip Schonebaum at philip.schonebaum@k12.sd.us