

Districtwide Facilities Master Planning-Elementary Focus revised elementary school construction scenarios

WHAT'S NEW:

In response to a demographic study of district attendance areas, the district administration has prepared new scenarios for elementary school projects as part of the current Districtwide Facilities Master Planning-Elementary Focus.

The State College Area School District Board of Directors is considering the scenarios to reach a decision on potential updates to Corl Street, Houserville and Radio Park elementary schools. The scenarios assume combining Lemont Elementary with Houserville into one school, a proposal in district planning since 1999.

DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT RESULTS:

The report from the demographer, DecisionInsite, included projected enrollments based on analysis of current and planned residential developments within attendance areas, recent kindergarten enrollment trends and changes in grade level cohorts of students within the district.

Overall district enrollment (6,808 students in 2015-16) has decreased by 594 students since 2000. Over the same period, elementary enrollment dropped slightly but remained fairly consistent from year to year.

DecisionInsite's report predicts:

- 1,400 new residential units over the next 10 years.
- An average of 100 new students per year district-wide — about 1 percent growth annually.
- A conservative estimate of 3,204 elementary students by 2025-26. The 2015-16 elementary enrollment was 2,894 students.

CAPACITY DECISION:

The district wishes to maintain elementary school capacity **between 80 and 90 percent**, an accepted ideal range.

- Following state administrative guidelines for elementary class size (21-24 students for K-2; 24-26 students for grades 3-5), the district assumes **23 students per class** for capacity planning.
- The SCASD Board is weighing between choosing eight or nine classroom units per grade in schools.
- Based on the district's current elementary building capacity and enrollment, the 2025-26 capacity is projected to be **95.4 percent**.

- Under one building scenario that calls for three classrooms per grade for Corl Street, Houserville and Radio Park, the projected 2025-26 capacity is **91.6 percent**.

NEW BUILDING SCENARIOS:

The current capacity configuration is two classrooms per grade for Corl Street and three classrooms per grade for Houserville/Lemont and Radio Park. Corl Street is the smallest district elementary school (276 students in 2015-16).

With three classrooms per grade for the rest of the district's elementary schools, the total capacity is 3,358 students — for an average building capacity of 480.

SCENARIO 1:

- Closes and repurposes Corl Street.
- Adds one classroom per grade to Radio Park and Houserville for a total of four classrooms per grade for each. This would make the schools similar to Park Forest, the largest district elementary school (529 students in 2015-16).
- The Radio Park population density supports the scenario.
- The Houserville population density does not support the scenario.
- The configuration does not meet the district's capacity requirements for projected enrollment.
- Average building capacity of 480 students.
- Estimated net project cost of \$35.07 million.

SCENARIO 2A:

- Closes and repurposes Corl Street.
- Houserville retains three classrooms per grade, keeping it similar in size to most district elementary schools.
- Radio Park adds two classrooms per grade for a total of five, making it the largest district elementary school.
- The configuration does not meet the district's capacity requirements for projected enrollment.
- Average building capacity of 480 students.
- Estimated net project cost of \$35.23 million.

SCENARIO 2B:

- Closes and repurposes Corl Street.
- Houserville retains three classrooms per grade.
- Adds one classroom per grade for a total of four for Radio Park.

- Requires an Easterly Parkway Elementary School expansion, adding one classroom per grade for a total of four.
- Makes Radio Park and Easterly Parkway the largest district elementary schools.
- The configuration does not meet the district's capacity requirements for projected enrollment.
- The Easterly Parkway addition would not be eligible for construction reimbursement from the state's PlanCon program.
- Average building capacity of 480 students.
- Estimated net project cost of \$38.27 million.

SCENARIO 3:

- Corl Street adds one classroom per grade for a total of three.
- Houserville and Radio Park retain three classrooms per grade, keeping them similar in size to most district elementary schools.
- Generates sufficient capacity for projected enrollment.
- Requires project costs for three buildings rather than two.
- All district elementary schools are proximate to families and of comparable size.
- Average building capacity of 437 students.
- Estimated net project cost of \$45.39 million.

NOTE: The Board is considering two additional scenarios (six buildings with four classrooms per grade and five buildings with five classrooms per grade) **STRICTLY FOR INFORMATIONAL AND COST ANALYSIS PURPOSES ONLY.**

- Results in schools not near families or of comparable size.
- Requires added project costs.
- Could yield significant operational cost savings.
- Generates school sizes comparable to the district's cohort schools in the state.
- Average building capacity of 552 students for six buildings with four classrooms per grade.
- Average building capacity of 690 students for five buildings with five classrooms per grade.
- Not all projects would be PlanCon eligible.
- Estimated net project costs of \$52.37 million for six buildings and \$71.37 million for five buildings.

COMMUNITY FORUMS:

The district will hold its next public forums about the elementary school planning on:

- Sept. 19, 7 p.m., Mount Nittany Middle School
- Oct. 17, 7 p.m., Mount Nittany Middle School

Childcare will be available. The SCASD Board of Directors expects to make project decisions on Nov. 14. More information about the planning is available at www.scasd.org/elementaryplan.