



Executive Summary

Recorded on worksheets as a result of the small group work activity
Building Tomorrow Together Workshop #1 • October 14, 2024

More than 60 people participated in the first Building Tomorrow Together community workshop on Oct. 14, 2024. Nine small groups worked together at Northbrook Junior High School to discuss surprises and concerns about the District's facilities, considerations about renovating vs replacing schools and additional information they would like presented at the next workshop. The following is a summary of the responses from the groups.

Activity:

Task #1: Surprises and Concerns

Based on the information you learned tonight, what are your group's biggest surprises and concerns about our facilities?

Task #2: Renovating vs Replacing

Tonight's presentation included information about when the cost of building a new school provides a better return on investment than renovating that same school. What do you feel are some things the district should consider when deciding if a school should be renovated or replaced?

Task #3: Additional Information

At the next community workshop, we will work together to set priorities and refine options for improving our schools. What additional information do you need in order to set priorities and refine options to implement the facility master plan?

Task 1: Surprises and Concerns

Listed below is a summary of the first activity where workgroups were asked about the biggest surprises and concerns about D28 facilities.

The feedback regarding the school facilities reveals a mix of surprise and concern, primarily revolving around funding, the extent of renovations needed, and the future of the district's buildings.

Funding Confusion and Concerns

- Many participants were confused and concerned about where the funding for both renovations and potential replacements would come from. Several groups questioned whether property taxes would be raised and if the community would support such measures.
- Some people wondered if donations or alternative funding sources, such as state funding, could be tapped into.
- There were concerns about pacing the funding over time and suggestions about redistricting or consolidating schools to save costs.

Cost and Renovation Surprises

- The high cost of renovations was a surprise to many. People noted that they lacked a reference point for understanding whether these costs were reasonable or not.
- There was a surprise that replacing entire buildings, rather than renovating them, was even on the table, especially since some believed prior renovations had addressed many issues.
- Concerns were raised about whether past funding was used efficiently, with specific questions about how COVID expenses were handled and why there hadn't been more long-term planning.

Facilities and Conditions of Schools

- Many were shocked by the poor condition of existing facilities, with specific mentions of original, inaccessible bathrooms, lack of lunchrooms, and deteriorating infrastructure like flooding and mold.
- Some participants were surprised that schools other than Meadowbrook also required significant attention. They expressed concerns about why more proactive maintenance had not been conducted to avoid such large-scale renovations.
- People also noted the need for clarity on which schools were growing and how the district was preparing for future demand, especially with demographic changes.

Educational Impact and Community Implications

- There was concern over how construction projects could disrupt students and teachers, particularly with the potential for classrooms or play areas to be impacted.
- The lack of endowment or dedicated funding for capital improvements raised alarms about the district's ability to manage future facility needs.
- Participants worried about the broader impact on the community, including whether better facilities would increase property values or influence town demographics.

Strategic Suggestions and Questions

- Some people suggested cutting costs by limiting the number of teacher assistants or looking into creative partnerships with organizations like the local park district.
- Questions were raised about the timeline for these projects, the prioritization of different schools, and whether the district should aim for more ambitious goals or risk having to revisit these projects again in the near future.

Overall, the responses reflect both a sense of urgency to address facility issues and uncertainty about the best path forward, with many looking for more transparency, strategic planning, and community involvement in the decision-making process.

Task #2: Renovating vs Replacing

Participants provided their perspectives about things the district should consider when deciding if a school should be renovated or replaced.

When considering whether a school should be renovated or replaced, respondents highlighted several key factors:

Logistics During Construction - A major concern is where students and staff would go during construction, and how the learning environment and surrounding neighborhoods would be affected. This

includes considerations for temporary spaces, the disruption to the community, and the overall impact on student learning during the process.

Long-Term Planning and Timelines - Respondents wanted clarity on the timeline for renovations or new constructions, including how the 10-year plan would roll out and what the specific stages would look like for each school. There was interest in seeing detailed timelines to better understand the long-term logistics of construction or renovation.

Cost Considerations - Cost was a primary concern, particularly how renovating versus replacing would impact property values, taxes, and future maintenance needs. Participants wanted to know how the district would fund these changes, the potential need for referendums, and how costs would be managed, including whether renovations would require future upgrades.

Building Functionality and Modernization - A key consideration was whether renovations could create spaces that meet modern teaching needs. Some questioned if it was possible to renovate older buildings to suit current educational methods, or if only new construction could fully meet these requirements. Energy efficiency, classroom size, sunlight, and facilities such as cafeterias were also raised as important factors for creating a functional and inspiring learning environment.

Safety and Parity - Safety was a significant concern, with respondents wondering if renovations would compromise safety compared to new buildings. Another point raised was ensuring all schools have equal access to modern facilities and maintaining equity across the district.

Population Growth and Community Engagement - Respondents stressed the importance of considering future school population growth and how community input, such as referendums, could influence decision-making. Additionally, respondents wanted to see how the needs of neighborhoods, businesses, and the broader community would be factored into the decision-making process.

Task #3: Additional Information

Participants were asked: What additional information do you need in order to set priorities and refine options to implement the facility master plan? The key points from the responses regarding additional information needed to set priorities and refine options for implementing the facility master plan are as follows:

Funding and Financial Concerns - Many respondents asked for details about funding sources used by neighboring districts to build new schools and renovate facilities. They also inquired about alternative funding options beyond property tax increases and sought clarity on how anticipated inflation and construction costs would impact the plans. Some wanted to understand how debt and funding inequality between districts arose. They also expressed concern about how real estate tax increases would affect homeowners, particularly seniors with property tax freezes.

Demographics and Growth Projections - Respondents emphasized the importance of having clear data on projected student population growth, particularly with new developments in town. Several asked for more details on how demographic changes would affect enrollment and school sizes, and how these factors would be addressed in the master plan.

School Equity and Redistricting - Several people raised concerns about perceived inequalities in school renovations, particularly that some schools (e.g., Meadowbrook) with larger populations and district

boundaries were consistently delayed in receiving upgrades. They also questioned whether redistricting or balancing enrollment between schools could help address disparities.

Building and Renovation Plans - The responses highlighted the need for more specific details about the Facilities Master Plan, including the breakdown of renovation versus replacement costs and what specific improvements would be addressed in the FMP. They wanted assurances that the plans would benefit educational programs based on sound research and theory.

Community Impact and Communication - Respondents were interested in understanding how the plans would impact the community, particularly in terms of tax burdens. Some suggested that more detailed financial information, such as the impact on taxes and cost-benefit analysis, would be helpful in future meetings.

Logistics and Timing - Several respondents wanted more information about the timeline for implementing the master plan and the logistics involved.

Safety and Security Priorities - Some people expressed concern about ensuring that safety and security measures were prioritized within the renovation or construction projects, particularly regarding the urgency of these needs.

CONSENSUS POINTS

Points of general agreement from the work activity

- Attendees felt both a sense of urgency to address facility issues and uncertainty about the best path forward.
- Participants agreed on the need for thorough planning, transparency, cost efficiency, and a focus on creating schools that are safe, functional, modern, and comparable for all students across the district.
- Attendees emphasized a strong desire for more detailed financial, demographic, and logistical information, as well as transparency about the decision-making process for renovations and funding. There was also significant interest in equal distribution of resources across schools and ensuring that community needs and concerns are fully addressed in the facility master plan.

**For a complete listing of all responses,
see the CW #1 Verbatim Response Document
on the website: northbrook28.net/btttd28**