



Verbatim Responses

Recorded on worksheets as a result of the small group work activity
Building Tomorrow Together Workshop #2 • October 28, 2024

About 45 people participated in the second Building Tomorrow Together community workshop on Oct. 28, 2024. Ten small groups worked together at Northbrook Junior High School to prioritize options developed by the Facilitating Team and provide feedback on the two favored options. The following are the verbatim responses from the small group work activities.

Activity

Task #1: Prioritize Options

Around the room are boards displaying the four options that were developed by the Building Tomorrow Together Facilitating Team. After learning about these options and how facility improvements are funded, we'd like you to help prioritize them. Take the red and green dots that are in your packet and "vote" with them by placing green dots on the option(s) you would like the Board to consider and red dots on the options you feel should be removed from consideration. You can distribute your dots as you see fit, spreading them among a number of options or placing all of them on one option.

Task #2: Option with the MOST green dots: Option 3

Respond to the following question for the option that was the MOST preferred based on the activity in Task #1.

2A. What should the Board of Education consider to improve this option?

2B. What, if any, roadblocks should the Board consider if they decide to ask the community to vote on a referendum to implement this option?

Task #3: Option with the SECOND MOST green dots: Option 4

Respond to the following question for the option that was the SECOND MOST preferred based on the activity in Task #1.

3A. What should the Board of Education consider to improve this option?

3B. What, if any, roadblocks should the Board consider if they decide to ask the community to vote on a referendum to implement this option?

Task 1: Prioritize Options

Take the red and green dots that are in your packet and “vote” with them by placing green dots on the option(s) you would like the Board to consider and red dots on the options you feel should be removed from consideration.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Green Dots	12	22	41	40
Red Dots	63	8	3	19

Task 2A: What should the Board of Education consider to improve Option 3?

GROUP	VERBATIM RESPONSE
1	Option 3 feels like a partnership between the district and taxpayer. Avoid the example of the NB Park District buying 5 Seasons. By the time they added all the wishes onto the list, the community felt like they were asking for too much and it doomed the project. What we like about option 3 is that it feels like it's just the must do's and not nice to have's. What could help in framing option 3 is that the district has skin in the game. Reach out to the other districts who had such high approval rates for their bonds and find out what their game plan is. Put some focus on the rationale on making the school safer for kids from an environmental perspective, ie. what materials are chosen.
2	Can you increase funding opportunities by renting school to other community events, etc. Prioritizing improvements (or share details) for other elementaries to help convince non-Meadowbrook stakeholders to see the benefits of the plan. Advertise in comparison to neighboring districts - Focus on property values - best education, great schools attract buyers - modern buildings will build on the idea of the best education Use results of districts that have been successful with the process (and how it has benefited those without kids in schools). More palatable if it's a one-time ask. Provide more examples of estimated tax increases at various home values, to make it easier for community members to understand the impact on them Provide estimates of future ongoing operational expenses - will ongoing operational expenses increase significantly from current budgets, creating hidden future expenses for homeowners?
3	Highlight how improvements positively impact all residents. Emphasize that other schools will be improved, highlight impact on property values. Can you show how new schools affect property values? We are a destination district and need to maintain that status. Refine messaging to people without kids in the schools. Clarify impacts of depleting school districts savings account, what effect will that have?

4	Are future thinking facilities being designed with future thinking curriculum design and teaching methodologies? Are curriculum design and teaching methodologies being considered with these new facilities? How do you plan to address innovated staff development to match? Are advancements in technology being considered? Who else will be part of these plans aside from a hired company- will teachers and parents have input in what is needed and what is not?
5	- could we get funding through the park district if the gym is also used by the park district? - does the entire \$20M district reserve have to be used? Is there an option where some reserves remain? - can concessions be made in the facility master plan? If new Meadowbrook is built, are all \$16M FMP funds required - how are we going to rebuild the \$20M reserve fund (if at all)? - with the proposed green initiatives like geothermal, will there be any cost savings around utilities and maintenance moving forward? If so, highlight them.
6	Need to know the details behind the capital improvement details on 3 vs. 4 to really understand preference between the two. Are there differences? Also, is there low-priority costs or more details that the community could evaluate for trade-offs on the specifics of the proposals (ie - are there types of capital expenditures that the community likes vs doesn't like). Emphasis is mainly on the capital improvements, but if there are even marginally obvious trade-offs from the other buckets, we would like to know. Capital improvements are the ones we like to see - if there are ways to be conservative on the less exciting spend to benefit capital improvements, that would be great. It would also be great to be able to prioritize items in the capital expenditures - community would love the ability to put value on the most preferred.
7	I know the median home is 622 but there is a huge fluctuation - wondering if the 622 was a marketing play? We need more messaging for the different demographics and why we should want to vote yes for these improvements. Is there a middle ground to protect our fund balance and not use the total 20 million and drain that fund? Option 3 vs 4 but almost have a middle ground.
8	Clarification on what specific capital improvements will happen to each school under this scenario. Information on any tax relief assistance to homeowners on fixed budgets who might not be able to afford the long-term tax increase. Better explain the impact of using the district's budget in this scenario. Provide explanation of where Meadowbrook students will go while school getting built.
9	What is the estimated lifespan of the new building or buildings be considered if the voters are in favor of starting the replacement cycle? How are we ensuring that these renovations stand the test of time. What's the predicted life span. How are we ensuring that these improvements are scalable and will last the test of time. How will it scale to fit future needs? How will these renovations match curricular goals and needs? There was some general skepticism by one member of our group about whether we need to adopt a plan to replace all of our schools or to update them, as needed, to accommodate new needs.

	Clearer picture in how the renovation and facilities will tie into curricular development and how teaching and learning will improve in tandem with improvements and how the district will fund this.
10	Justify with the increased enrollment. Communicate more detail on how tax increases would work. For example, would that average increase be an annual tax for the timeline? Communicate more effectively to the whole community about what exactly the funds would be used for. Have the D28 Superintendent and CBO communicate to the broader community during a Village Hall meeting.

Task #2B: What, if any, roadblocks should the Board consider if they decide to ask the community to vote on a referendum to implement Option 3?

GROUP	VERBATIM RESPONSE
1	There will always be a roadblock for people to pay extra taxes. What may help is to remind the tax base that we have been fully funding all major additions/renovations until now with district funds. Another roadblock is just getting the message out and reaching people who aren't familiar with the district.
2	Logistics of rebuilding Meadowbrook during the school year - where will students go, will it be on the same site. What is the footprint of the land surrounding Meadowbrook? Where is the extra \$10mil coming from in the district's budget? What will be cut? How will the portion of the population that is not utilizing the schools going to "buy in" to spending extra money to fund the schools? It is an increase in individual tax expenditures - need to explain why it is an advantage for the greater community.
3	Cost. Convincing people without kids in school district that is in their best interest to increase their taxes. Can we look into why other referendums have failed? Avoca specifically?
4	People who do not have kids currently in school; significant opposition to such a big ask; community division and tension; will we have enough funding to address the previously mentioned points about training staff in futuristic curriculum designs and methodologies
5	- How would you convince the community to continue supporting future phases at Year 10 and beyond - How will residents outside of Meadowbrook area respond to this proposal - How will D28 area residents without kids support the increase in their property taxes - if all \$20M reserves are depleted, what happens if there is an emergency? Is there a contingency plan in place?
6	Can we refinance the higher rate now to a lower rate in the future? Could anything that has to do with the state's fiscal situation affect us later down the line? If state taxes increase in the future, will that put us in a precarious spot in the future?

7	Why does Meadowbrook get the rebuild? Highlight what WM and GB would be getting as well? We may get more people willing to fund the improvements. Where would the students go during the rebuild? How would this work? Need to make the case for why to pay? Home values etc.... How do we get this approved now and not have to be voting on this again in 5-10 years time, can we highlight what we have invested in this and what the projected costs will be for us down the line? How much more will this cost us if we don't do it now and do it in the future. How can we get those with no children or those on a fixed budget to buy into this?
8	Homeowners may not properly understand the tax increase dynamics (ie the increase is on top of your current tax bill, will fluctuate over time, etc.) Homeowners will question why we need to raise money if we have over \$20mm in district funds.
9	Footprint size: Parking at the schools.
10	Consider recent property tax increases. Getting the community interested to engage in this topic. Could this option 3 leave us at risk of no reserves for operating expenses and also could it cut other programs and staff?

Task 3A: What should the Board of Education consider to improve Option 4?

GROUP	VERBATIM RESPONSE
1	The delta in cost per family is not a huge ask between 3 and 4.
2	Can you increase funding opportunities by renting school to other community events, etc. Prioritizing improvements (or share details) for other elementaries to help convince non-Meadowbrook stakeholders to see the benefits of the plan. Advertise in comparison to neighboring districts - Focus on property values - best education, great schools attract buyers - modern buildings will build on the idea of the best education Use results of districts that have been successful with the process (and how it has benefited those without kids in schools). More palatable if it's a one-time ask. Provide more examples of estimated tax increases at various home values, to make it easier for community members to understand the impact on them Provide estimates of future ongoing operational expenses - will ongoing operational expenses increase significantly from current budgets, creating hidden future expenses for homeowners?
3	Clarify impacts of depleting school districts savings account, what effect will that have?
4	
5	- need to better merchandise the capital improvements. Showcase the current state of the buildings, what is in dire need of repair, etc. Position that against the proposed

	improvements and the impact they will have on the learning experience, curriculum, etc. - opportunities to refinance in the future at a lower rate? - how will the school improvements and new footprints factor in with the need for green space, recreational equipment, and increased parking?
6	Same as previous
7	Have we thought of a public/private partnership with local businesses to get help funding? Can we split the middle and combine Option 3 and 4? Can we keep a larger reserve fund to be safe? How big is that reserve and how much of a cushion do we have? Highlight security is important for everyone whether you have children in the district or not.
8	Provide detailed explanation on impact to the district of not using the district's budget this scenario. Clarification on what specific capital improvements will happen to each school under this scenario. Information on any tax relief assistance to homeowners on fixed budgets who might not be able to afford the long-term tax increase. Provide explanation of where Meadowbrook students will go while school getting built.
9	Simplify the financing overview to ensure understanding by all residents. How will the funding work with the bonds the district tries to borrow against.
10	Very similar to last question

Task #3B: What, if any, roadblocks should the Board consider if they decide to ask the community to vote on a referendum to implement Option 4?

GROUP	VERBATIM RESPONSE
1	Same roadblocks as in number 3.
2	Logistics of rebuilding Meadowbrook during the school year - where will students go, will it be on the same site. What is the footprint of the land surrounding Meadowbrook? How will the portion of the population that is not utilizing the schools going to "buy in" to spending extra money to fund the schools? It is an increase in individual tax expenditures - need to explain why it is an advantage for the greater community.
3	Cost. Convincing people without kids in school district that is in their best interest to increase their taxes. Can we look into why other referendums have failed? Avoca specifically?
4	Same thoughts as Question 2: Are future thinking facilities being designed with future thinking curriculum design and teaching methodologies? Are curriculum design and teaching methodologies being considered with these new facilities? How do you plan to address innovated staff development to match? Are advancements in technology being considered? (Etc, see previous answers) Additionally: How do you address an issue arising if there is no reserve?

5	- what is the estimated lifespan of the new buildings and improvements? - need a strong story against delaying these improvements. Why now versus later? - what is being done with the \$20M funding right now? Is it earning interest?
6	Same as previous
7	Funding it all through a bond may be looked negatively against, the District should be willing to put some money into it. Unchecked Why can't we cut costs with staff such as aids? Need to lay out the risks of not having the reserves and what risks we are taking by choosing option 3 and not 4.
8	People will want to know why we aren't using the \$20mm of district funds for the master plan vs. putting cost on homeowners. Homeowners may not properly understand the tax increase dynamics. People want to kick the can down the road.
9	Why do we need to start the replacement for all schools now? Can we just start with Meadowbrook?
10	Very similar to last question