Elementary Facility Plan Citizen Task Force Recommendations

SUMMARY January 2025

What are the issues we are trying to resolve?

- Over 1,100 empty seats in District's 13 elementary schools today—projected to grow to around 1,300 empty seats by 2027 if no changes
- Projected $2 to $3 million annual operating deficit by 2027
- Aging building infrastructure—nearly $25 million in 10-year deferred maintenance needs across 13 elementary buildings
- These factors are driven by demographic, economic, and policy factors beyond the District's control
- The Wausau School District is not alone in facing these issues

Task Force Process Overview

Summer

Orientation and Learning

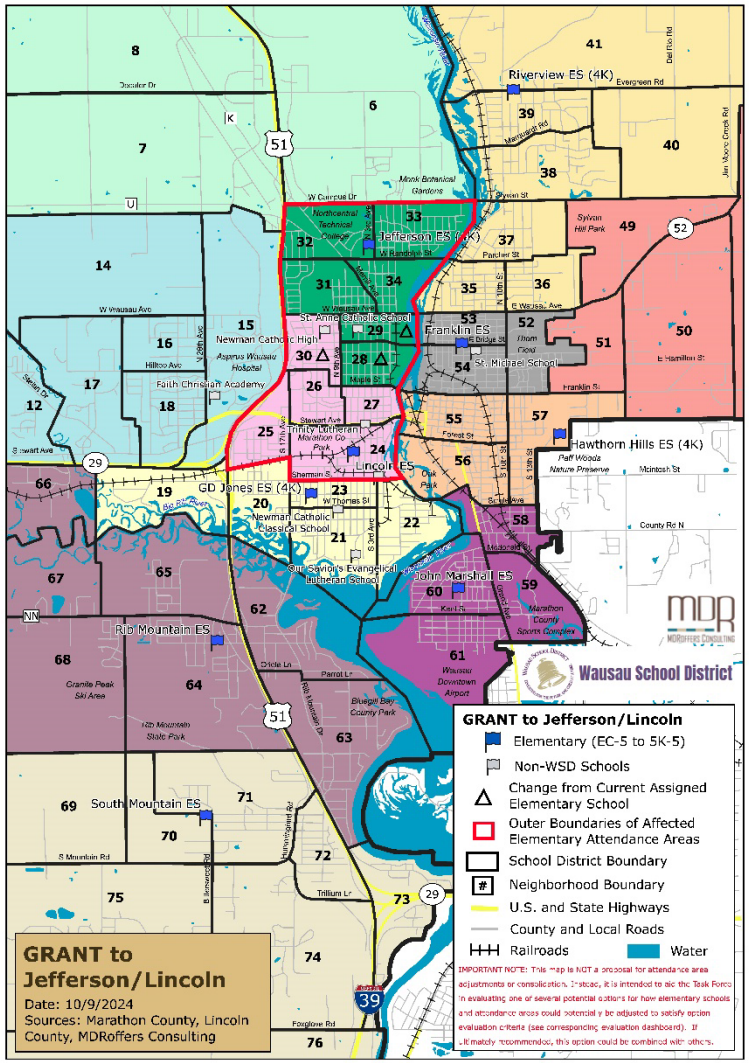
September

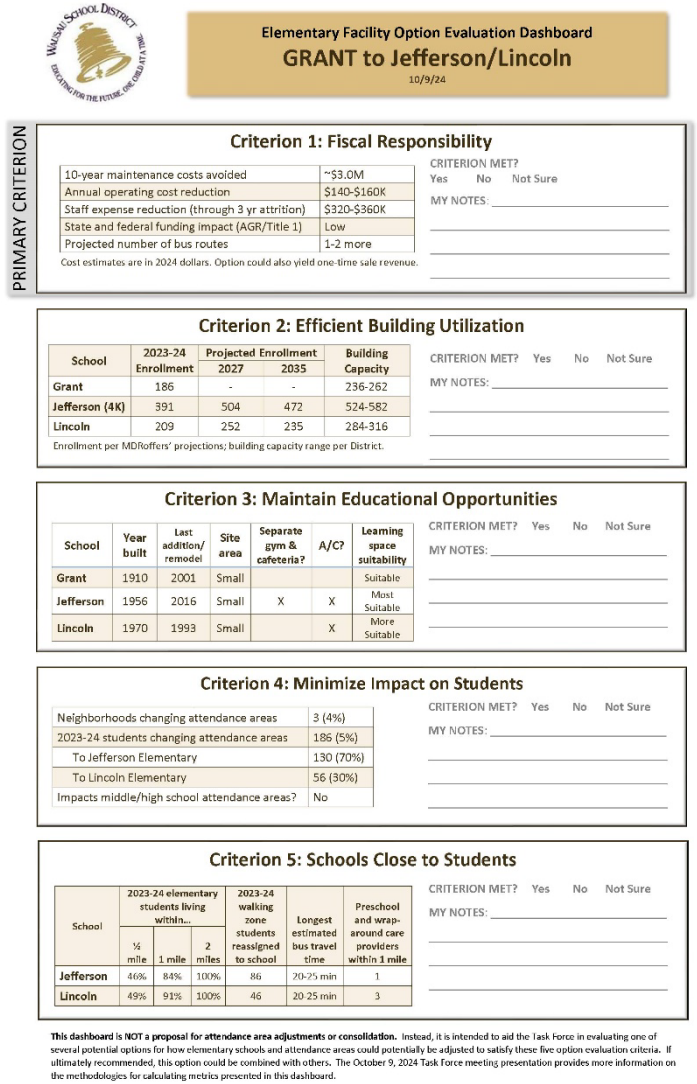
Review of Criteria and Agreement on Need

Fall

Facility Option Evaluation and Recommendation

Task Force Evaluation of 10 Different Options





Elementary Facility Option Evaluation Dashboard
GRANT to Jefferson/Lincoln
10/9/24

PRIMARY CRITERION

Criterion 1: Fiscal Responsibility

10-year maintenance costs avoided	~$3.0M
Annual operating cost reduction	$140-$160K
Staff expense reduction (through 3 yr attrition)	$320-$360K
State and federal funding impact (AGR/Title 1)	Low
Projected number of bus routes	1-2 more

Cost estimates are in 2024 dollars. Option could also yield one-time sale revenue.

CRITERION MET? Yes No Not Sure
MY NOTES:

Criterion 2: Efficient Building Utilization

School	2023-24 Enrollment	Projected Enrollment 2027	Projected Enrollment 2035	Building Capacity
Grant	186	-	-	236-262
Jefferson (4K)	391	504	472	524-582
Lincoln	209	252	235	284-316

Enrollment per MDRoffers' projections; building capacity range per District.

CRITERION MET? Yes No Not Sure
MY NOTES:

Criterion 3: Maintain Educational Opportunities

School	Year built	Last addition/ remodel	Site area	Separate gym & cafeteria?	A/C?	Learning space suitability
Grant	1910	2001	Small			Suitable
Jefferson	1956	2016	Small	X	X	Most Suitable
Lincoln	1970	1993	Small		X	More Suitable

CRITERION MET? Yes No Not Sure
MY NOTES:

Criterion 4: Minimize Impact on Students

Neighborhoods changing attendance areas	3 (4%)
2023-24 students changing attendance areas	186 (5%)
To Jefferson Elementary	130 (70%)
To Lincoln Elementary	56 (30%)
Impacts middle/high school attendance areas?	No

CRITERION MET? Yes No Not Sure
MY NOTES:

Criterion 5: Schools Close to Students

School	2023-24 elementary students living within... ¼ mile	1 mile	2 miles	2023-24 walking zone students reassigned to school	Longest estimated bus travel time	Preschool and wrap-around care providers within 1 mile
Jefferson	46%	84%	100%	86	20-25 min	1
Lincoln	49%	91%	100%	46	20-25 min	3

CRITERION MET? Yes No Not Sure
MY NOTES:

This dashboard is NOT a proposal for attendance area adjustments or consolidation. Instead, it is intended to aid the Task Force in evaluating one of several potential options for how elementary schools and attendance areas could potentially be adjusted to satisfy these five option evaluation criteria. If ultimately recommended, this option could be combined with others. The October 9, 2024 Task Force meeting presentation provides more information on the methodologies for calculating metrics presented in this dashboard.

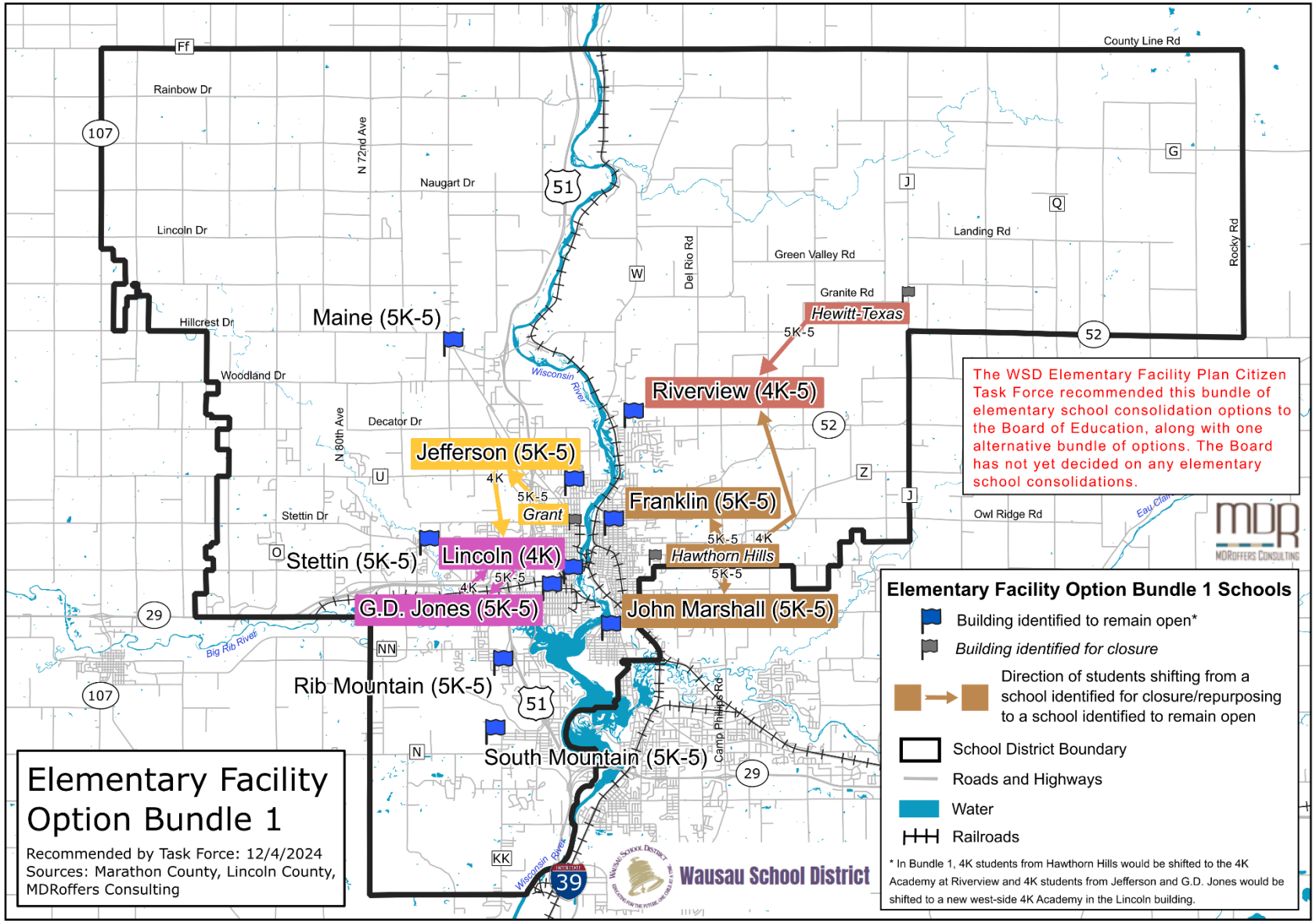
- During October to December meetings
- Each option accompanied by a map of possible attendance area changes and a dashboard comparing the option to the 5 criteria
- Members ranked and discussed how well each option met the criteria

Task Force Voting and Recommendation

- 71% of Task Force members voted "base" Bundle 1 as their most preferred bundle/variation, and an additional 14% voted Bundle 1 as their second most preferred bundle (i.e., 85% support)
- 49% voted "base" Bundle 2 as their second most preferred bundle/variation, and an additional 9% voted Bundle 2 as their most preferred (#1) bundle
- **Based on these results, the Task Force on 12/4 advanced Bundle 1 as its recommended bundle, with Bundle 2 also presented to the Board as an alternative. The Task Force reaffirmed this recommendation on 12/18.**

Recommended Elementary Facility Option Bundle 1

- Hewitt-Texas to Riverview
- Hawthorn Hills to John Marshall/Franklin (& 4K Academy to Riverview)
- Lincoln to G.D. Jones (& 4K Academy from G.D. Jones to Lincoln)
- Grant to Jefferson (& 4K Academy from Jefferson to Lincoln)

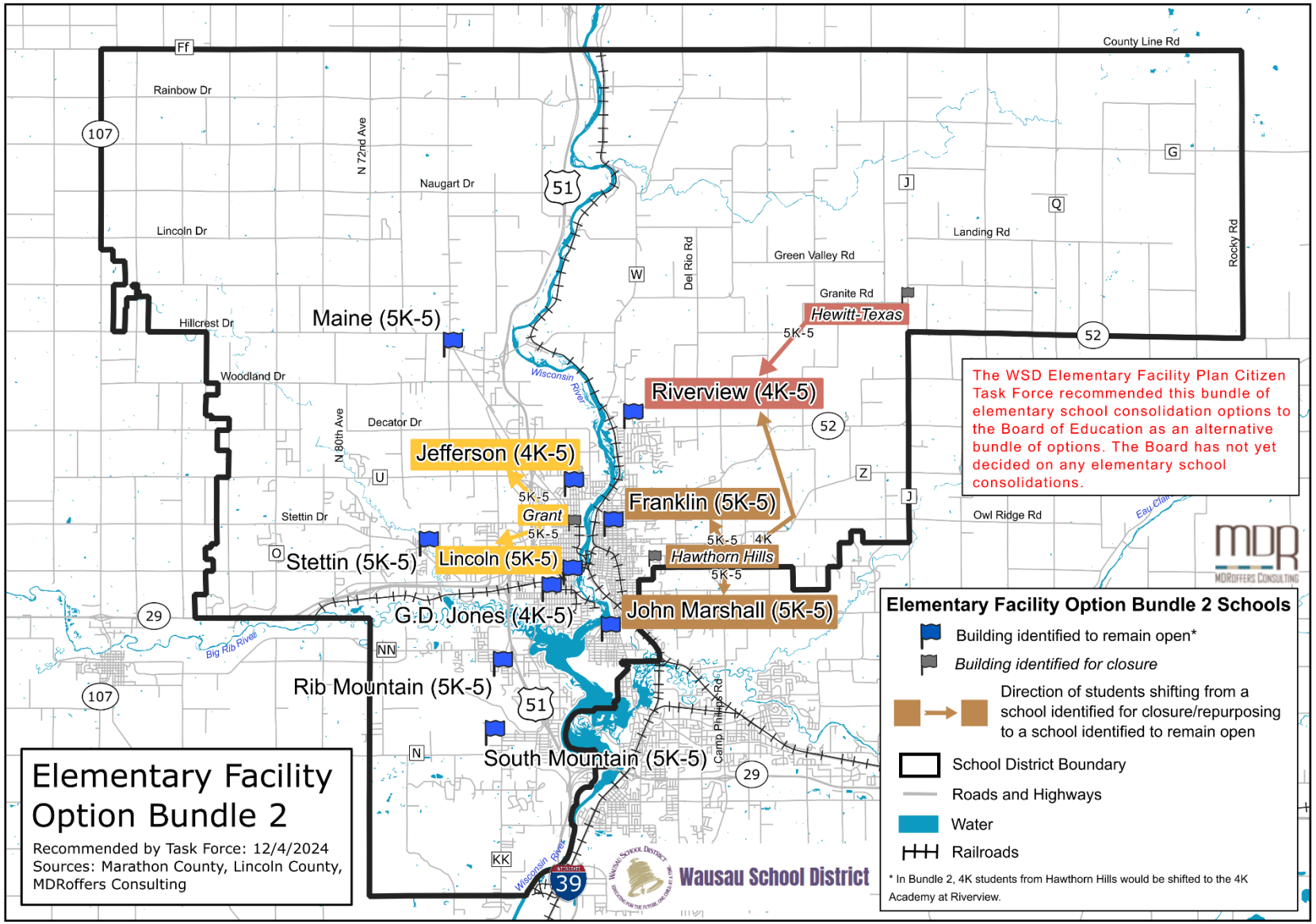


Why did the Task Force recommend Bundle 1?

1. Comprised of the Task Force's 4 most preferred consolidation options
2. Comprehensive solution to fill most of 1,300 empty elementary seats
3. Would close or repurpose two east side and two west side schools
4. Remaining schools would be regularly spaced in community
5. 3 of 4 are "1-to-1 consolidations" (i.e., all students to 1 different school)
6. Only around 20% of the WSD's elementary students would change schools
7. "Receiver" schools have large populations of walking zone students
8. All schools that would be closed do not have separate gym and cafeteria spaces; all receiver schools do have such separate spaces
9. All receiver schools have at least "more suitable" learning spaces
10. Cost savings prioritized

Alternative Elementary Facility Option Bundle 2

- Hewitt-Texas to Riverview
- Hawthorn Hills to John Marshall/Franklin (& 4K Academy to Riverview)
- Grant to Jefferson/Lincoln



Why Consolidate 4K Academies? Per Task Force…

- Provides space for "1-to-1 consolidations" of Lincoln to G.D. Jones and Grant to Jefferson, which is a primary component of Bundle 1 and helps achieve the "minimize student change" criterion
- Provides west side 4K Academy in central, accessible location at Lincoln, which has air conditioning and "more suitable" learning spaces
- If Hawthorn Hills closes, its 4K Academy program would need to be relocated (currently has around 30 4K students)
- Is cost-effective and enhances staff collaboration opportunities
- Would not impact partnerships with community partner sites

Why Close Hawthorn Hills? Per Task Force…

- About half-full currently—lowest percentage occupancy in District—with more enrollment decrease projected
- Fewer walkers than John Marshall and most other in-City schools—no WSD students to southeast and few to northeast of Hawthorn
- One road in-and-out presents challenges (especially if more students were instead shifted there in some different option)
- Lack of separate gym and cafeteria spaces presents challenges (especially if more students were instead shifted there)
- Its closure facilitates regular spacing of east side schools and logical attendance areas, with all students within 2 miles of new schools

Why Close Hewitt-Texas? Per Task Force…

- Lowest current student enrollment by far (under 90 students), which is not projected to change much
- Most remote school in District, with limited open-enrollment-in from other school districts
- All students must be bussed there/no walking zone students
- Higher per-student operating costs than most other elementary schools
- Does not have a separate gym and cafeteria and has lower space suitability rating than most other school buildings
- Low enrollment means easiest "1-to-1 consolidation" with another school
- Task Force acknowledged need to relocate Red Granite if building is sold

Why Close Grant? Per Task Force…

- Does not have separate gym and cafeteria spaces or air conditioning, and has lower space suitability rating than most other school buildings
- Oldest school in the District on one of its smallest sites
- Declining enrollment expected to continue to go down
- Modest student population facilitates "1-to-1 consolidation"
- Its closure facilitates regular spacing of west side schools and logical attendance areas, with all students within 2 miles of "receiver" school(s) in both bundles