EVANSTON/SKOKIE SCHOOL DISTRICT 65

Every Child, Every Day, Whatever it Takes

TO: Evanston/Skokie District 65 School Board

CC: Dr. Angel Turner, Superintendent

FROM: Dr. Stacy Beardsley, Asst. Superintendent, Facilities Subcommittee

DATE: June 23, 2025

RE: SDRP III: Categories and Criteria Recommendations

Objective: ___ Information __X_ Discussion ____ Follow-up ___ Decision

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SDRP Steering Committee Purpose: With a focus on returning to financial sustainability, the District is engaging in phase III of its Structural Deficit Reduction Plan (SDRP). In this operational stage, the District aims to address its current budget deficit of $10-15 million to achieve long-term financial sustainability. Additionally, the District will develop a plan to address its aging facilities and evaluate the effects of declining enrollment, with the goal of providing optimal programming for its students. Factors to consider in SDRP Phase III include the following:

1. Facilities: Assess schools needed to support student programming and prioritize improvements.
2. Finances: Balancing the budget and identifying funding sources for proposed facility improvements.
3. Programs: Assessing and prioritizing existing initiatives within current financial constraints.

Facilities Subcommittee Purpose: The Facilities Subcommittee will use data regarding enrollment, facilities, and finance/budget to support the development of a long term facility plan in District 65, including enrolled schools and plans for preventive maintenance and renovations informed by the District sustainability plan, school code, and school board policy.

Facilities Subcommittee Responsibilities:

- ***Use the data from the master facilities plan and demography report as inputs to develop criteria for school consolidation(s) and/or closure(s).***

- Assess feasibility and cost of site renovation(s).
- Plan for potential school closures, repurposing, or expansions.
- Ensure compliance with safety, accessibility, and zoning regulations.
- Develop a facilities transition plan that minimizes disruption.
- Assess outcomes of asset disposition (e.g., sale of partial or whole parcels).

Committee Authority:

- Advisory rather than decision-making capacity.
- Does not manage implementation details or timelines.
- Not responsible for financial analysis or facility assessments.
- Focused on process integrity and community impact rather than operational logistics.

Intended Outcomes:

- By June, deliver a report to the steering committee capturing the categories and criteria with weighting to be used for potential school closing and consolidation scenario development.
- By September, support the development of multiple closing and consolidation scenarios to the steering committee for possible School Board consideration with draft attendance boundaries.
- By December, continue to model and refine scenarios and attendance boundaries for possible school closing(s) and consolidation(s).

Member Selection:

District 65 issued an all call to the Evanston/Skokie Community in March to recruit members to participate on our steering committee. Specifically, the facilities subcommittee, which is charged short term with categories and criteria for potential school closing(s) and long term with a facility improvement plan, sought diverse perspectives and skills that could be brought to the team to inform our work.

From a total of twenty-three applications, sixteen members were selected that drew from 7 of the 9 Evanston wards (no members from Ward 3 and 8). The sixteen members bring extensive professional and personal experience to our work. Team members have served on PTAs, District Green Teams, City of Evanston Commissions (Utilities, Preservation, Land Use and History), Leadership Evanston and many other opportunities. The team's professional experience includes architecture, civil engineering, commercial real estate, construction, education, geography/demography, medicine and other areas of expertise. The team presents a unique

opportunity to bring a talented group together to support District 65 in making facilities related recommendations to the School Board.

Process:

The Facilities subcommittee met 6 times between April and June to work towards our first deliverable: A report capturing the categories and criteria with weighting to be used for potential school closing(s) and consolidation(s) scenario development. The team worked to keep both the goal of long term financial sustainability and the experience of students, families and educators while doing their work central in the work.

The categories, criteria and weights shared in this report are the product of the subcommittees learning, collaboration, and commitment. The team began by becoming familiar with the District 65 master facility plan and demography data. Then they moved to data connected to operations and maintenance, program enrollment patterns (TWI, EL programming, King Arts and Early Childhood), transportation, financial, and data connected to school performance (excellence). The team regularly submitted data requests and assessed the relevance of the data for our task.

In addition to this data, the subcommittee also read and discussed the findings from the spring 2025 community and staff engagement sessions and recommended categories and criteria from the Superintendent Parent/Caregiver Advisory Committee.

During the facilities subcommittee's work, the team learned about and applied aspects of the Race Equity Impact Assessment tool from Race Forward. This tool helped the team name and consider perspectives or experiences that were not in the room and reminded the team that District 65 serves a diverse student body. The REIA tool also opened a conversation about the closing of the former Foster school and the fact that this had a disproportionate impact on Black students and families.

Entering our fourth meeting, the team shifted from small groups to a whole group and the team took charge of the work drafting categories and criteria. The team spent most of the fourth and fifth meetings developing their deliverable. During these meetings, the team gained a common understanding of what was needed for an idea to be a strong criteria. Below is a list the team referred to:

1. Relevance to the Goal
2. Measurability & Normalization
3. Weighted Importance
4. Completeness Without Redundancy

The team noticed that some of the potential categories and criteria that were collected at community engagement sessions were potentially strong programmatic ideas but the team did not see the ideas as meeting the expectations of strong criteria for our process. An example is PK expansion or movement. They noted that PK education is a worthy and expensive investment. Growing the program at this time did not seem aligned to the focus of SDRP Phase III. Additionally, the District 65 transportation coordinator, Mr. Lou Gatta noted that there would **not** be transportation savings (and potentially a cost increase) since transporting to more locations would result.

Additionally, school performance or excellence criteria is intentionally absent from the facilities weighting for several reasons:

- The committee believes rigor and commendable or better achievement is happening in all of our schools and should continue to be supported.
- The committee sees strong culture, climate, and academics as being driven most significantly by the staff of the buildings.
- The committee believes that each of our facilities should be able to accommodate special programs, unless there is inadequate ADA accessibility.

The final phase included using a weighting tool to take individual weights and average them across the team to develop category level weighting. The team had a final opportunity to read and revise the report through our discussions at the last meeting.

Below the Categories, Criteria and Weighting the Facilities subcommittee is suggesting with recommendations follow.

Categories and Criteria

Category/Criteria	Possible Data Source (Suggestions)	Measure (Suggestions)
Equity *Minimize disproportionate impact on any historically marginalized stakeholder groups*		
• Number of students changing schools	= # of students/# of District students	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.
• Who is impacted?	Of the students, how many are moving to a new school: = # of Black students moving/# of students moving = # of Latino students moving/# of students moving = # of FRL students moving/# of students moving = # of IEP students moving/# of students moving = # of EL students moving/# of students moving *Note: Based on 2024 Demography information with Foster school. Change considerations should draw on future structure not past/current structure.*	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.

Geography *Minimize the difficulty of a student getting from home to school.*		
• Walkability	= # students within "walkable" distance of newly assigned school/total students in school (SDRP Facilities recommending 0.75 miles)	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data. Please see appendix A for map visualizations of .5 and .75 distances.
• IDOT Hazards *(scenario dependent)*	= # of students who must cross an IDOT hazard/total number of students in school (within the 1.5 mile state guideline)	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.
• Transportation needs and cost *(scenario dependent)*	% of students that would qualify for transportation (ISBE Guidelines)	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.
• Geographic proximity of adjacent schools.	= Average distance the three closest adjacent schools	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.
Building Functionality *Building features and amenities fit for current and future needs*		
• Current ADA Compliance/Equitable Accessibility	= % accessible by quartiles (Data sheet)	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.

• Cafeteria and gym are separate spaces?		Yes or No
• # of teaching stations/classrooms for use	=count of teaching stations from MFP	Scale 1 - 5 15 or less 20 or less 25 or less 30 or less 31 or more
Financial Impact *Maximize operating cost savings, minimize capital expense costs, maximize any potential revenue opportunities*		

• Income potential [1]
  ○ City of Evanston Historic Landmark Status[2]
  ○ Zoning
	= Calculation TBD
	
	Income Potential
	• Landmarks ((Data sheet - Column R)
	• Zoning (Data sheet - Column S)
		Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.

• Capital expense for updates	= Calculation TBD • Expense for updates (discuss so I can link to the right data)	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.

• Monthly facility operating cost	= Normalized cost • Facility Operating Cost - Normalized (Column R)	Scale of 1 to 5 across the range of data.

Notes:

1. *District 65 will use a property assessment to inform that metric.*
2. *Public Schools receive permits and permitting permissions through ISBE North Cook ROE*

Category Weighting

Category	Mean
Equity	22%
Geography	32%
Building Functionality	16%
Building Income	9%
Building Cost	21%

Rationale for Category Weighting:

The facilities subcommittee consists of individuals with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. This led to the committee having a variety of perspectives on how to weigh our categories. The team ultimately listened to each other's perspectives and came to a consensus on category weights.

The team fully understands that we are engaging in this process due to the need to address financial sustainability. This is reflected with 30% of the weighting being assigned to building income and building cost. The additional categories and weighting hold that should there be closings and consolidations, attention needs to be paid to walkability and the impact of the changes on the diverse stakeholders that District 65 serves.

Additional Recommendations:

- Middle schools are well utilized, located, and h*ave specific features that support a middle school program (larger libraries and gyms, locker rooms, fitness/weight rooms).* The subcommittee recommends maintaining the existing middle schools. The committee recognizes the major importance of walkable neighborhood elementary schools as demonstrated by the survey results and realizes that middle school closure or consolidation may need to be modeled when considering K-5 walkability.
- The committee would like to see additional study of Park School. The committee visited Park and saw a need for significant space improvements and functionality improvements. Further study would help to determine if co-location with another school (requiring renovation of existing building to meet Park program requirements) or if renovation of the existing school building would be most financially responsible.
- The subcommittee recommends limiting the changes to feeder patterns from elementary to middle school.

- The subcommittee recommends minimizing the distribution of dissolving student bodies. When a school must be closed, the subcommittee would like the design to minimize the number of receiving schools. This priority is lower than walkability however.

Next Steps

After sharing the Categories, Criteria, and Weightings with the School Board on June 23 the District is leading two community engagement sessions to share the criteria and hear community feedback. These sessions are:

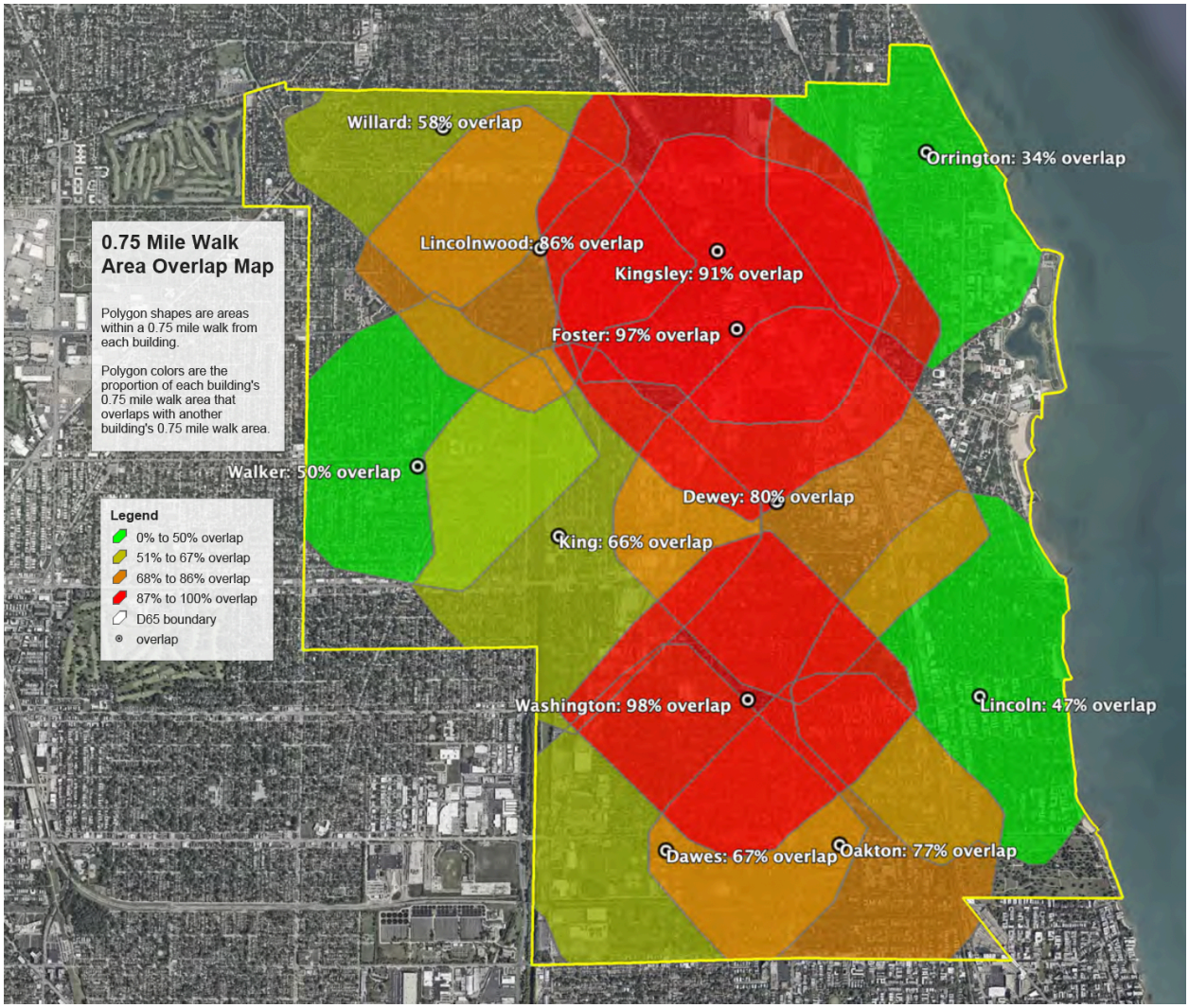
- Tuesday, June 24 @ 6 PM (Kingsley School)
- Wednesday, June 25 @ 9:30 AM (Prieto Community Center)

The District will then move into scenario development in July. Several criteria are scenario dependent so this will be a time consuming and important process.

The Subcommittee will be reengaged in August (8/13 & 8/27) to support the scenario development process. Scenarios are scheduled to be shared with the School Board in September.

Appendix A:

K-5 schools and King Arts with 0.75 Mile Walk Area Overlap



K-5 schools and King Arts with 0.5 Mile Walk Area Overlap

