



Mission: Delaware

A Report on Our Community Conversation

Our Mission Began with Listening

As the new superintendent began his tenure, the Board of Education and community expected a leader who would build authentic relationships and deeply understand our district.

Mission: Delaware was designed as a comprehensive listening tour to achieve three key objectives:



1. **Build Authentic Relationships**: To be visible, accessible, and genuinely engaged with students, staff, families, and community members.



2. **Understand Our Culture**: To gain invaluable insight into the unique traditions, strengths, and distinct challenges of each of our seven school buildings.



3. **Inform Our Future**: To gather systematic input to guide both immediate decisions and long-term strategic planning.

Guiding Philosophy

This work was guided by the principle that character is built through daily decisions.

$$E + R = O$$

(Event + Response = Outcome)

We Engaged Directly with Stakeholders Where They Are



Immersive School Visits: Full days spent at all seven district buildings, from arrival to dismissal. (Sept - Nov 2025)



Structured Focus Groups: 45 formal, in-person sessions with students, staff, parents, and community members to facilitate interactive discussion.



Online Questionnaire: A QR-code accessible survey used at larger, informal gatherings to capture a wide range of feedback.



Community Presence: Attended community events and met with business and civic leaders to understand the broader context.

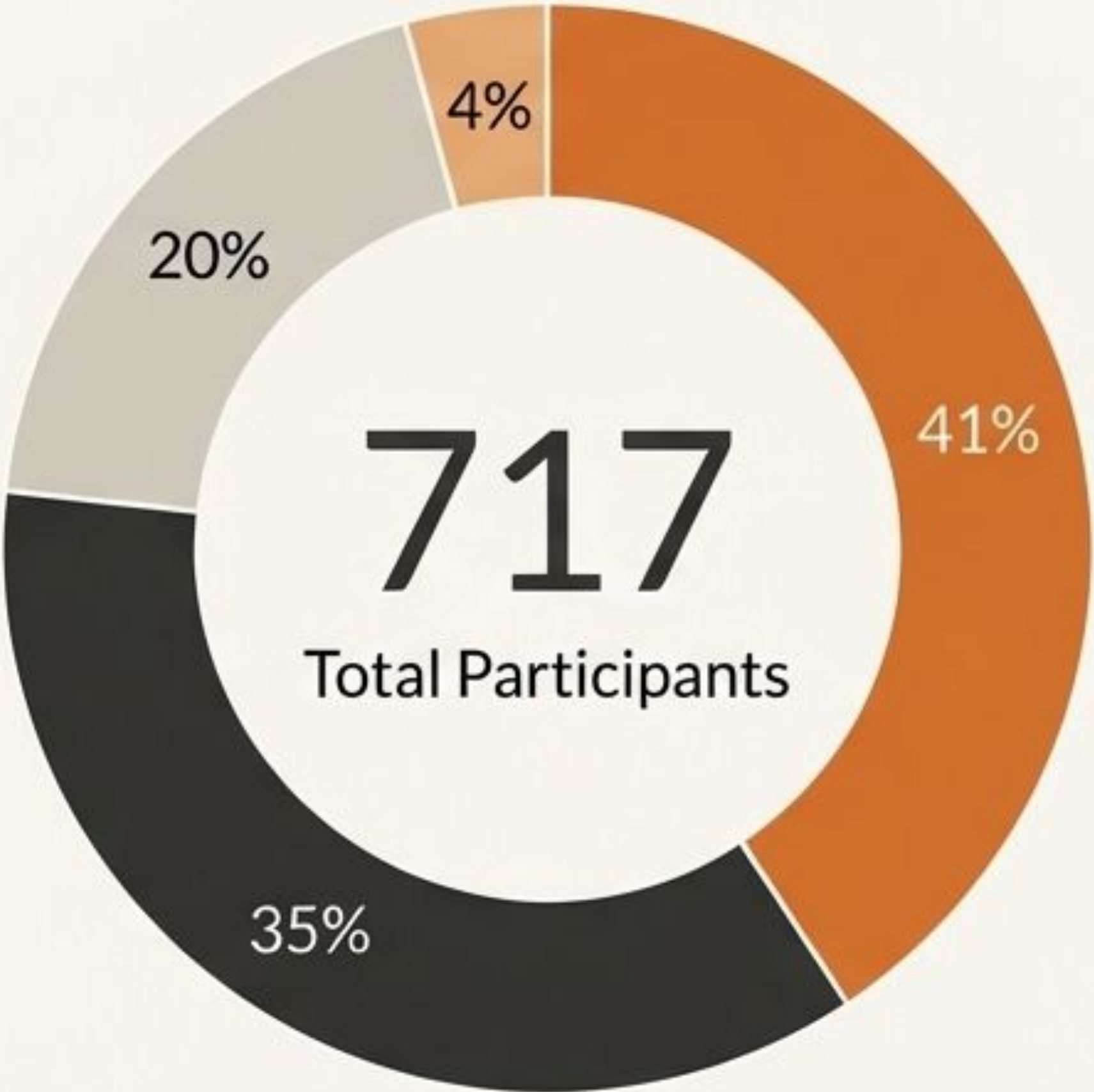
Guiding Questions

- What are our greatest **Strengths**?
- What one thing could we **Change/Strengthen**?
- How do we prepare students for **Their Future** (Class of 2038)?

We Heard from Over 700 Voices Across Our Community

Focus Groups
45 Groups | 325 Participants

Questionnaire
392 Responses



- Parents: 293 (41%)**
- Staff: 252 (35%)**
- Students (K-12): 142 (20%)**
- Community: 48 (4%)**

Key Takeaway: Participation was strong for staff and parents. Authentically engaging with community members who are not current parents remains a key opportunity for the district.

Part I: The Foundation

Our Community Identified Five Core Strengths that Define Delaware City Schools



Fostering Community

A “family-like feel”
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Resource-Rich Community

Strong partnerships and wraparound services that support students and families.

Our Greatest Strength is Our People and the Community They Build

A “Family-Like Feel”

Staff, students, and families consistently describe our district as a community where colleagues support one another and students feel safe and valued.

“Staff across all buildings consistently identify community as a defining strength of Delaware City Schools, describing it as a ‘family-like feel’ where colleagues support one another and genuinely care about student well-being.”

“Above and Beyond” Dedication

Our teachers and staff are characterized by their profound commitment, professionalism, and willingness to do whatever it takes for student success.

“Teachers are characterized as caring, compassionate, and willing to go ‘above and beyond’ to meet diverse student needs, creating supportive learning environments where students feel genuinely valued.”

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We are all Pacers!

Part II: Strengthen the Foundation

We Also Heard About the Pressures and Challenges that Strain Our Foundation



Proactive Planning

A need to approach
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Behavioral issues and social-emotional needs as impacting daily experiences

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Student Experience & Opportunities

Emphasize the need to expand and refine learning experiences

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District-wide communication and transparency for information sharing about priorities, decisions, and resource allocation

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Professional Development

Professional Development to effectively address evolving student needs and parents want to avoid burnout in teachers

Part III: Preparing for Their Future

Themes Emerged About Preparing Our Students for the Future



**Human
Foundation**



**Thinker's
Toolkit**



**Technology
Paradox**



**Bridge to
Real Life**



Pillar 1: The Human Foundation Must Come First

Staff and parents are in strong agreement: before academic rigor can take hold, students need a strong foundation in social-emotional skills. There's a shared concern that timeless traits like grit, resilience, and patience are declining and require explicit development.

Staff

“Students must first learn basic life competencies like patience, sharing, “how to be bored,” and waiting their turn before they can effectively engage in academic learning.”

Parents

“Grit, stamina, resilience... current students “do not have stamina, grit has gone away” and need explicit instruction in perseverance and handling adversity.”



Pillar 2: Building a Thinker's Toolkit for a Complex World

Beyond what they know, our community wants graduates who know *how to think*. The focus is on developing independent, analytical minds that can solve novel problems and critically evaluate information, rather than relying on technology for answers.

Parents

“Critical thinking and problem-solving skills [are] the most essential competencies... students need to ‘think outside the box,’ and ‘develop analytical abilities independent of artificial intelligence.’”

Staff

“[We need] explicit instruction in the ‘4 Cs’ (communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking) embedded throughout the school day.”



Pillar 3: Navigating the Technology Paradox

Our community recognizes that students must be prepared for a future shaped by AI. However, there is an equally strong call to ensure they can thrive without it. The goal is digital literacy and responsible use, not dependency.

Staff

“While students will be ‘an AI generation’ who must understand technology... they simultaneously need to develop capacity to ‘survive without technology’ through hands-on experiences.”

Parents

“[We need] media literacy skills to identify ‘what is real and what is fake’ and discern credible sources from misinformation.”



Pillar 4: Forging a Stronger Bridge to Real Life

There is a clear and consistent demand for skills that equip students for the practical realities of adulthood. From managing finances to exploring careers beyond a traditional college path, the community wants graduates who are self-sufficient and prepared to function as independent adults.

Parents

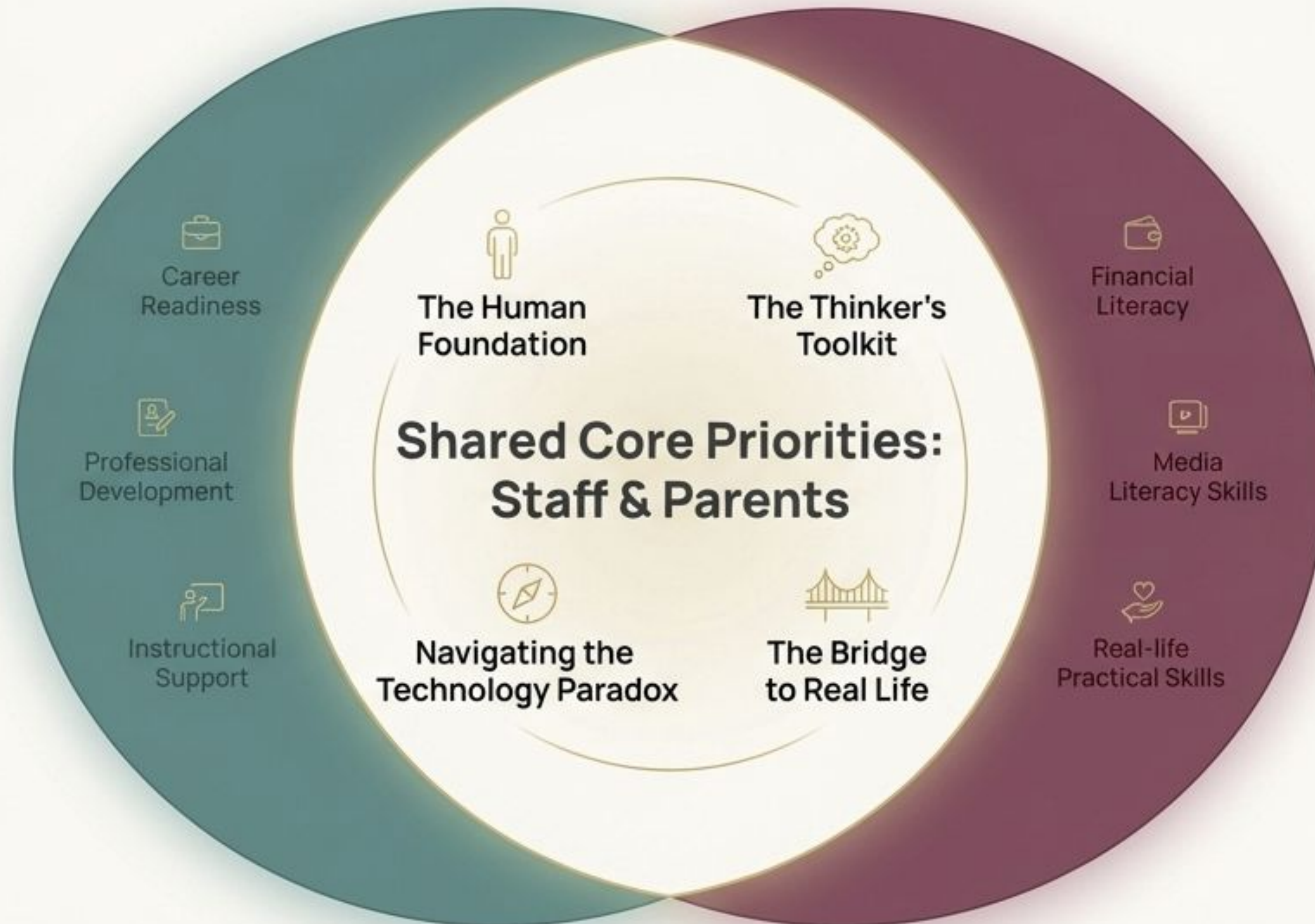
“Real-life practical skills emerge as parents’ second major priority, with strong calls for financial literacy including budgeting, money management... essentially ‘how to function.’”

Staff

“[We need] career readiness programs, expanded opportunities beyond college-prep tracks, [and] life skills instruction.”

A Portrait of Overwhelming Alignment

The priorities of staff and parents show remarkable overlap. This isn't a collection of disparate requests; it's a unified call for a more holistic approach to education focused on developing the whole person.



So, where are the students in this picture?

Students don't speak in terms of competencies like '*grit*' or 'critical thinking.' Instead, they focus on the *experiences* through which those skills are built. Their vision isn't different; it's the *practical roadmap* for how to get there. They provide the "how" to the adults' "what".



Pillar 5: Cultivating a Path of Discovery

Students see their growth happening through active engagement and exploration. They value choice and a rich variety of opportunities to discover their passions and build confidence.



Elementary students look forward to: "music and orchestra opportunities," "sports teams, clubs," and "science experiments."



Middle and High school students want: "marching band, varsity sports teams, career programs," and practical courses like "learning how to do taxes."



The common thread: An appreciation for systems that allow them to "chart their own pathway" and "try new things."

Our Shared Vision: The Delaware Graduate of 2038

Taken together, our community has described a graduate who is:

- A **Resilient Person** with a strong social-emotional foundation.
- An **Independent Thinker** who can solve problems and analyze information critically.



- An **Adaptable Technologist** who uses digital tools responsibly and effectively.
- A **Capable Adult** equipped with practical skills for life and career.

An **Engaged Explorer** who pursues their passions through diverse experiences.



A shared compass needs a North Star.

This unified vision is a powerful tool. But to guide our work for the next 15 years, it needs to be more than a report. It needs to become a **living framework** that informs our curriculum, our teaching, and our culture from kindergarten through graduation.

The community has already shown us the way forward.

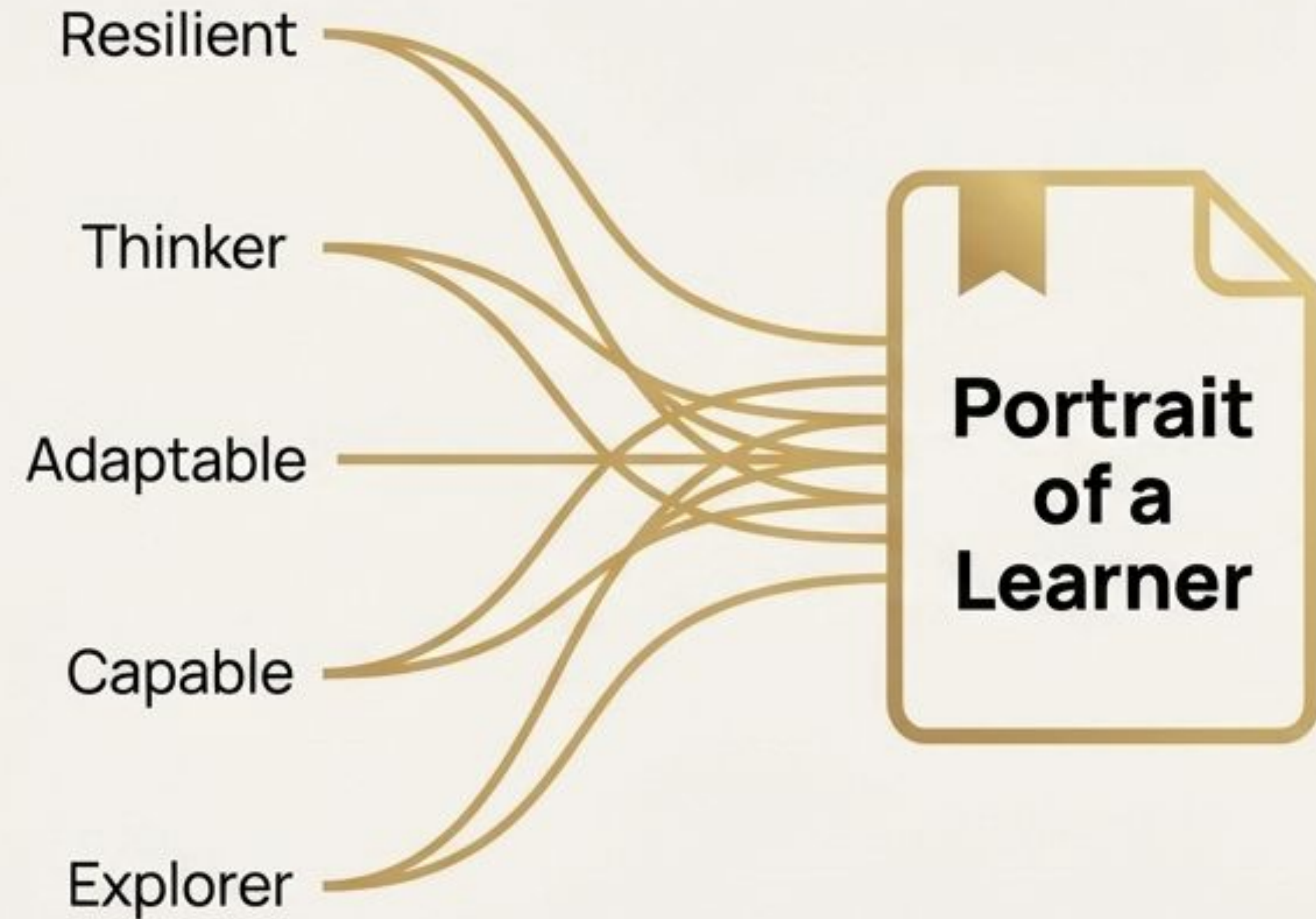
The idea of codifying these values is not new. It came directly from our stakeholders, who called for a clear, K-12 vision to unite expectations and define what it means to be a Delaware graduate.

Parents

“Several parents advocate for clearly defined district values or “Portrait of a Learner” pillars that articulate what Delaware graduates should embody—resilience, empathy, curiosity, critical thinking—md—providing coherent K-12 vision rather than fragmented expectations.”

Our Next Step: Codifying Our Shared Vision

We propose embarking on a collaborative process to create a formal “Portrait of a Learner” for Delaware City Schools. This portrait will serve as our North Star—a public commitment that will guide strategic planning, professional development, and student experiences for years to come. It transforms this feedback from a moment in time into a lasting legacy.

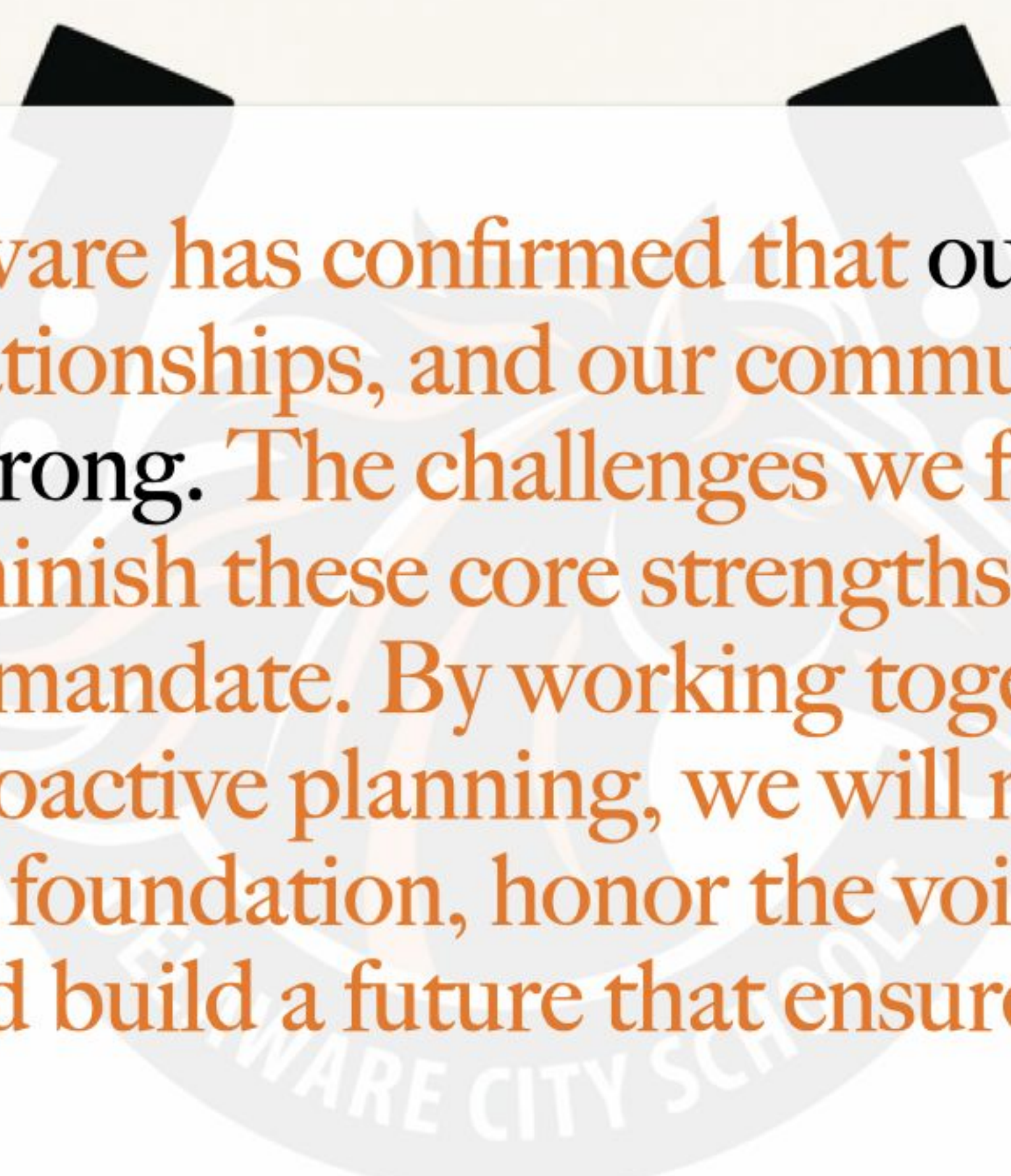


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Mission: Delaware has confirmed that our foundation- our people, our relationships, and our community- is exceptionally strong. The challenges we face are real, but they do not diminish these core strengths. Instead, they provide a clear mandate. By working together with purpose and proactive planning, we will mend any fractures in our foundation, honor the voices of our community, and build a future that ensures every student can thrive.

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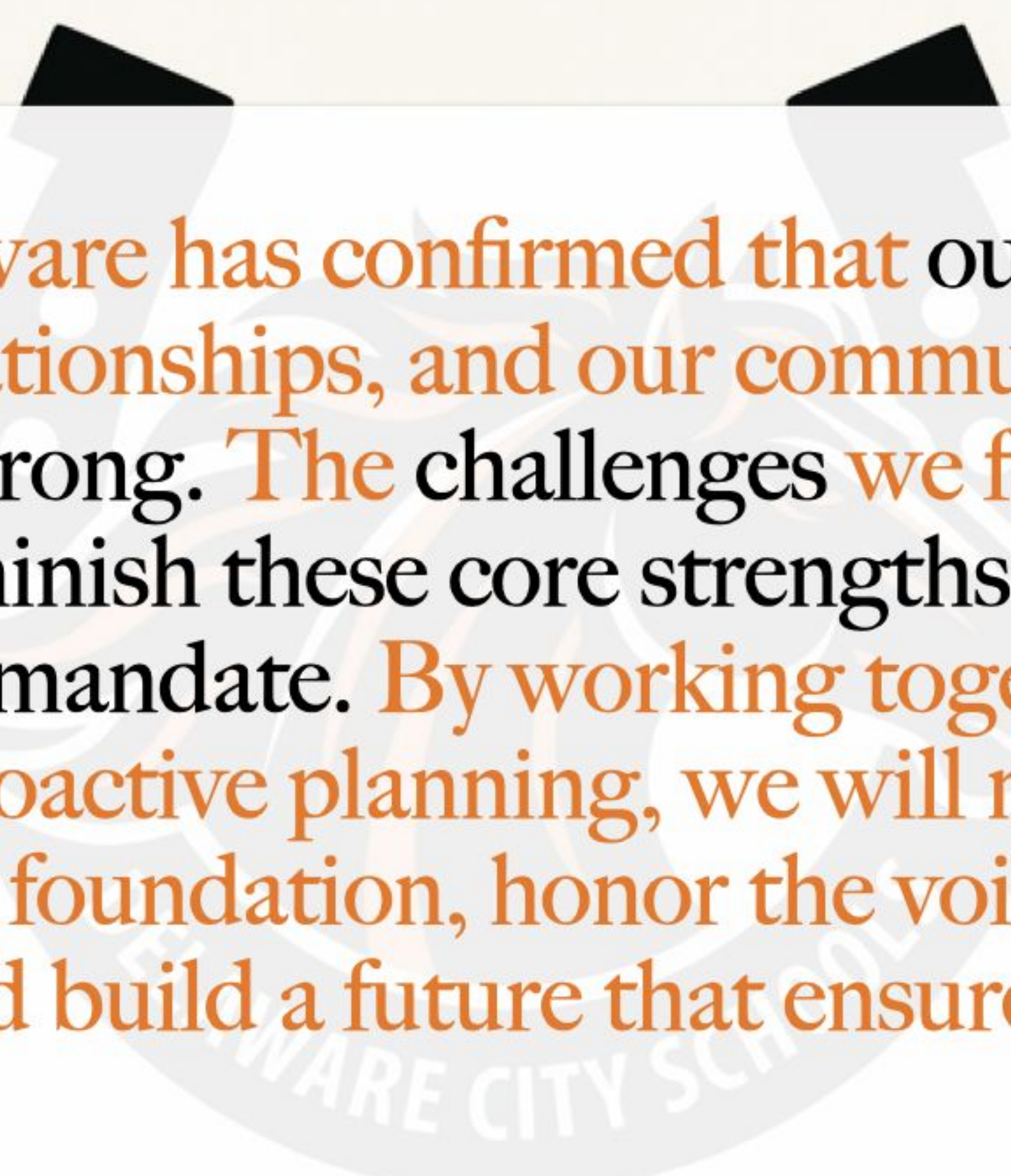
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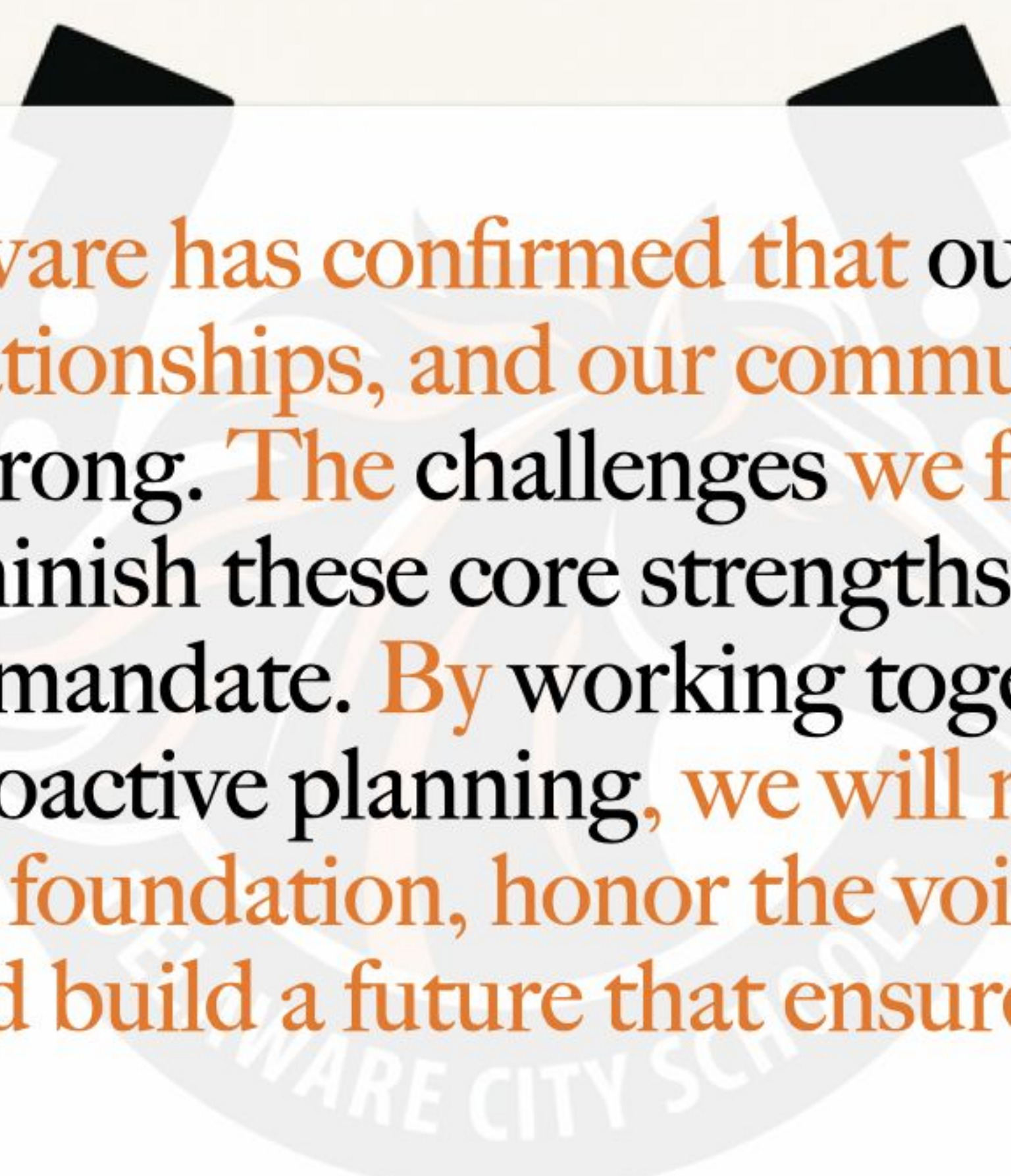
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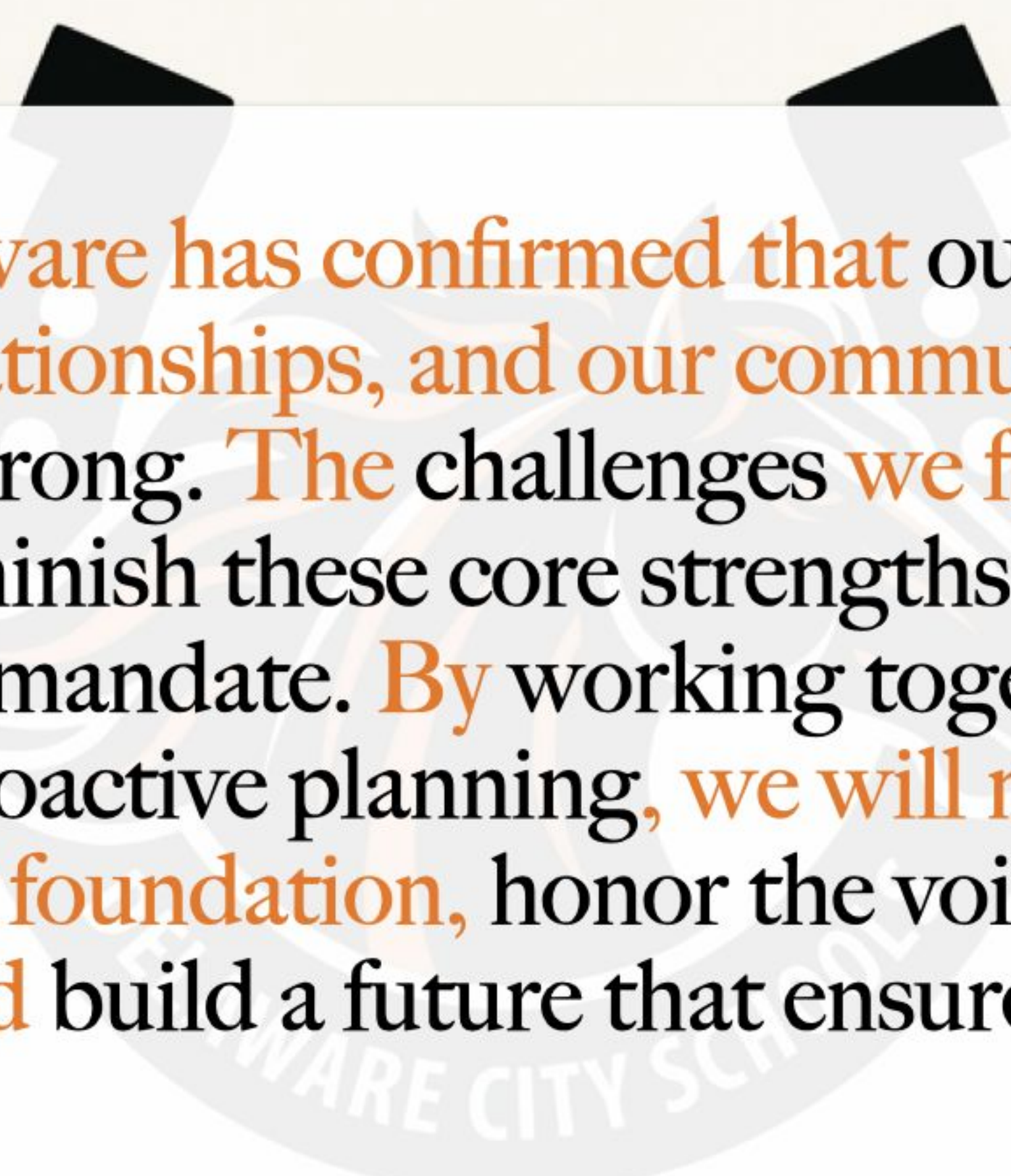
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Our foundation is exceptionally strong

Our challenges are real

They do not diminish these core strengths

They provide a clear mandate

Working together with purpose and proactive planning

We will honor the voices of our community

We will build a future that ensures every student can thrive

Mission: Delaware

A Report on Our Community Conversation



Foundational and Future Ready Academics

Goal: Advance academic excellence through personalized, engaging learning experiences that prepare all students for their chosen pathways.



Community Engagement and Partnerships

Goal: Clear, consolidated, proactive & responsive communication while continuing to expand partnerships



Student Experience

Goal: Support the comprehensive development of all students through integrated academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and wellness supports while engaging student voice.



Facility Master Planning

Goal: Provide safe, modern, well-maintained facilities and strategic allocation of resources that support 21st-century learning that are prepared for our future.

Delaware City Schools

Achieving Excellence, Honoring Tradition





Enrollment Projections

The New 10-Year Forecast: Lower Near-Term Projections on a More Accurate Foundation

The 2025 enrollment report presents a slightly more conservative growth trajectory than the 2024 report. This adjustment is driven by a lower-than-projected actual enrollment baseline for 2025–26.



Lower Starting Point

The forecast begins with 69 fewer students than previously projected, grounding our outlook in the most current, actual data.



Stronger Growth Signals

Despite the lower baseline, the underlying growth drivers—including a significantly expanded housing pipeline and a 9% rebound in local births—are stronger than ever, signaling robust future enrollment.



The Bottom Line

We project an **increase of 627 students** over the next 10 years, reaching a total enrollment of **6,294** by 2035-36.

At a Glance: Key Data Drivers of the 2025 Enrollment Projection

1. Accurate Baseline

-1.9%

Actual 2025-26 enrollment was lower than projected, resetting the forecast.

2. Expanded Housing

+1,290

Additional planned housing units identified in the development pipeline.

3. Birth Rate Rebound

+9%

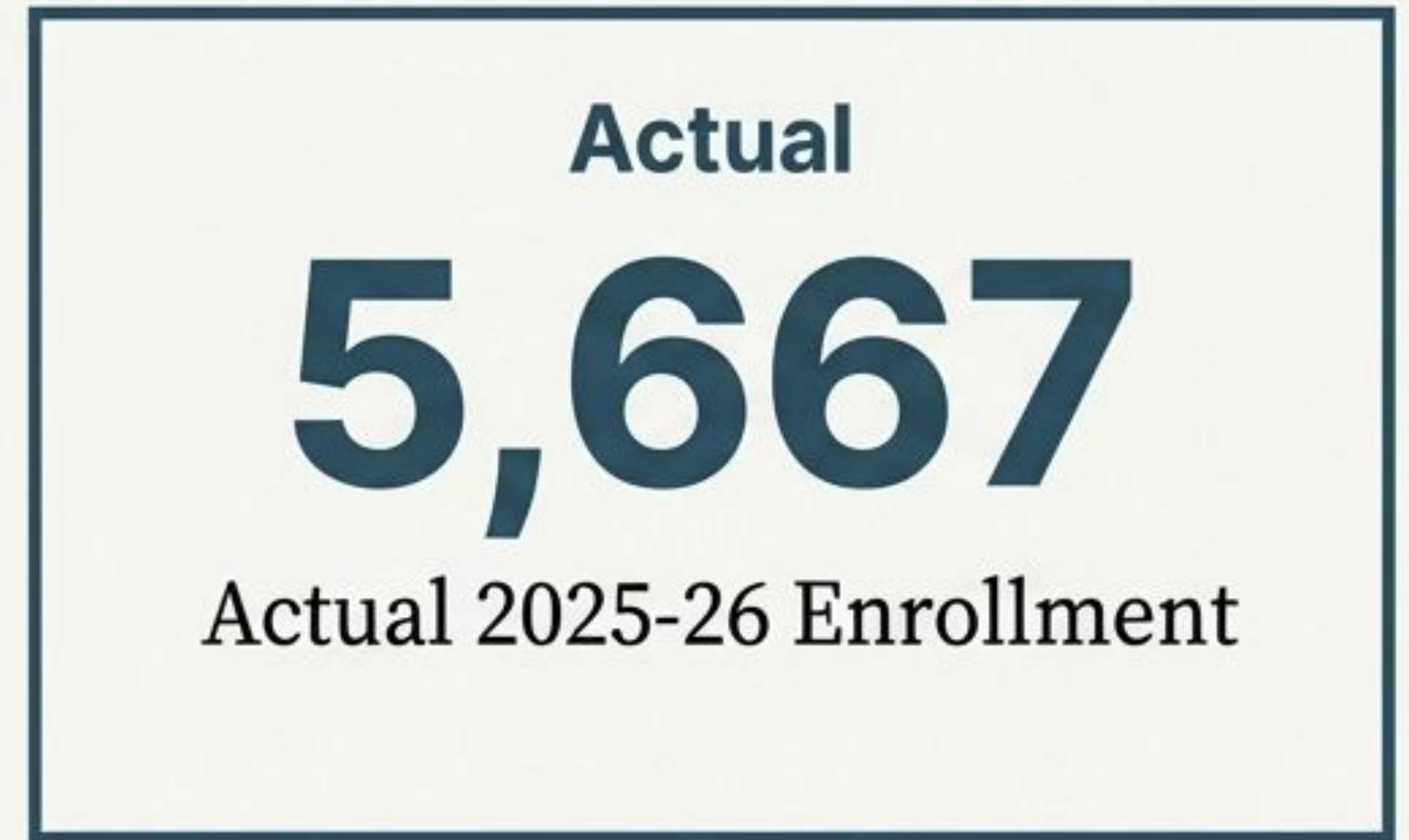
Year-over-year increase in births, signaling future kindergarten class growth.

4. Population Growth

+10.3%

Projected increase in the total district population by 2030.

Our New Forecast is Grounded in a Lower, Actual Enrollment Baseline



The actual 2025-26 enrollment was **112 students (-1.9%) lower** than projected. This updated, more accurate figure serves as the new baseline, making the entire 10-year forecast more conservative and reliable.

Growth Driver #1: The Housing Development Pipeline is Significantly Stronger and More Expansive



36

Total active developments,
an increase of 11 from the
2024 report.



6,107

Total planned residential
units, an increase of
1,290 units.



4,532

Units remaining to be
built that will generate
future students.

Growth Driver #2: Building Permit Activity Confirms Ongoing Residential Construction



547

Total single-family permits issued for the full year 2024.

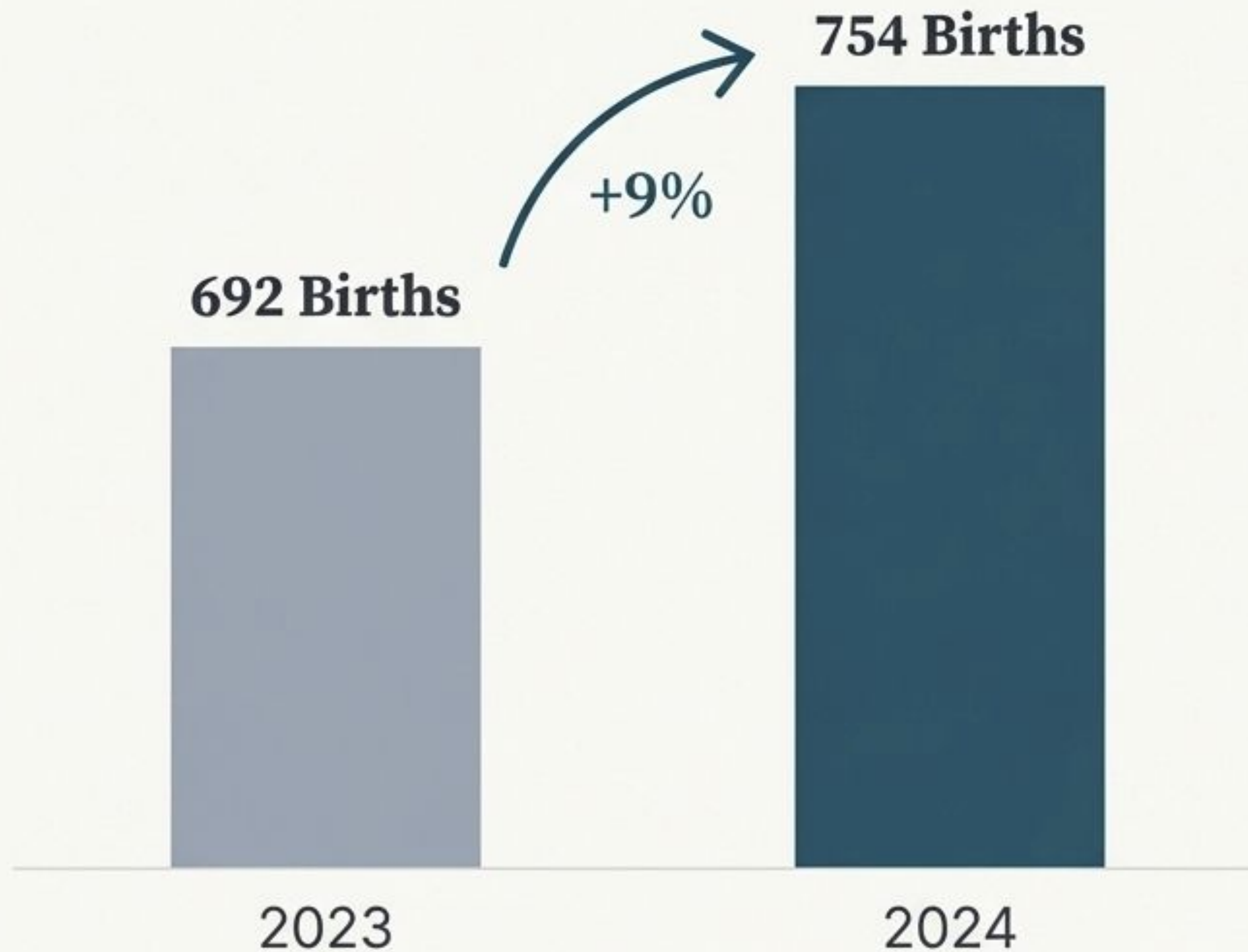


292

Single-family permits issued through July 2025, indicating a continued pace of development.

This steady permit activity provides tangible evidence that the housing units in the development pipeline are progressing toward completion.

Growth Driver #3: A 9% Rebound in Births Signals Future Enrollment Increases Starting in 2029



+9% Increase. This significant uptick will begin to impact kindergarten enrollment in **the 2029–30 school year.**

Growth Driver #4: Broader Demographic Trends

Project Sustained Growth for the District



+10.3%

Total District Population

Projected growth from 42,001 to 46,318 by 2030.



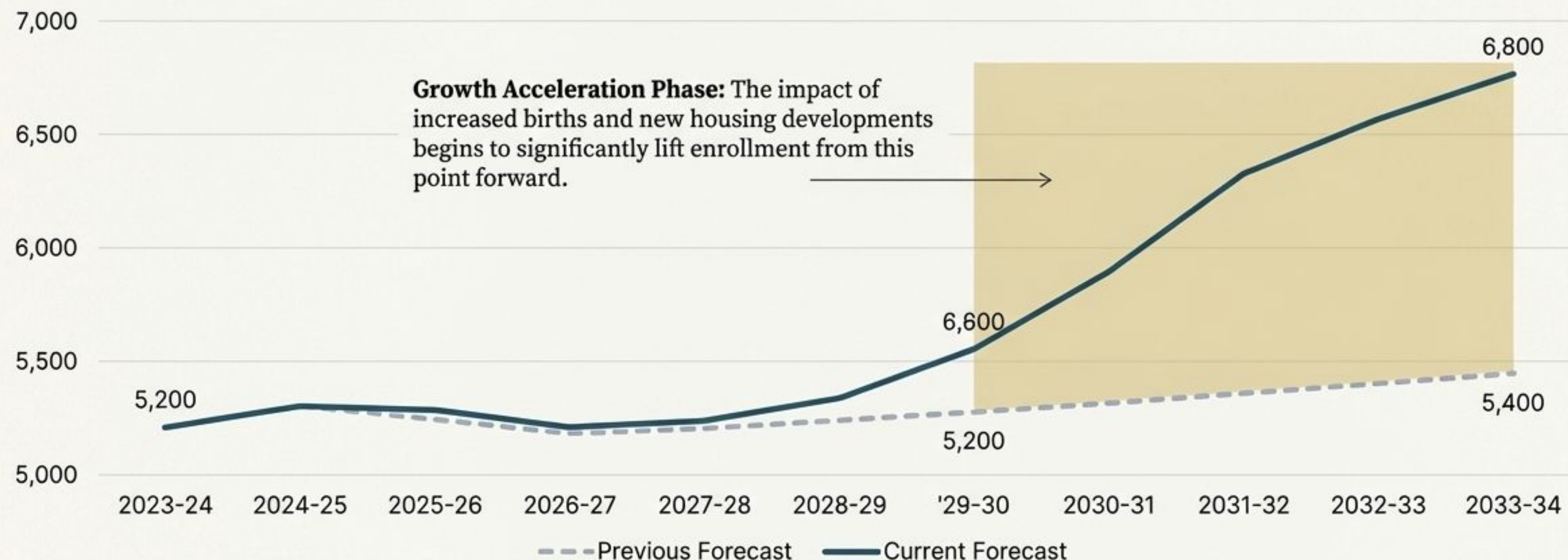
+6.0%

School-Age Population (0-18)

Projected increase from 10,005 to 10,601 by 2030.

The overall community is growing, providing a solid demographic foundation for future increases in student enrollment.

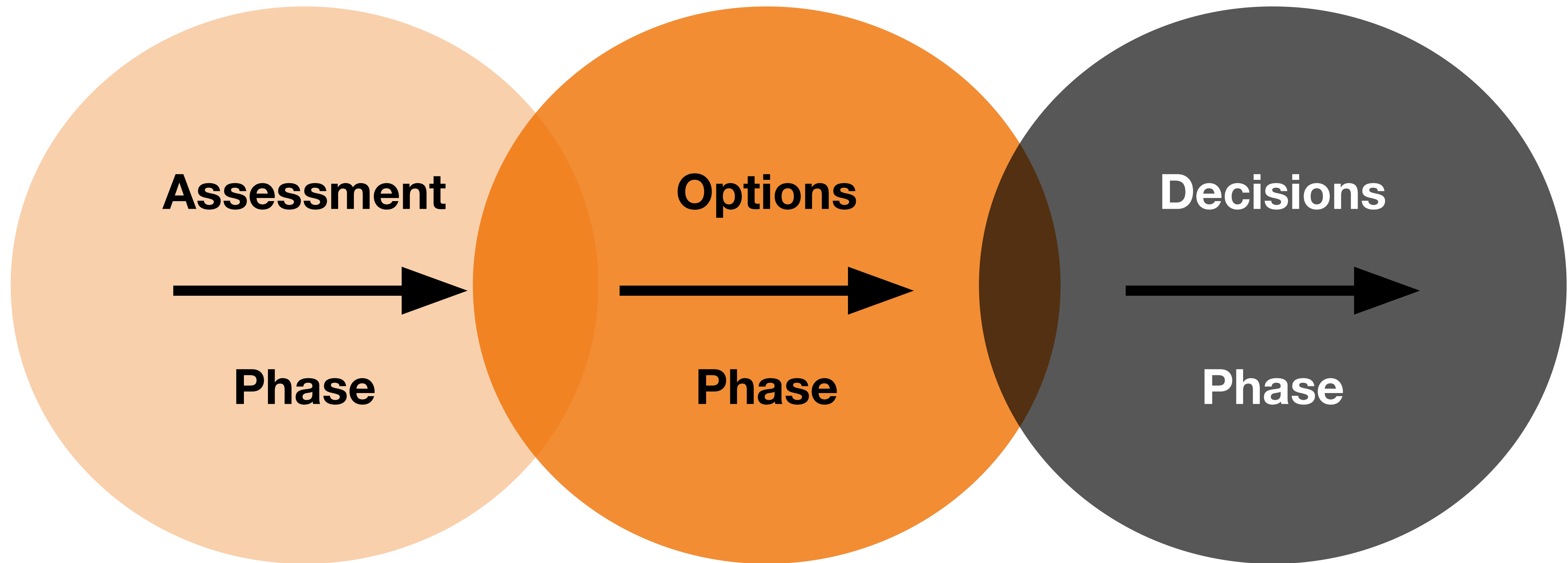
The New Trajectory: Strong Growth Indicators Reshape the Forecast After an Initial Reset



The initial conservative years, driven by the baseline adjustment, give way to a period of robust growth. This demonstrates a healthy, sustainable enrollment trajectory built on updated, verifiable data.



Facilities Master Plan



Facilities Master Plan

Physical Assessment

What physical assets are in need of renovation or replacement?

Educational Assessment

How do our facilities support the educational focus of the district?

Financial Assessment

What are the priorities and the associated costs?

Facilities Master Plan



Creating a common language for our choices.



REPAIR

Maintain or update infrastructure. Addresses **physical needs only**. No change in program or physical appearance.



RENOVATE

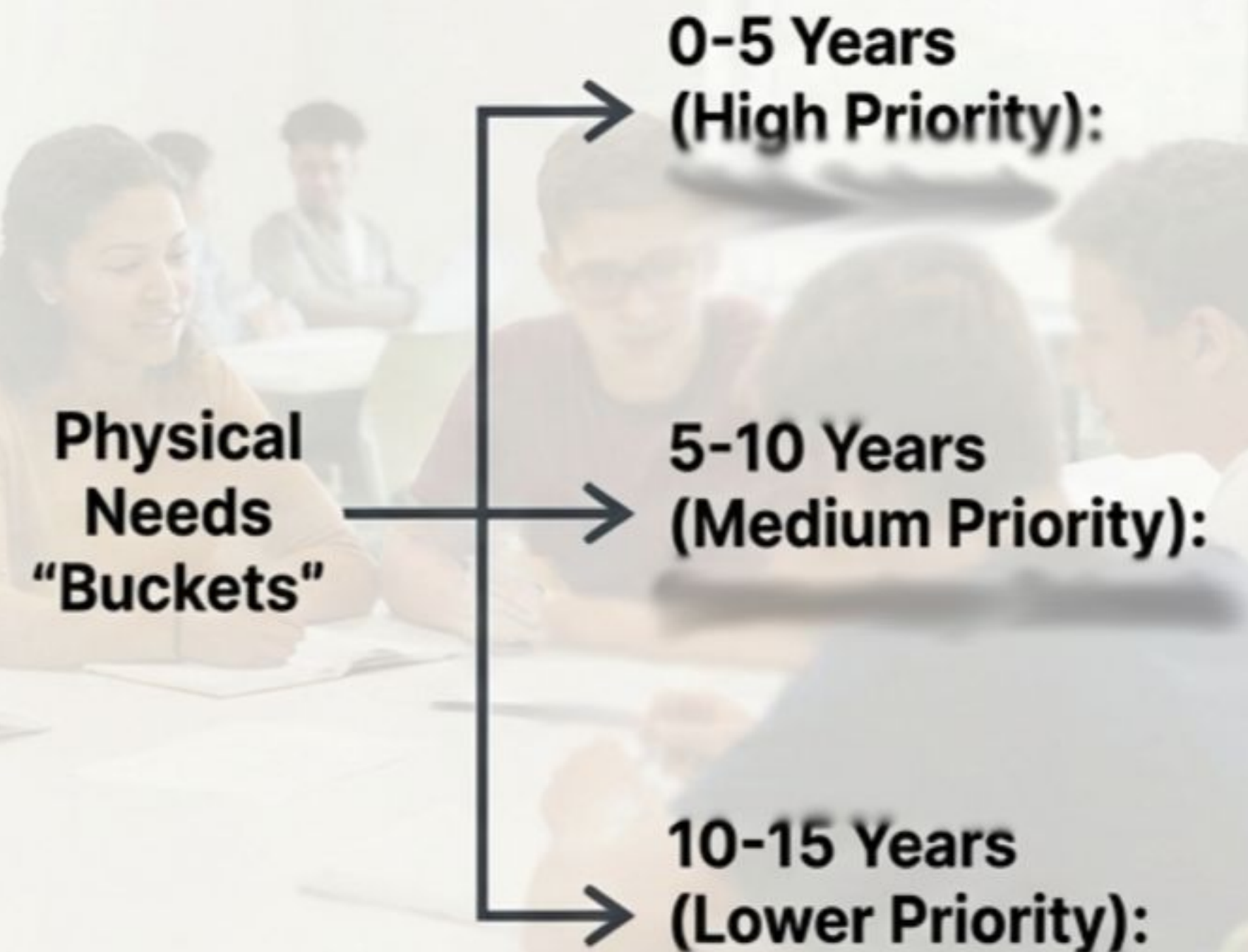
Change use of existing structure to allow better use. Addresses **physical AND educational needs**. Can include right-sized spaces and additions.



REBUILD

Construct new structure to meet priorities. Also addresses **physical AND educational needs**. Eliminates dysfunctional building stock and addresses programmatic deficiencies.

Prioritization Framework



Next Steps



**Request for
Qualifications**

**Released ASAP and
deadline of January 15**

**Review and interview
top 3 Submissions**

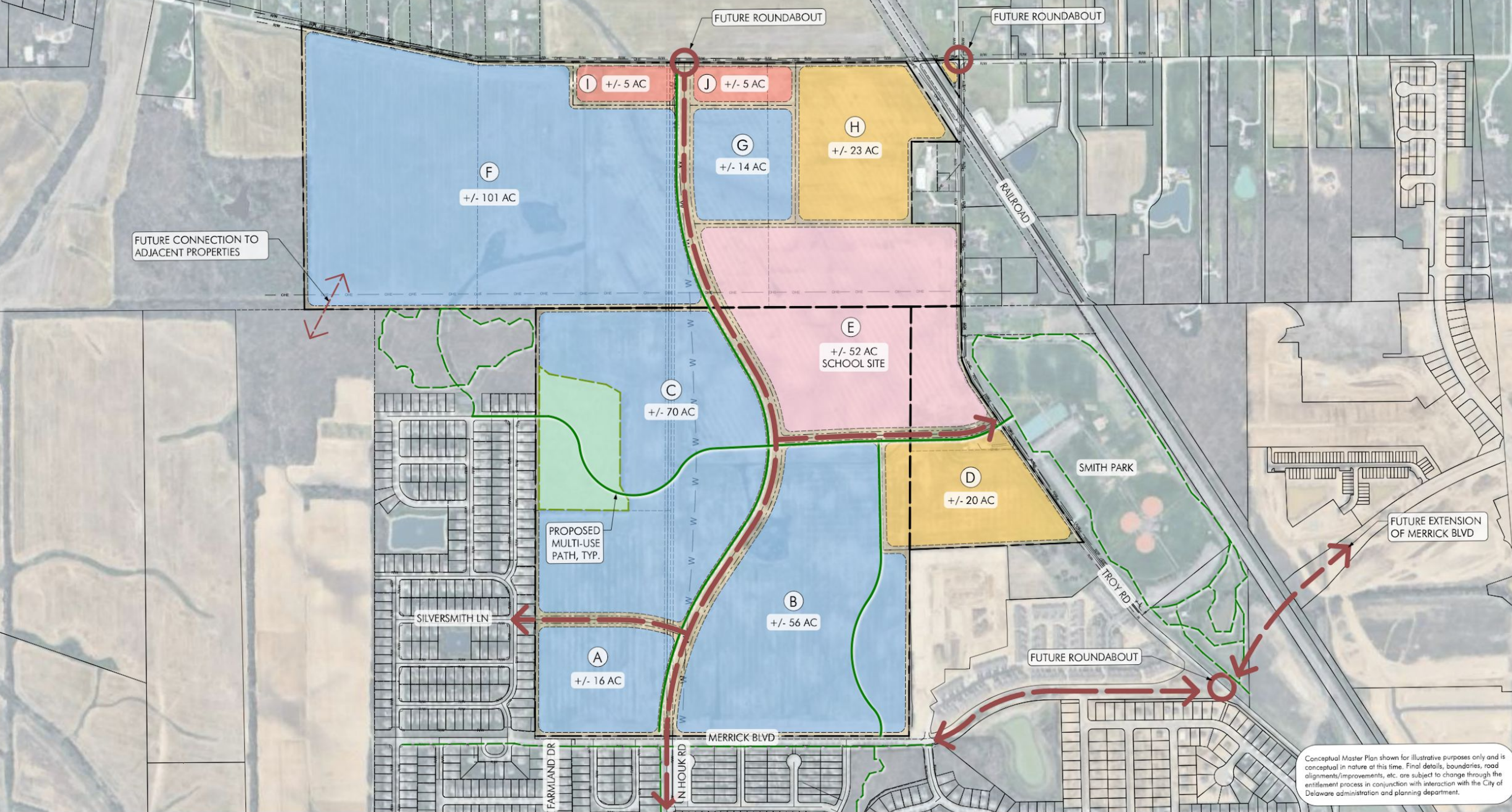
Rubric

Next Steps



Ryan
Homes

52 Acre Donation



Conceptual Master Plan shown for illustrative purposes only and is conceptual in nature at this time. Final details, boundaries, road alignments/improvements, etc. are subject to change through the entitlement process in conjunction with interaction with the City of Delaware administration and planning department.

