

NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203



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New Trier examines options for campus renovation, new construction

Exploring how the New Trier facilities can best support student learning now and in the future, the Board of Education will hear recommendations ranging from selective renovation at both campuses to significant demolition and reconstruction. The options will be presented at a Special Meeting of the Board of Education on July 7. The presentation is the next step in the District's long-range facilities planning at both campuses.

"Many of our facilities are dated and inefficient," said Linda Yonke, Superintendent. "Our Winnetka Campus classrooms were designed for an era that no longer exists educationally. Also, older buildings are costly to maintain and those costs increase over time. Changes are necessary – if not now, then at some point in the future. So with effectiveness and efficiency in mind, we are taking a long-range look at how our facilities need to support education."

Campus Deficiencies at Winnetka and Northfield

Deficiencies exist at both campuses – in terms of space, infrastructure, coherent design and "way-finding," adjacencies, and ADA accessibility, among others. The current facilities also limit scheduling and the course offerings the District is able to provide to students, as well as constrain extracurricular activity possibilities.

Inefficient operationally and instructionally, the aging Winnetka Campus is a combination of buildings that range from 90 to 34 years old, with multiple additions that were built over time. The oldest parts of the campus are the 1912 student cafeteria and the 1925 boiler plant. The 1931 Tech Arts building, at the northwest corner of the campus, has had no significant renovation in its 77 years. The North building was an addition in 1934 behind the original Tower building to provide more classrooms for a growing community. The four-story music building, along Woodland Avenue to the west of the campus, was added in 1950, blocking in the single-story cafeteria and robbing it of its windows and natural light. In 1954, the original Tower Building was razed and replaced by the current front façade and clock tower. The newest addition to the Winnetka Campus came 34 years ago, when auxiliary gyms were built along the southeast corner of the campus.

The Northfield Campus, which was open from 1965 until 1985, was renovated when it re-opened for freshmen in 2001. Short on classroom and educational program space, the campus will experience some pressure relief when Building B – currently leased to Stepan Chemical Company -- returns to school district use in 2009 when the Stepan lease expires.

Facilities Options

At the July 7 meeting, Facilities Workshop Committee members will outline the advantages, disadvantages, and preliminary cost estimates of the two recommended facilities options the committee agreed to forward to the Board for further exploration and consideration. They also will explain the process and criteria they used to examine facilities issues and to eliminate and select options for recommendation. The 60-member committee – over half of whom are community members -- met monthly this spring to complete their study.

"The facilities options being presented to the Board are preliminary concepts," Dr. Yonke continued. "Tonight's presentation will update the Board on the work the committee has been doing for the past five months, and will begin the process of examining -- along with the community -- how we can best meet the facilities challenges at both of our campuses."

Reaching a Recommendation

Studying the facilities issues, the Workshop Committee identified deficiencies in the following areas: size, number and configuration of classrooms; size, configuration and location of offices; disabled individuals' limited accessibility to various parts of both campuses; constrained extracurricular activities; limited meeting space; limited building flexibility due to space constraints; insufficient student and staff spaces for out-of-class time; and the age of the physical plant buildings and infrastructure.

After identifying the facilities issues and challenges, the Workshop Committee ranked and agreed on the criteria they would use to assess and recommend facilities options. In order of importance, their evaluation criteria were: educational program, student and staff life, a coherent solution, consideration of community and economic support, opportunities for extracurricular involvement, viability, and community access.

They began with eight potential options, then narrowed the options to five, and then narrowed again to the two facilities possibilities they are recommending. One option is to replace a portion of the Winnetka Campus with new construction and make major repairs and renovations at both campuses. A second option is to build a new Winnetka Campus north of the existing site and renovate portions of the Northfield Campus.

"Status Quo" Needs Further Study

The Workshop Committee also agreed that the Board should examine what would happen with a "status quo" scenario – meaning the District would complete the necessary selective, scheduled renovations and repairs – estimated at \$95 million – over a ten year period, recognizing that this plan would not address most of the significant issues identified by the facilities study.

"One of the questions the Board and community will need to address is, 'Is it worth investing so heavily into existing facilities when so many are energy-inefficient and are no longer optimal for meeting the need,'" said John Neiweem, Director of Physical Plant Services. "There comes a point of diminishing returns and wanting to maximize your investment."

"Major Addition and Renovation" Option

The "Major Addition and Renovation" Option consists of demolishing the western third of the Winnetka Campus – the single-story 1912 cafeteria, the 1934 Tech Arts building, the music building, and the loading dock – and replacing it with new construction and a basement. The Gaffney Auditorium, also located on the campus' west side, would remain. In addition, this option recommends renovations to the central area of the campus – the North building and the Tower building – and light renovation of the east area.

Among many advantages, this option would improve energy efficiency and climate control, increase natural light, improve traffic patterns by relocating the loading dock and truck traffic, increase storage for student projects and classroom supplies, and improve food service with a new cafeteria and kitchen. It also would provide 108 new – of 180 total – well-proportioned 900-square-foot classrooms. It would create flexible, multi-use space in a new cafeteria that could be used the entire day, and improve circulation and ADA accessibility by providing disabled individuals with full access to new music and technical arts facilities. Larger department offices – where students drop in to meet with their teachers – provide faculty and students with more collaborative work space. The relocation of administration to the first floor improves public accessibility and security, and the addition of a basement provides more new space for the educational program.

At the Northfield Campus, renovation provides additional classrooms or lab space for dance, family and consumer sciences, kinetic wellness, science, and special education. Renovation and relocation also provides for improved business education and practical arts offices, a multipurpose room, gallery/commons area and expanded storage. Improvements to the pool and auditorium also are specified in the plan, as is the relocation of the New Trier Extension Program and the move of the Human Resources Office from Winnetka to Northfield, freeing vacated space at Winnetka for other uses.

A field house at Winnetka and a pool at Northfield are additional options that could be added to this plan.

The disadvantages of this option are the higher operating costs associated with the existing, aging buildings and infrastructure. In addition, some classrooms remain that are too small and/or ill-proportioned for optimal teaching and learning. Poor circulation and some ADA

issues are not addressed in the Kinetic Wellness and athletic areas, and a playfield is lost to the construction project. This option also disrupts school operations while school is in session on campus. Phasing is estimated to take four years.

"This option to combine some new construction with some renovation and reassignment of functions within the space we have meets many immediate needs," Dr. Yonke added. "The disadvantages are that there is a longer period of disruption due to longer phasing, and it does not fully address facilities challenges elsewhere in the District, delaying those decisions for a future time."

The preliminary cost to implement the major addition and renovation plan ranges from an estimated \$255.8 million to \$325.8 million, depending on whether or not a field house and a pool are included. These costs equate to an increase between \$384 to \$537 per every \$10,000 in taxes for the option without a field house and pool, or between \$448 to \$619 per every \$10,000 for a plan with a field house and a pool.

"New Construction" Option

The "New Construction" option consists of building a new Winnetka Campus on the existing north parcel of land, and later demolishing the existing Winnetka Campus when the new facility is completed.

Building a completely new Winnetka Campus, with renovations and additions at Northfield, has all the same advantages of the "Major Addition and Renovation" Option, but with greater flexibility. New construction also results in more usable square footage than the "Major Addition and Renovation" Option provides. Phasing is estimated to take two years – half of the disruption time of the other option and one-fifth of the time of implementing the necessary changes required to remain "status quo."

Additional advantages include the ability to "start with a blank slate" in order to efficiently and effectively design a campus for innovative 21st century needs while, at the same time, explore the opportunity to adequately reflect the historical, traditional architecture of the neighborhood and community.

A new facility permits space and classroom design for adequate natural light and optimal acoustics, ergonomics and indoor air quality – all contributing factors to a student's total

school experience and academic performance. Opportunities exist for innovative uses of space, maximum flexibility, improved traffic circulation and drop off, and increased parking in a central location that is more user-friendly to visitors and staff while more aesthetically pleasing to neighbors.

All new construction on mostly open land also improves the phasing of the project by providing the least disruption to school during construction.

The disadvantages of the "New Construction" Option are the higher up-front costs and the loss of a playfield. Also, the shift of the campus to the north of the property from the south could be viewed as a disadvantage by some community members.

The phasing of the "New Construction" Option is over two years. The preliminary cost for implementation is an estimated \$358.5 to \$396.3 million, and includes the field house and pool. These costs equate to an increase of \$538 to \$753 per every \$10,000 in taxes.

Next Steps

Following the July 7 presentation, the Board will discuss the options, seek information to further explore the recommendations, and identify a timeline for facilities planning. The District also will survey the community and will continue to host community meetings and facilities tours.

This spring, Dr. Yonke met with nearly 30 community groups to explain the facilities challenges. In addition, the District hosted nine Open Community Meetings and Winnetka Campus tours from January through June.

On July 8, another facilities overview meeting will be hosted especially for residents who live near the Winnetka Campus facility. The 45-minute presentation will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the McGee Theatre and will be followed by a campus tour, starting on the roof.

"Future study and continued community input are our next steps," Dr. Yonke added. "The Board has no preferences at this point. Historically, education has been highly valued by this community – perhaps its highest value. We're now at a crossroads of deciding the vision of New Trier for the next 100 years."

