



Facilities Utilization Study Update

Preliminary Report on Facilities Utilization Study is June 28

A school district where all schools are up-to-date and equipped for this generation of students and the generations of students to come. This is the goal of one ambitious endeavor of Spring Lake Park School District 16.

For over a year, the district has been studying the condition and the usage of the buildings in our school district. Engineers and architects have consulted with staff and community members and have conducted their own study of each of the buildings and schools in the district, determining the needs and the usage of each site.

Then, in February 2005, a school-community Facilities Utilization Task Force began to meet to review recommendations of the architects and engineers and to make a sound determination for future School Board consideration. A timeline was developed which included a **preliminary update** to the Board in the spring/summer of 2005. **The administration and Task Force will make this presentation on June 28, 2005, at 7:00 p.m., in the Board of Education Building, 8000 Highway 65 NE, Spring Lake Park.**

Although the Task Force has not agreed upon a facilities plan at this time, it has reached consensus on some major items of consideration. First, the Task Force is unanimous in emphasizing that all schools need significant electrical and mechanical upgrades, including heating and plumbing, for energy efficiency and safety. They also are unanimous in their agreement that there should be a school district presence in Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley, and that there should ideally be a presence in the new high growth areas of Blaine as well.

The Task Force also agrees that additional classrooms are needed at Westwood Middle School due to enrollment growth and changing and expanded academic programs.

In addition to the professional input of architects and engineers, as well as construction management, there are three other professional resources that have been utilized by the Task Force for this study.

Hazel Reinhardt, a former demographer for the state of Minnesota, has examined enrollment trends of the district, studied relevant data on new housing projections, as well as present aging demographics of our district. In a preliminary report to the School Board, she noted the "very fast and very dramatic" growth in the northern area of Blaine. This, she said, presents a challenge and perhaps an opportunity.

Because all districts must submit their building plans to the State Department of Education for the department's "review and comment" process, the district has also consulted with John Ryberg, the Facilities Specialist for the State

Department. He has already expressed concern that the "schools have exceeded their expected life span."

Further, he stated that the Spring Lake Park High School complex is utilized for too many purposes. He noted, for example, that the high school site additionally hosts the district office, a multitude of community services programs, early childhood center, the high school Learning Alternatives Center, as well as an elementary school, in a land area that was originally planned for the high school alone!

Additionally, a professional survey of community members from throughout the school district was prepared and conducted for the school district by the Center of Community Opinion and those results will also be part of the Task Force's deliberations

Perhaps the items generating the greatest level of excitement and discussion among Task Force members are

- 1) strong consideration for a K-3 elementary school to be located in the fast-growing area of Blaine and,
- 2) 2) the reconstruction of some (50-year-old) portions of the high school to produce a far more up-to-date facility, to better accommodate changing academic programs, to address space issues, and to improve security issues.

There is still much to be done before there is a completed and specific plan for upgrading our facilities.

Following the June 28 presentation, throughout this summer and next fall, plans will be modified, revised, and fine-tuned. Public presentations, discussions, and listening sessions will occur during the fall, and through November. Following additional modifications, a final facilities plan will be presented to the School Board possibly in December 2005.

An eventual Board-approved facilities plan will lead to a community vote on a bond referendum. This could take place a little before or after March 2006

The bond project is expected to be substantial because our needs are great. The School Board, administration, and Task Force, however, want to assure the public that the cost of a bond referendum would not exceed \$15-\$20 a month for the average homeowner in the school district.

A bond referendum is still some time away (the spring of 2006) but we want the public to know what we're thinking, projecting, and planning throughout the process. We also want to be sure the public is aware of future opportunities to listen, learn, and comment as our facilities plan moves closer to completion.

A good way to stay informed is to continue to visit "Blueprint for Improving Facilities, Security, and Student Achievement" on the district web site.