

State College Area School District

District Wide Facility Master Planning - Elementary Options 2016

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What's happening?

A: The district is undertaking an accelerated District-Wide Facilities Master Plan (DWFMP) review focused on elementary schools. This DWFMP will update the 2009 and the 2014 master plans that concentrated on the high school. The schools under consideration date to the 1950s or prior with the last renovations completed in the 1960s. (For more information on the DWFMP go to: <http://www.scasd.org/domain/2420>)

Q: Why is it important for the district to update elementary schools?

A: Many of our schools have been updated with air conditioning, working and efficient heating, daylighting, ADA accessibility, permanent walls between classrooms for noise reduction, etc. The schools being recommended for updates are not equal to those schools, and the district wants to create equitable learning environments for all K-5 students.

Q: Why now?

A: The district chose to begin the master plan review about six months ahead of schedule to take advantage of opportunities for significant non-local funding (i.e. state grants and reimbursement for construction projects), which would reduce project costs for district taxpayers. If the district had not met deadlines this spring to apply for the funding, it would not have been eligible for these funds.

Q: Which schools are identified as potential projects?

A: Radio Park and Houserville elementary schools were designated in the state grant application because, of the district's older elementary schools, they are expected to be the largest projects with the highest cost to renovate and therefore could receive the largest reimbursement. PlanCon (the vehicle by which the State reimburses local school districts for construction projects) applications were submitted for potential Radio Park, Houserville and Corl Street Elementary renovation and/or new construction projects.

Q: Does that mean those schools will be renovated?

A: Nothing has been decided yet. As required, the DWFMP consultants, Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates and Massaro Construction Management Services, submitted PlanCon applications with rudimentary placeholder designs for updated Radio Park, Houserville and Corl Street buildings. Design proposals will take into account input received at community forums this summer and in September. The Board of School Directors will make final decisions in late September or early October.

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Q. If it is decided to renovate a school, how will construction take place with students in the schools?

A. The design team, consisting of the architect and construction managers, will schedule the work to occur in phases such that students and employees are separated from the construction work. This type of phasing has occurred in other elementary projects such as Easterly Parkway, Park Forest, Gray's Woods and Ferguson Township, as well as the high school project.

Q: What funding is available?

A: The district met an April 1 application deadline for a state grant that could reimburse two capital projects by 10 percent, up to \$2 million each. In addition, the district applied for state PlanCon funds before a May 15 moratorium (for additional information see <http://www.pasbo.org/plancon>) took effect on the school construction reimbursement program. PlanCon funding could provide \$2.2 million to \$2.4 million for two capital projects. Both funding opportunities come with construction deadlines. The state grant requires substantial completion of projects by June 2018.

Q: What elementary options are being considered during the DWFMP update?

A: The Board will evaluate eight options containing different combinations of renovation and/or new construction projects for Radio Park, Houserville and Corl Street. To help assess future enrollment patterns and capacity demands, the district has commissioned a demographic analysis of school attendance zones, using geographic information systems and municipal data.

Q: Will Lemont Elementary be repurposed?

A: It's a possibility. Lemont currently serves K-2 students; Houserville, its sister school, serves grades 3-5. Combining these two schools into one facility has been in district master planning since 1999. Community input will help shape a decision on the future use of the Lemont Elementary building.

Q: If Corl Street is repurposed, where would its students go?

A: That hasn't been determined yet. The demographic analysis will identify the population centers of the district for the future. Combined with the updated demographics, the DWFMP will assist in providing recommendations for the attendance areas. In this case, there would be a process for determining the best repurposing decisions.

Q: What are the estimated project costs?

A: Current estimates are \$16 million to \$19 million for Radio Park and Houserville each, and about \$10 million to \$12 million for Corl Street. These are maximum estimated costs and may come down during the design process.

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Q: How will the district pay for these projects?

A: Through fiscal planning, the district has the financial capacity for \$40 million for elementary school capital projects.

Q: Is there enough land to build new buildings on the current sites for Houserville/Lemont, Radio Park and Corl Street?

A: This will be determined with site geological testing and investigation.

Q: If the district has to bus students farther, would there be an increase in busing costs?

A: This can only be determined from the results of the demographic analysis and final project plans.

Q: Will class sizes increase as a result of the attendance area analysis?

A: The district does not expect to change the current guidelines for class size based upon this analysis. (For current guidelines go to:

<http://www.scasd.org/cms/lib5/PA01000006/Centricity/Domain/86/126-Guidelines.pdf>.)

Q: How soon would the construction start and how long would it take?

A: At this point, the construction could begin as soon as summer of 2017, with an expected construction period of approximately 16 months.

Q: If changes to attendance areas result in changes to student school assignments, when would those become effective?

A: If any potential changes are identified, the district will develop a transition plan. More information will be available upon completion of the demographic study in August - September. The results of that study will be communicated electronically and shared at a public Board meeting.

Q: What will happen to Fogleman Fields at the Houserville site?

A: The district recognizes the need for field space and will take this into consideration during this process.

Q: Will any of these projects result in staff furloughs?

A: The district has no plans for furloughing staff.