

Building Study FAQ

Why is the District considering closing some buildings and adding onto others?

Every public school district in Illinois must comply with state Health Life Safety regulations (for a closer look into these regulations, please click [here](#)). The District architects have identified over \$40 Million worth of mandated updates to its facilities. These updates would be largely invisible (such as water pipes, roof work, and underground air circulation tunnel improvements).

How many options did the District consider?

The District architects presented five different options to the Board of Education. Included in those options was the option to keep all buildings open, and to only do the required work for health life safety. The estimated price tag of this option was \$40 Million. This option was rejected, as it did not meet the needs of our students, according to the feedback from last year's community feedback sessions. All other options cost approximately \$56 Million and involved the closure of some buildings and alterations to other buildings. One option would have moved the District from operating under the neighborhood schools concept to an attendance center concept (attendance centers are buildings where all the District's students from a certain grade attend the same building, such as GHS). This option was rejected for two reasons. First, the community feedback stated that District families were much more in favor of neighborhood schools. Secondly, the attendance center concept would have required additions to Silas Willard and the Board of Education did not want to add onto a building that was recently constructed.

Why is the District appearing to move so quickly?

The District held 13 meetings in the community last year, and improvement of district facilities was near the top of the list of community wishes. In addition, the District needs to enact the required improvements within a ten-year window, which expires in 2024. Also, a large consideration involves the inflationary effect of waiting. For each year the District waits to bid construction work, prices are anticipated to rise approximately 3%. For a \$56 Million set of projects, that inflationary effect would add approximately \$1.7 Million to the cost. The District architects, Legat, have informed the Board of Education that in order for bids to be let for work this summer, the District needs to choose a plan so drawings can be made and bid documents can be drafted.

Why is the District in favor of a plan that would move 7th-8th graders to the current GHS campus?

The initial reason that this concept drew favor is due to how health life safety money can be spent. If the District abandons a building, the money that would have been spent in the closed

building must follow the students that will go to another building. In this case, Churchill Junior High needs approximately \$8.2 Million in mandatory repairs. (These would be mostly invisible repairs as explained above.) If the District opts to close Churchill, all \$8.2 Million can be moved to improve the current GHS campus. That building needs the most improvements and is the only current structure that houses all District students. In addition, there are potential academic program enhancements that could be made in a newly configured 7th-12th grade building that would reduce the District's overall dropout rate. According to a series of studies in the early 2000s, a 7th-12th grade alignment can help reduce a District's dropout rate (click [here](#) to read a summary of those findings).

If the District moves to a 7th-12th grade building, will 7th-8th grade students interact with 9th-12th grade students?

Yes, but only on a limited basis. The District will need to create several committees regarding the academic and safety planning for the newly configured buildings. Committees will be comprised of district administration, professional staff, parents, and students. One of the committees will be tasked to research how to create a schedule and safety plan that allows for complementary schedules for students in grades 7th-12th, without requiring students in grades 7 and 8 to heavily interact with older students. For a research-based primer regarding some of the considerations, please read the following:

- [Evidence Regarding Effects of Grade-Span Configurations on Academic Achievement: What Rural Educators Should Know](#)
- [Research Roundup on Grade Spans \(From the National Association of Elementary School Principals\)](#)
- [The Effect of Grade Span Configurations and School-to-School Transitions on Student Achievement](#)
- [Trends and Issues / School Organization: Grade Spans](#)
- [Relationship of Grade Span and Math Achievement](#)

Will the District save any money by moving to a new configuration?

Yes. Based on projections, the District should conservatively save \$1 Million annually through operational savings. Those savings come in some personnel reductions and utility savings. While the District does not anticipate any reductions in the teaching staff, there are projected reductions in administration, secretarial, custodial and food service positions. There are several anticipated retirements prior to the new grade alignment, so most, if not all of those positional reductions will be through attrition rather than any Reductions in Force.

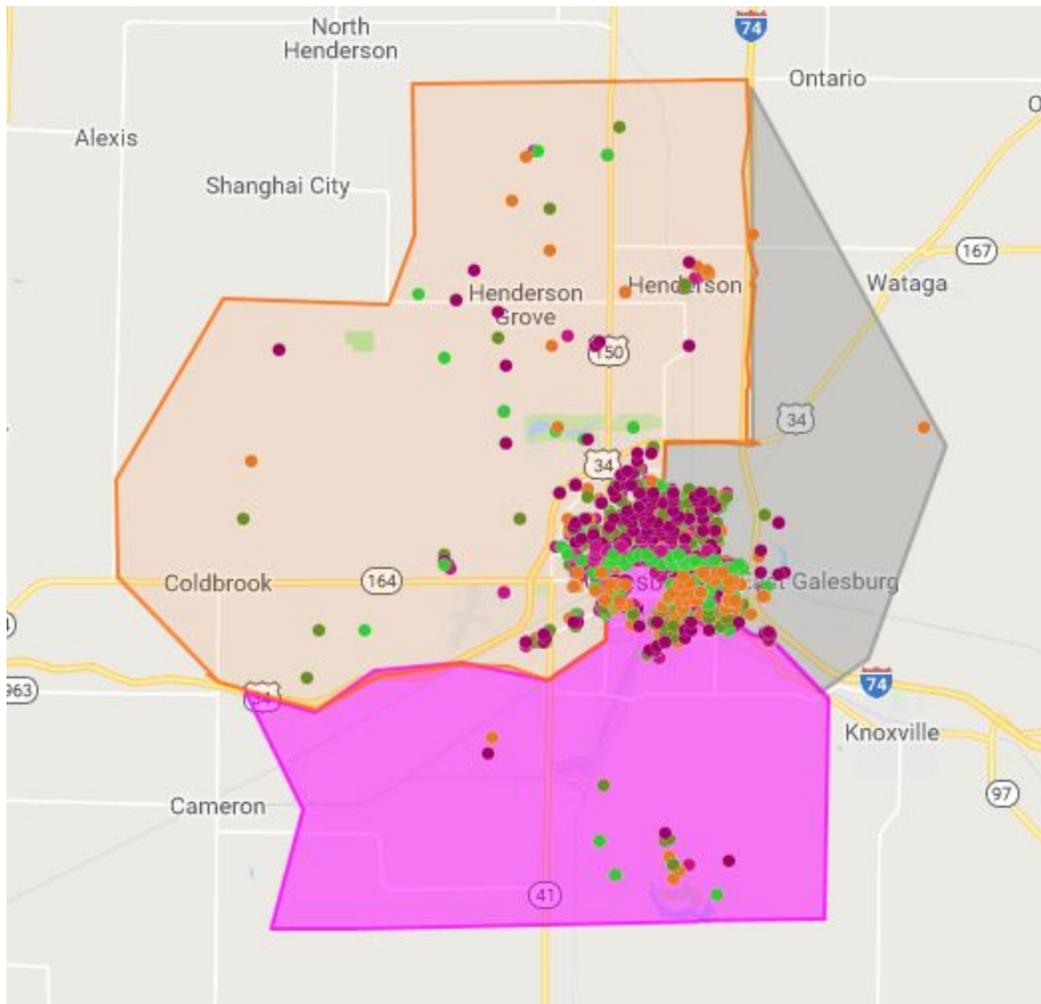
How will the District's transportation needs change?

Based on our predicted enrollment, it is anticipated that the District will need to add five bus routes once the building plan has been fully enacted. This translates to an estimated cost increase of approximately \$45,000 when factoring in the increased state reimbursement for transportation.

What will the new elementary school boundaries be?

Based on the District's mobility rate (the rate at which students move in and out of the District and also move within the District), it is difficult to predict what the final boundaries would be. But based on this year's enrollment and residential patterns, the boundaries would be similar to the one attached below:

Tan = Steele **Gray** = Silas Willard **Pink** = King



Will the tax rate increase?

No, we don't believe there will be a need for a tax rate increase. There will need to be additional bonds sold, but the overall tax rate in other funds can be reduced due to the operational savings outlined above.

Will there be any educational enhancements due to the building realignment?

We are very hopeful that there will be many educational enhancements. For instance, the Board would like to begin formal band instruction at 5th grade, rather than the current 6th grade. We would also like to add options for students to take a foreign language course and engage in drama and theater in grades 7 and 8. Currently, we have a competitive robotics team at the grade school level. We would like to ensure that all our schools, K-12, have competitive robotics teams.

How long did the board consider this issue?

This process really began in 2016, when the Board of Education asked its architect (Philips and Associates at that time) to conduct the 10-year health life safety survey (the survey should have been performed in 2014, but other district issues had intervened and the board had not asked for the survey process to begin at that time). The timeline can be broken down as follows:

- Summer of 2016: Board of Education receives Health Life Safety information from Architect and directs Architect to conduct comprehensive facility study.
- January 2017: Board of Education receives facility study from Philips and Associates. This study includes nine options for the Board of Education to consider.
- April/May 2017: Three new members of the Board of Education are elected and a new Superintendent is selected.
- September/October 2017: 13 community outreach meetings are held to determine the community's priorities for District 205. Facility enhancements are listed among the highest priorities.
- Summer 2018: Board of Education solicits Requests for Qualifications from four architectural firms and selects Legat Architects out of Moline to represent the District.
- August/September 2018: Board of Education holds four community meetings regarding facility priorities to help inform Legat's work.
- September 2018: Legat presents the Board with five options to consider.

- October 2018: District administration and Legat meet with state architects to ensure that the options will all meet approval with ISBE.
- October/November 2018: Board of Education holds four more community feedback sessions, plus sends out a community survey to gather more feedback on the options from Legat.
- November 2018: Board of Education selects the option that calls for the closure of Churchill Junior High, and Nielson and Gale Elementary Schools. In addition, this plan calls for additions and alterations to King, Steele, Lombard Middle School and the current GHS building which will house all students grade 7-12.