

Verona Area School District: Long Range Facilities Plan, 2008

Executive Summary

A Strong and Growing District

Over the past two decades, the Verona Area School District has been one of the fastest growing school districts in Wisconsin. Student growth has been driven by the District's excellent reputation, the quality of life in the Verona/Fitchburg area, and the region's strong economy. Student growth has led to the construction of new school facilities—most recently Glacier Edge Elementary in 2006.

Driven by projected community growth, student enrollment increases are expected to continue into the future. These increases will continue to point to the need for additional and expanded school facilities over the next two decades. To assure that the District's facility needs are addressed in the most efficient and effective way possible, long range facility master planning based on careful research and discussion is essential.

Study Purposes

This study is intended to provide the School District with a framework within which to make informed decisions regarding the future of its educational facilities. The study includes projections of student population growth within the Verona Area School District over the next twenty years, and compares those projections with existing school capacities. This comparison suggests where and when current capacities will be exceeded. The study then includes suggestions on the types and timing of new and expanded facilities that will likely be needed. Finally, ideas related to locations for future schools are shared.

Study Methodology

In an effort to generate the most accurate and comprehensive estimates of student population growth in the District, two methodologies for projecting student population were utilized and combined. The Grade Progression method is based on a demographic analysis of the District's population, and considers factors such as birth rates and in-migration in the District. For the Housing Unit projection method, consultants analyzed city and town growth plans over the next twenty years, focusing in particular on areas planned for residential development.

Student enrollment projections were then compared with existing school capacities within three grade groupings: K-5 (elementary), 6-8 (middle), and 9-12 (high). School capacity figures were derived from the District's 2006 School Capacity Study, which was completed in 2006 by the architectural firm, Plunkett-Raysich. These comparisons revealed in what grade groups and when school capacities would be exceeded. Next, based on preferred maximum school sizes, as determined by the School Board, the consultant projected the need, type, and timing of new and expanded school facilities over the next twenty years. Specific options for addressing those needs were derived through discussions and analysis among the consultant, District officials and staff, the Board of Education, and the public.

Key Findings

By 2016, the capacity of schools within all three grade groupings (K-5, 6-8, 9-12) in the Verona Area School District is projected to be exceeded. Existing capacities within elementary schools are expected to be exceeded the soonest, by about 2012, followed soon after by middle and then high school capacities.

Therefore, addressing school capacities through new and expanded facilities will require a comprehensive solution considering all grade levels and school types.

The following table summarizes the suggested approach for addressing the District's projected enrollment and facility space needs. The approach suggests the need for analysis, siting, and construction of new or expanded schools within four general time periods. Discussion, planning, design, and funding for each identified construction project would have to occur well in advance of the time the District requires each respective school to be opened. The table is a summary only; readers are encouraged to read the full *Long-Range Facilities Plan* for the detailed analysis and assumptions. For example, one key assumption was that School District boundaries would remain unchanged.

FACILITY TYPES	TIME PERIODS			
	2008 – 2010	2011 – 2015	2016 – 2020	2021 – 2026
Elementary	Explore potential for expansion to existing elementary schools* Identify and acquire new elementary school site(s)	Explore school attendance area shifts Construct first additional elementary school Identify and acquire next new elementary school site(s)	Explore school attendance area shifts Construct second additional elementary school	One additional elementary school may be needed at or soon after the end of this final time period
Middle	Explore potential for expansions to and attendance area shifts for current middle schools	If feasible and desirable, expand existing middle school(s)* Identify and acquire new middle school site (sooner if campus site identified)	Construct new middle school (<u>may</u> be deferred until next period if significant expansions made to existing school(s))	See note under 2016 – 2020 time period One additional middle school may be needed soon after the end of this final time period
High	Explore potential for expansion to existing school. Explore opportunities for partnerships with other education providers in region to help address high school capacity needs and educational interests	Decide on future high school(s) configuration and emphasis Identify and acquire high school site if new construction direction selected	Engage in major high school construction or expansion project, including potential for a specialized high school	

*Expansion may necessitate redrawing district boundaries

The best locations for these new schools are based on a range of factors, including the locations of existing schools, planned neighborhood growth areas, and transportation access. In general, the best areas for new schools appear to be near the northwest corner of the District, near the current Town of Verona/City of Fitchburg border, in Fitchburg near the present campus there, and south of the Highway 151 bypass in Verona.