

Community Questions on CH-UH Facilities

Below are questions and comments submitted in person or online from community members regarding our facilities and the facilities review and assessment process. To submit your question or comment, go to: info@chuh.org.

Questions and comments from community input meeting on May 12, 2011, with District responses.

Q: We want to make sure that any new or renovated buildings aren't modeled after the open classrooms of the 1970s that were a huge disappointment. There were major acoustical issues, teachers would still lecture to 30 students, they didn't have the professional development to make them work, and some students were easily distracted or not able to focus in that type of setting.

- Any new or renovated school buildings will be designed utilizing input from teachers and the community, and will incorporate proven school facilities plans to create the very best learning environment for students. Current school facilities best practices do not encourage "open classroom" designs.

Q: Can the district pay for it without putting the burden on taxpayers?

- Any facilities plan adopted by the Board of Education will require at least some additional financial resources from the community. However, the cost savings from having fewer, and more efficient, buildings would diminish the size and number of levies in the future.

Q: Are you working in partnership with the educational program?

- Steve Shergalis, the District's Director of Business Service, has served as a vital link between the school facilities committee and the educational services team. Any new or renovated buildings will be designed to support and enhance the delivery of the Districts educational program to students.

Q: We need more information.

- We agree. All meetings of the school facilities committee are open to the public, and we strongly encourage residents to attend. Prior meetings can be viewed on the Districts web-site, along with a large amount of information related to the committees work to date. In the future there will be many additional opportunities for the community to be involved with, and to learn about, the District's facilities planning initiative. The Board of Education is committed to creating an open planning process and as additional information becomes available it will be immediately shared with the community.

Q: We aren't convinced the buildings are in need of major repair. How inefficient are they? What would be the cost savings?

- Based upon a review of District and State of Ohio assessments, the School Facilities Options Sub-Committee found that the District has significant facilities issues that are challenging our ability to provide the kind of quality education for our students that is desired and expected in our community. These assessments can be viewed in full by going to: <http://www.chuh.org/district/district-facilities-planning-update>.

- The School Facilities Options Sub-Committee found that the District's current facilities are inefficient in their use of space, causing the District to have a greater amount of square footage per student than new or renovated schools across the state. In addition they found that it may be possible to significantly reduce the amount of square footage per student, and that such a reduction may result in operational cost savings that could possibly be as high as \$4.6 million annually.

Q: Can you prove that the renovations are necessary and then design the renovations and new buildings around 21st Century teaching and learning.

- The Community Facilities Committee has shown clearly that either renovations or rebuilding are necessary to reduce significant inefficiencies in our buildings.
- While definitions vary, generally 21st Century Education means a recognition that children learn and grow at different rates and should be exposed to many different learning philosophies and models, that students learn by doing, that teachers should have the opportunity to flexibly interact with students and each other in a wide variety of settings, that students should be actively engaged in creating their own learning, and schools should be highly integrated with the community.
- Any new or renovated buildings would be designed with these principles foremost in mind.

Q: What are you doing to get the community engaged? What does the community engagement process look like?

- From the beginning, the District has been fully committed to a robust community engagement process. We continue to provide information and solicit opinions from community members online, at meetings, and through informational mailings. Now that most of the research and analysis have been completed by the Community Facilities Committee, the Board of Education's next step will be to conduct a community engagement process that reaches out to everyone who has a stake in our school district's future. Once that engagement process is fully outlined, likely toward the end of the year, we will publicize it widely and seek the broadest possible resident input.

Q: Why should we support any new buildings when we have buildings such as Milliken sitting empty?

- The closing of the Milliken Building has allowed the District's remaining buildings to be utilized more efficiently, resulting in critical operational cost savings. The Board of Education is committed to finding a new use for the Milliken property. In these difficult economic times that has proved challenging, and the building has remained vacant much longer than the Board had hoped. Still they remain committed to finding a new use for the site, one that is compatible with, and also supportive of, the surrounding neighborhood, while at the same time provides a prudent financial return to the schools.