

SPARTA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Regular Meeting September 25, 2023

*Anthony Scholze, President;
John Hendricks, Vice President; Amy Lopez, Clerk;
Pat McKenna, Treasurer; Colin Burns-Gilbert, Director; Todd Wells, Director; Ashley Berendes, Director*

School Perception Survey

Draft - 9/25/23

Order of Discussion

- Setting the Stage for Survey
- Facility Discussion and questions
- Operating Discussion and questions
- Entire survey flow
- Draft Timeline
- Questions

Facility Challenges

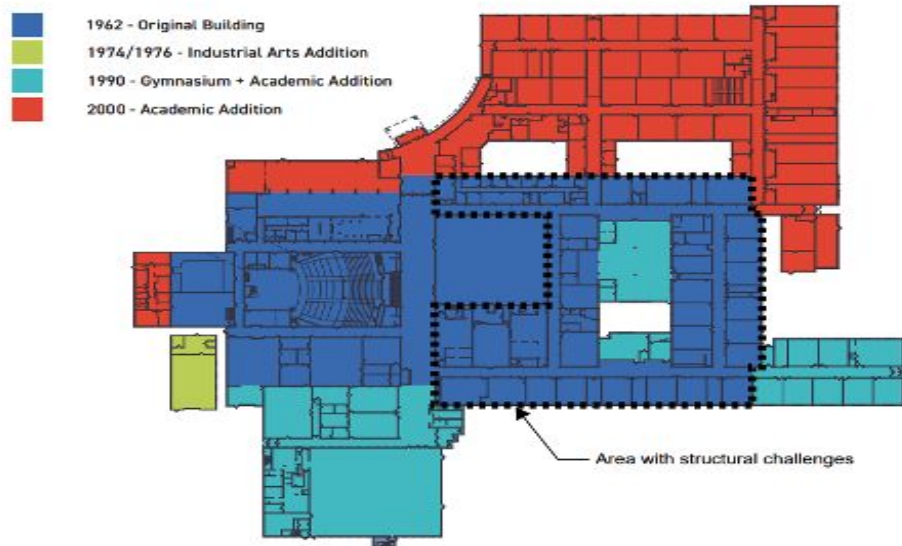
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Each school has pressing needs, with the most urgent issues at **Sparta High School**, where portions of the building are more than 60 years old.

The biggest challenge is a section of the building where ceilings are sagging and exterior walls are bowing. **A structural engineer determined there is no immediate threat to staff and student safety.** However, if this area of the school is to be used for the long term, this section needs to be torn down and rebuilt.

Over the past several months, the District held several community listening sessions. During these meetings, some asked if now is the time to consider building a new high school. However, this cost would nearly exceed the maximum amount the District can borrow per state law.



Other district-wide major building issues include:

- Updates to the main entrances to properly monitor and control visitor access at the high school as well as Meadowview and the Montessori School.
- Some of the major building systems (HVAC, plumbing, electrical, etc.) at each school are original and need repair/replacement.
- Roof sections at the high school and Montessori School need to be replaced.
- The high school tech. ed. (shop) classrooms/labs lack space and equipment to properly train students for jobs and careers in our region.
- The high school auditorium stage and support areas need expansion and updates.
- The high school locker rooms are on the lower level and not handicap accessible.
- The high school kitchen is too small, which limits menu offerings, staff work area, and storage.
- Updates are needed to the high school agriculture lab and greenhouse.

Comments/suggestions/questions:

Facility Master Plan

We need your input to determine how many projects, if any, should be completed at this time.

Project 1 (Base Plan):

1A. Demolish the structurally challenged portion of the high school and build a two-story addition with classrooms, special education areas, and a library.

1B. Build the main office with improved security, as well as space for art classrooms and locker rooms.

1C. New tech. ed. (shop) area for welding, metals, and manufacturing classes.

1D. Site updates, including parking.

The project would also replace the high school's roof, update plumbing, heating, ventilation, and A/C equipment, and address ADA accessibility issues.

In addition, the base plan would:

- ✓ Repair/replace (where needed) roofing, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, masonry flooring, exterior windows, exterior doors, flooring, and ceiling tiles in the other schools, except Herrman.
- ✓ Create a dedicated bus pick-up/drop-off lane on-site (currently on the road) to better separate vehicles and pedestrians and improve student safety at Southside Early Learning Center.
- ✓ Remodel the main entrance/office at Meadowview to better monitor and control visitor access.

Estimated cost: \$87 million

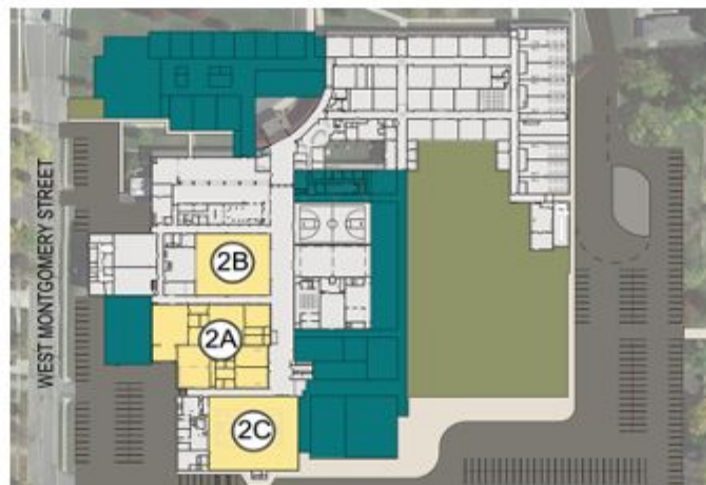


In addition to the Base Plan (Project 1), the following projects are in the facility master plan. Each could be completed while construction crews are on-site, saving money in the long run.

Project 2:

- 2A. Renovate other tech. ed. (shop) areas.
- 2B. Renovate the auditorium/expand seating.
- 2C. Replace the Alton Ask Gym floor and bleachers.

Estimated cost: \$10 million



What priority would you place on Project 2?

- High (Address immediately)
- Medium (Important, but address in the future)
- Low (Not a priority)
- Not sure

Comments/suggestions/questions:

Project 3

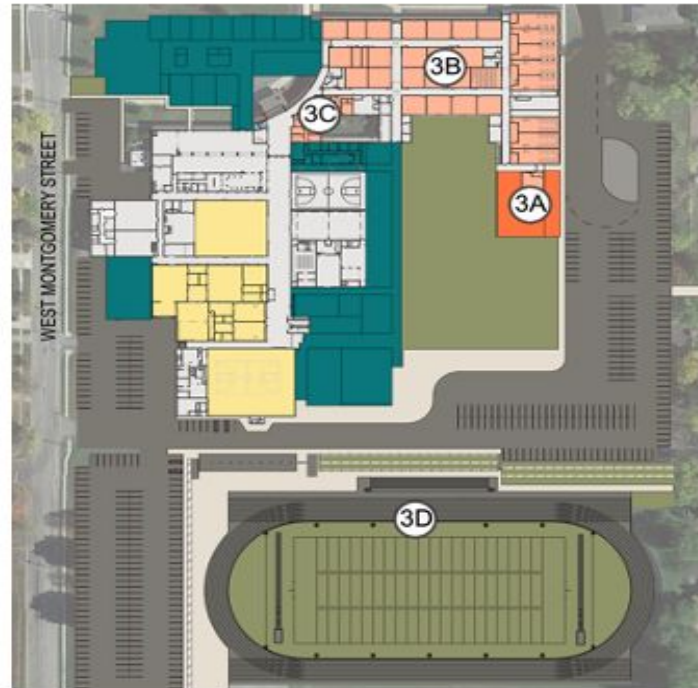
3A. Expand agriculture classrooms and replace/expand the greenhouse.

3B. Upgrade classrooms and science labs.

3C. Renovate/reconfigure the existing main office to provide space for Student Services (school counseling, health services, etc.)

3D. Replace the track and field.

Estimated cost: \$10 million



What priority would you place on Project 3?

- High (Address immediately)
- Medium (Important, but address in the future)
- Low (Not a priority)
- Not sure

Comments/suggestions/questions:

Project 4

4A. Build a larger/more functional kitchen and serving area to address overcrowding.

4B. Renovate the existing cafeteria/kitchen into larger/more functional band and choir classrooms.

4C. Renovate the existing band/choir area into auditorium support spaces (such as dressing rooms and set construction).

4D. Renovate the stage and expand the performance area to better support the growing fine arts program and larger productions.

Estimated cost: \$18 million



What priority would you place on Project 4?

- High (Address immediately)
- Medium (Important, but address in the future)
- Low (Not a priority)
- Not sure

Comments/suggestions/questions:

Project 5: High School Gym and Fitness

5A. Build a three-court gym with a fitness area.

The District lacks gym space to meet school and community needs. As a result, practices are being held early in the morning and late at night throughout the school year, and community access for youth and recreational programming is very limited.

5B. Renovate existing gym space into dedicated gymnastics and wrestling areas. The gymnastics team practices offsite in a city-owned building, which is too small for all events and hosting competitions. The wrestling area is only accessible by stairs.

Estimated cost: \$15 million



What priority would you place on Project 5?

- High (Address immediately)
- Medium (Important, but address in the future)
- Low (Not a priority)
- Not sure

Comments/suggestions/questions:

Funding Support

The total cost to fund the master plan is \$140 million. **We realize doing all of the projects at one time may not be realistic.** Therefore, we will establish a plan based on the community's priorities.

POTENTIAL FACILITY REFERENDUM AMOUNTS					
Referendum amount	\$87 million	\$97 million	\$107 million	\$125 million	\$140 million
Property tax mill rate increase	\$.12	\$.37	\$.64	\$1.10	\$1.45
Estimated tax increase per \$100,000 of property value	\$12	\$37	\$64	\$110	\$145
What referendum amount would you support? <i>Financing assumes a multi-phased borrowing plan repaid over 21 years at interest rates of 5.25% - 5.50%.</i> <i>For more information, visit www.spartan.org/2023-facility-study.</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> I would support a \$140 million referendum. <input type="checkbox"/> I would support a \$125 million referendum. <input type="checkbox"/> I would support a \$107 million referendum. <input type="checkbox"/> I would support a \$97 million referendum. <input type="checkbox"/> I would support an \$87 million referendum. <input type="checkbox"/> I would only support a smaller referendum. <input type="checkbox"/> I would not support any referendum. <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure/need more information.		

Other information you would need before making a decision:

Referendum Funding

There are two types of referendums voters can approve to provide schools with additional funding.

1. A **capital (facilities) referendum** allows a school district to issue debt (take out a loan) to pay for major facility improvements. This is the type of referendum voters in our district supported in 2018 to build a new elementary school and update the other elementary schools.
2. An **operational referendum** is used to fund daily operations such as compensation, safety and security systems, utilities, technology, building maintenance, busing, and learning materials. Voters supported this type of referendum, providing \$750,000 annually, between 2007 and 2020.

Last year, voters did not support a \$2.1 million operational referendum. To balance the budget, we reduced staff positions, reduced programs, and closed one building. Even though the state budget included a small increase for Sparta, our federal funding will decrease by over \$2 million next year. **Therefore, we are forecasting a budget shortfall in the foreseeable future.**

Next year, the District may consider asking voters to consider a \$750,000 operational referendum for each of the next 3-5 years to:

- ✓ **Maintain Current Programs and Class Sizes**
- ✓ **Retain Staff:** We need to remain competitive for staff wages and benefits, which affects our ability to attract and retain high-quality staff. Our teacher compensation is below average in comparison to other districts in the area.
- ✓ **Pay for Increasing Operational Costs:** This includes learning materials, utilities, building maintenance, busing, technology, and safety/security systems.

Would you support a \$750,000 operational referendum as described above?

Approval would increase the property tax mill rate by \$.42, representing an annual tax increase of \$42 per year for every \$100,000 of property value.

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Undecided
- Probably no
- Definitely no

Comments/suggestions/questions:

Full Draft Survey Flow



Dear Families and Community Members:

The Sparta Area School District (SASD) works hard every day to accomplish our mission: *To educate all students academically, emotionally, and socially to inspire curiosity and resilience.*

To accomplish this mission, SASD needs to retain our high-quality staff and continually improve services for students. Our facilities also need to be safe, secure, and support learning. This has become more difficult because of the lack of predictable, sustainable funding from the state.

The purpose of this survey is to present our current situation and gather your feedback to guide the District's planning process. All survey data is confidential and returned to School Perceptions, an independent education research firm.



TAKE THE SURVEY IN ONE OF TWO WAYS

Option 1: To reduce mailing expenses:

Go to the survey website:

www.Feedback2000.com

Enter your survey code:



Option 2: If you do not have internet access, please return the survey to any school office, or mail it to School Perceptions, PO Box 607, Slinger, WI 53086.

Additional Surveys: The survey code can be used only once. To obtain additional surveys for other adults in your household, please call the District Office at 608.366.3400.

Para pedir una copia de esta encuesta en español, favor de llamar 608.487.4916.

Please complete the survey before November 6th, 2023.

To receive the survey in a different language, or if you have a disability that makes it difficult to read, please contact the District Office at 608.366.3400. Survey results will be reported at a board meeting and will be available on the District's website.

The District takes pride in our efforts to maintain a safe and productive learning environment and foster collaboration, creativity, communication, and problem-solving for all students. We ask parents and members of our community to join us in this responsibility.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

Sam Russ
Superintendent

Respondent Information

What is your age? 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

Is your primary residence in the Sparta Area School District? Yes No Not sure

In which municipality do you live?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> City of Sparta | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Adrian | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Angelo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Grant | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Greenfield | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of La Fayette |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Leon | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Little Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of New Lyme |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Portland | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Ridgeville | <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Sparta |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township of Wells | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not live in the District | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure |

Are you an employee of the Sparta Area School District? Yes No

Do you have children attending a school in the District? Yes No

How would you like to receive school/District information? (Mark all that apply)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School website | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/teacher organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> District mailings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meetings at school | <input type="checkbox"/> School Board meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> School newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>La Crosse Tribune</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Monroe County Herald</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Television | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skyward | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | |

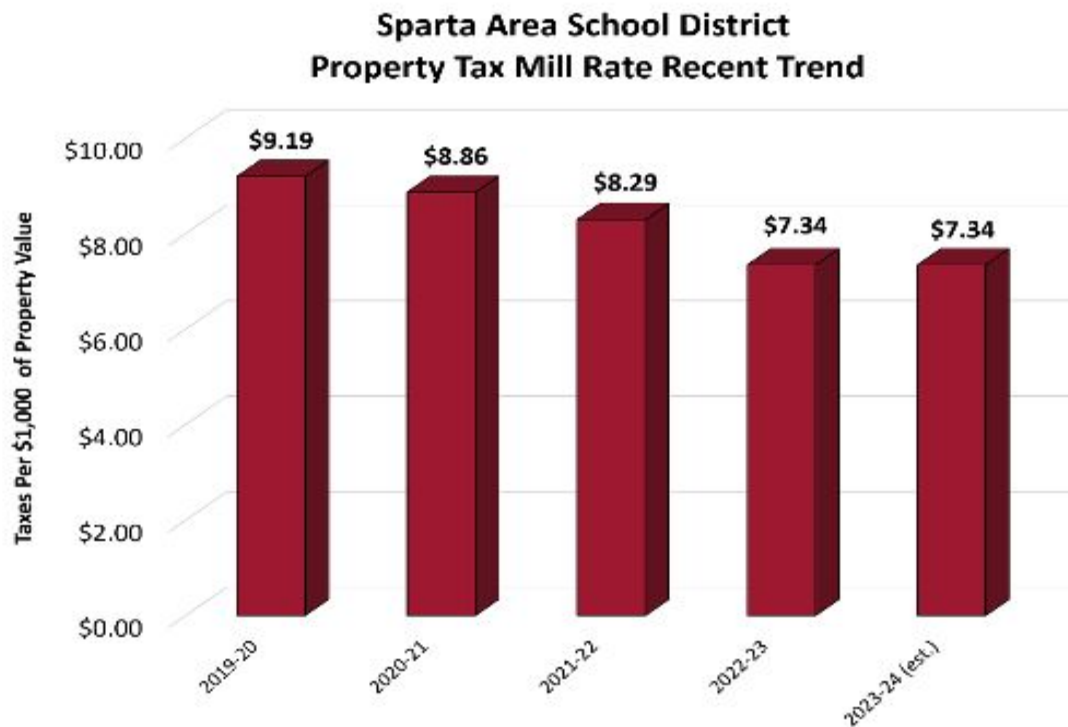
On a scale of 0 – 10, how likely would you be to recommend the District to a friend or family member?

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 |
| Extremely Unlikely | | | Neutral | | | | Extremely Likely | | | |

What do you believe makes our school district unique or special?

Financial Background

The District has taken the opportunity to pre-pay referendum debt, saving more than \$4.4 million in interest expenses. We are on pace to be debt-free by 2026, which is 12 years ahead of schedule. These actions will lessen the tax impact of a new referendum. As seen in the chart below, the tax mill rate (which is used to calculate a school district's share of local property taxes) has declined by 17% over the past 5 years.



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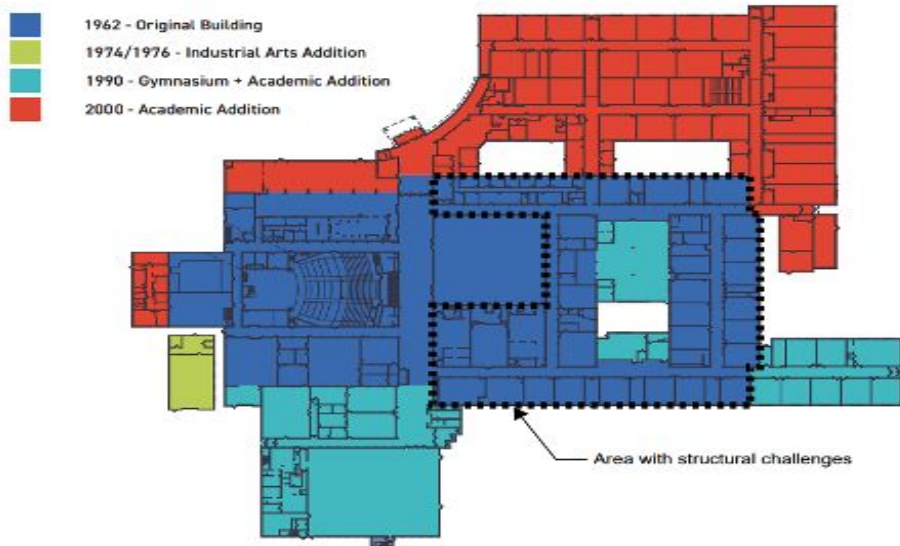
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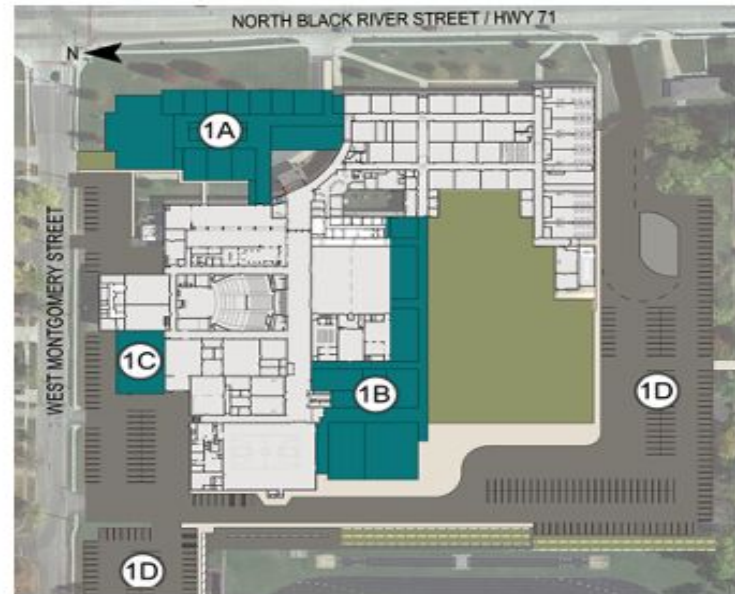
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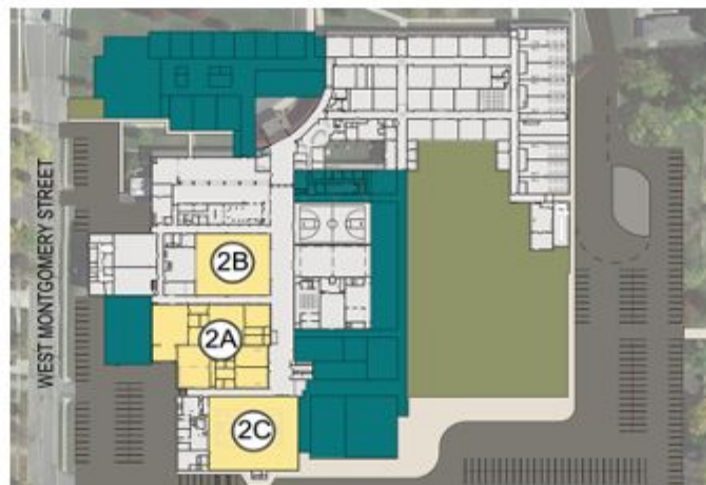


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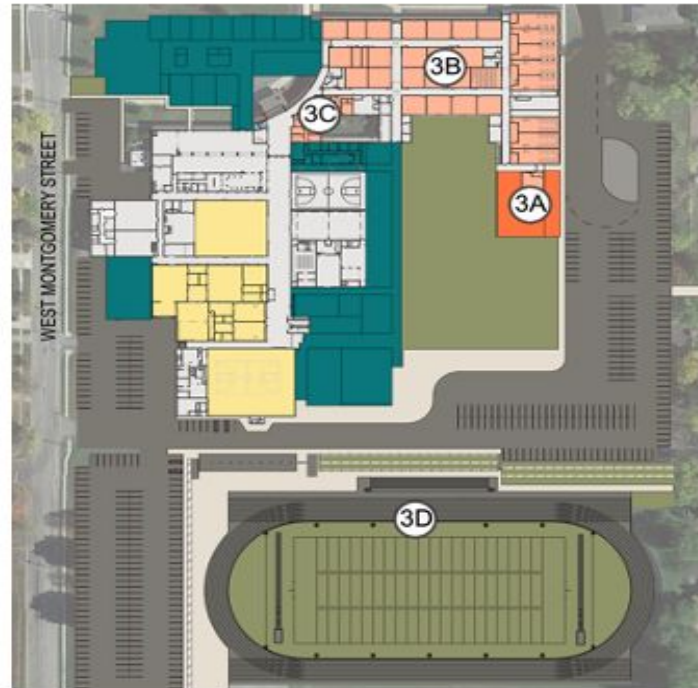
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Other information you would need before making a decision:

Draft Timeline

- October TBA Email survey to staff prior
- Approximately October 16 survey in mailboxes
- November 6 survey deadline
- November 27/December 11 BOE Review (could hold special meeting as well)
- December 18 potential decision for Board