



# Challenges & Priorities

# 4



## 4 CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Since the 2010 SFIP and the passage of Measure G, the District has successfully executed a broad range of improvements to its existing campuses while also adding enabling greater program flexibility and capacity throughout the District.

### 4.1 Recent Accomplishments

Accomplishments during this period focused on more visible, high impact/high-touch improvements with direct benefits to students and staff, including:

#### Modernizing Instructional and Work Spaces

- Improving instructional spaces for students, including modernization and new technology in classrooms.
- Improving the work environment for staff by modernizing each school's administrative offices and faculty workrooms.

#### Expanding District-Wide Capacity

- Building two new elementary school campuses (Vargas, Castro) while entirely rebuilding another campus (Stevenson).
- Creating spaces for the District's SPED programs.
- Expanding early education programs by adding preschool campuses at Latham St. and Graham.
- Adding new or modernizing existing Multi-Use Rooms (MUR).

#### Regulatory Compliance/System Upgrades

- Addressing critical non-conforming, regulatory deficiencies (e.g., ADA/accessibility).
- Addressing critical safety and security system deficiencies, including fire alarm, security system, and emergency management systems.

Modernization was extensive and comprehensive across all schools in the District. Almost all major buildings across the District were improved in some way.

As noted in Chapter 1, only a portion of the projects identified in the 2010 SFIP were completed. Projects which were left uncompleted were generally utility- and infrastructure-type projects which were both more technically complicated and provided less direct benefit to students, as well as new building projects which would have increased density on campuses while providing greater program flexibility, especially for after-school programs.

Since Measure G was passed, construction cost volatility has been very high due to increasingly intense development activity through the region.

By choosing to modernize facilities in lieu of building new, higher-density (and more costly) projects, the District was able to stretch available funds to cover a more extensive range of facilities, touching more students and more staff.

### 4.2 Challenges

Over the long-term, the District will need to balance strategies for growth while maintaining a network of neighborhood schools which foster more intimate and connected school communities.

In the short-term, many of its existing schools continue to face configuration and condition challenges which inhibit the optimum efficiency and capacity of each site.

#### **Summary of Challenges**

The following summarizes key challenges throughout the District:

#### Strategic Challenges

- Optimize use of all available District assets, including existing schools and leased properties, to address future growth.
- Expand capacity at and modernizing existing schools while ensuring equity across the District.
- Short-term facility investment decisions which also position assets to address long-term challenges.

#### Capacity Challenges

- Unevenly distributed residential growth across the District.
- Sufficient school capacity at the right locations to accommodate future growth.



- Clarify extent to which different schools will be impacted by future growth.
- Identify and prioritize range of solutions available to address growth.
- Ensure adequate utility capacity to support continued growth at existing schools.
- Ensure adequate supporting facilities to ensure efficient school operations (e.g., storage, parking, pickup/dropoff, afterschool programs).

#### Configuration Challenges

- Maintaining safe and easy access of school communities to neighborhood schools.
- Need for alternative school models in urban, higher-density neighborhoods where land for new school sites is limited and prohibitively expensive.
- Need to balance recapitalizing existing schools while also planning for future expansion.
- Need for secure perimeters at all campuses, especially where schools share public park facilities, trail access, and multiple road frontages.
- Need for real-time situational awareness by school administrators of all external access points onto school campuses during school hours.
- Facilities not optimized for energy efficiency.
- Administrative and community-oriented facilities not situated in the most visible and accessible areas of school campuses.
- Access routes to schools which jeopardize student safety, while also impacting residential neighbors.

#### Condition Challenges

- Utility and infrastructure systems at the end their service life.
- Recurring infrastructure network deficiencies which impact school operations.
- Limited awareness of the condition of underground and hidden utilities and infrastructure networks.

#### ***Strategies to Address Challenges***

The District has established a set of priorities to guide the continued recapitalization and modernization of existing schools. These priorities are discussed further in this section and emphasize growth, safety and energy efficiency.

Existing surplus capacity at existing schools can absorb short-term student growth from additional residential units projected to come online within the next 3 to 5 years.

Capacity challenges from long-term residential growth are not expected to exceed the capacity of existing schools for another 5 to 7 years.

During this period, the District has identified the following strategies to address long-term growth challenges:

- Continue negotiations to secure sites for new elementary schools in North Bayshore and East Whisman.
- Relocate MOT and preschools from existing middle school campuses to free up space for redevelopment.

- Begin a multi-phase/multi-year redevelopment process at Crittenden and Graham Middle Schools to significantly increase capacity, improve access and orientation, and optimize site efficiencies.
- Evaluate existing leased properties to address long-term growth, either directly if properties are suitably located near future growth areas (e.g., Whisman, Slater) or indirectly, if properties are not located near residents but may otherwise be useful for other purposes (e.g., Cooper).

### **4.3 Opportunities to Add Capacity-Existing Schools**

A number of existing schools which are expected to be affected by future growth have unaffiliated activities which share their campuses. If any of these activities are relocated elsewhere, additional capacity can be made available to address future growth and capacity needs at the following sites:

#### Castro Elementary School

- Latham Street District Preschool (portables)

#### Theuerkauf Elementary School

- Google Childrens Center (leased, portables)

#### Vargas Elementary School

- Google Childrens Center (leased, former Slater School)

#### Crittenden Middle School

- MOT Transportation Yard
- District Kitchen





Graham Middle School

- MOT Base Yard
- District Preschool

Because of the potentially significant lead times and complexity of relocating some of these activities, early decisions are required to create the necessary capacity at the desired locations on a timely basis.

### 4.4 Community Input

Feedback from the community was solicited at several points in the study, including a district-wide survey and local feedback by each school's constituents as facilitated through each school's leadership.

#### 4.4.1 District-Wide Survey (ThoughtExchange)

In October 2019, the District created an online survey using ThoughtExchange for students and families to respond to the following open-ended question, "What are the important perspectives to consider as we plan for future facilities to accommodate growth in our District?"

After responses were received, ThoughtExchange identified ten themes which respondents focused on.

These include the following (in descending order of importance based on the volume of responses):

- Smaller Class Sizes
- Staff Retention/Quality (Availability of Housing)
- Walkable/Bikeable Schools
- Education Quality
- Respect Staff Opinions (School Design Process)

**Table 4-1  
Themes from Online Survey  
Planning for Future Facilities to Accommodate Groth**

THEMES	FACILITIES-RELATED CHALLENGES/ THREATS	FACILITIES-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES/STRATEGIES
Smaller Class Sizes	Large institutional, impersonal learning environments out of scale with students	Create intimate learning environments which support sense of community within schools
Staff Retention/ Quality (Housing)	Poor living and working conditions which reduce quality of work life (i.e., availability of nearby housing, long commutes, work environment)	Create better living/housing opportunities and work environments for staff
Walkable/Bikeable Schools	Schools not within accessible distance to families and/or requiring crossings of major roads by younger children	Locate schools within residential neighborhoods and configure school boundaries to enable easy and safe access
Education Quality	Aging instructional facilities, poorly configured to support desired school operations	Modernize and configure learning spaces to support concepts for educating students
Respect Staff Opinions (Design)	Instructional and work spaces which do not reflect user input and preferences	Instructional/work spaces which enable preferred instructional/work processes
Equity between Schools	Varied facilities among different schools	Ensure consistent approach to facilities among all school sites
Provide Child-Friendly Green Spaces	Lack of, or poorly configured landscaping in high-touch, high-use areas of campus.	Provide and configure landscaping and outdoor furnishings to enable children to learn and play within more natural, outdoor settings
Program Quality and Offerings	Poorly configured campuses lacking facilities to support school programs	Provide facilities to support the school programs
Maintain Diversity (Student)	Learning environments which do not embrace a wide diversity of learners	Learning environments which are welcoming and engaging for a broad range of learners
Companies should support Schools	Schools isolated and disconnected from the thriving Silicon Valley business community	Improve partnerships/collaboration with Silicon Valley companies to improve school environments

- Equity between Schools
- Provide Child-Friendly Green Spaces
- Program Quality and Offerings
- Maintain Diversity
- Companies should support Schools

Table 4-1 summarizes facilities-related considerations for these themes.



## 4.4.2 Community Feedback

In the Fall 2019, District staff and parent groups received information about MVWSD's growth and facilities planning. Feedback was gathered from a variety of groups at different school sites including staff, district advisory committees, the Mountain View Educational Foundation, parent-teacher associations, school site councils, English language advisory committee, and principal-hosted coffee sessions with parents.

### **Strong themes: General**

While not specific to potential growth solutions, a strong theme from parents was keeping schools and classrooms small, with easy walking and biking access.

Parents also expressed their hope that density not be a diminishing factor for children's school/recreational experiences

### **Strong theme: Growth and Facilities**

Stakeholders are interested in long-term, flexible and creative approaches to growth. Some of these may include hybrid models of solutions proposed below.

Stakeholders ranked solutions to challenges in the following order with those listed as number 1 being the most ideal:

### **Themes: Challenge 1: Elementary School Growth and Potential Solutions**

1. New schools in North Bayshore & East Whisman: Stakeholders expressed hope that this could be done through partnerships, reducing cost to MVWSD.
2. Reuse leased properties: Stakeholders had questions about the cost of breaking leases vs. the cost of obtaining/building on new land.
3. Expand capacity of existing schools (Add 100 seats/4 Classrooms at Bubba, Huff, Landels): Stakeholders were hesitant about this solution and expressed concerns about space being added to schools where the growth is not happening, ultimately resulting in increased traffic and possibility of redrawn boundaries. Also concerns about cost and quality of keeping current portables.
4. Grade-level schools and lower & upper elementary schools (East Whisman): Ranked as the least popular ideas with parents and staff members due to traffic concerns and fear of loss of school community.

### **Themes: Challenge 2: Middle School Growth and Potential Solutions**

1. Identify site for New Middle School: Stakeholders expressed hope that this could be done through partnerships, reducing cost to MVWSD.
2. Recapitalize/redesign Graham & Crittenden: Stakeholders expressed support, but are concerned about traffic and student experience (both academic and extracurricular) as these schools grow.
3. Convert all elementary schools to K-6: Ranked as the least popular ideas with parents and staff members, though stakeholders offered a mix of opinions.
  - Pros: 6th graders could be leaders, middle schools would be smaller and lead to more supervision/support for 7th/8th graders.
  - Cons: negative reviews from Los Altos 6th graders in elementary, and less access to middle school curriculum and math differentiation if in elementary.

Some stakeholders are marginally supportive of this idea if that means growth is solved without renovating or adding to middle schools.



## ***Other Ideas and Questions from Stakeholders***

- Building up is both ideal and not ideal to stakeholders
- Many asked “what are tech companies doing to help?” with school growth
- Design middle schools with programmatic specific areas, like shop and home economics
- Increase Spanish immersion program
- Prioritize facility flexibility and expandability in any new projects
- What about grade level option schools at Cooper, Huff Schools? (i.e. K-2 at Cooper and 3-5 at Huff?)
- What about adding 6th grade to northern, growth-impacted schools?
- More magnet/specialty schools that would draw enrollment from all parts of the city
- Graham gym needs refurbishing
- We could consider year-round schooling

## **4.5 Priorities**

To address the challenges facing the District, the following priorities were identified to guide future facilities investments, both to address future growth among elementary and middle school students and to continue recapitalizing existing schools.

### **4.5.1 Future Growth**

As discussed previously, significant residential growth is expected in existing residential neighborhoods and designated change areas in the northern half of the City. The following priorities will enable the District to address this growth:

- Maintain the District’s current emphasis on neighborhood schools, locating schools and configuring boundaries to enable schools to stay connected and accessible to students and families within their community.
- Identify new school sites within future residential areas of North Bayshore and East Whisman. Continue negotiations with landowners, developers and the City to identify viable strategies to acquire sites and fund new school development.
- Evaluate opportunities to reuse existing leased properties (i.e., lease terms/extensions, proximity to future residential growth areas, suitability of facilities for reuse).
- Expand capacity at existing schools affected by future growth.
- Where future growth is unevenly distributed across the District, evaluate existing school boundaries to distribute growth more evenly.

### **4.5.2 Recapitalizing Existing Campuses**

To guide the continued recapitalization of existing school campuses, the District has identified the following four part criteria to prioritize its facilities-related investments:

#### ***Priority 1***

- Projects needed to expand capacity at selected school sites to address future growth.
- Projects which improve school safety, including site lighting, perimeter fencing, access controls, remote supervision, storage, and drinking fountains.
- Projects which improve operational and energy efficiency, including replacing aging HVAC systems, installing solar systems on each campus, replacing windows, natural systems to reduce heat islands, etc).

#### ***Priority 2***

- Projects which modernize indoor and outdoor learning spaces to align with the District’s emphasis on collaborative and differentiated learning environments.
- Modernize playground facilities including replacing aging equipment, upgrading ground surfaces and improving other related site furnishings.
- Replace aging utility and Infrastructure networks, including underground site utilities.



### **Priority 3**

- Aesthetic projects which focus on upgrading and improving a campus' visual and aesthetic character, including signage.

### **Priority 4**

- Opportunities to reconfigure school campuses to increase site efficiencies.

## **4.6 Solar Strategy**

The District has begun examining solar as both an opportunity to improve operational efficiency, reduce long-term operating costs, and continue its efforts to promote sustainability within the community.

Solar potentially has the opportunity to offset site usage on school campuses while increasing operational efficiency and building resiliency for unplanned emergencies.

Solar projects can be combined with other capital projects including shade structures, new buildings, and other site improvements.

## **4.7 Staff Housing**

One of the most significant challenges facing educators within the District is the cost of housing in the region. These challenges affect educators' abilities to live within, or near the communities they serve as well as the District's ability to recruit and retain staff.

The cost of living is the number one reason that the District loses its staff members. The success of the District's tagline, "A Foundation of Excellence. A Future of Achievement" is heavily dependent on its ability to retain its teachers and staff members.

In light of the significant residential growth occurring throughout the City, the District has made staff housing a priority.

The District has explored the feasibility of staff housing and has been negotiating potential partnerships with residential developers.

## **4.8 Funding**

To fund the next phase of its facilities-related capital investments, the District has approved another bond measure for the March 3, 2020 ballot, which would succeed Measure G.

Passage of the bond in 2020 would enable the District to begin funding high priority capital projects to both recapitalize existing schools and begin addressing growth as early as 2021.

The estimated capacity for the District with this upcoming bond measure is \$259 million.

Appendix E outlines the basis for this estimate and a general discussion on the range of funding options available to the District.

A significant amount of lead time is required to facilitate complex projects on existing campuses. The typical time to plan, design, approve and

