WAUWATOSA
SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECONDARY SCHOOL AD HOC COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT

March 3, 2026

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Introduction

The Wauwatosa School District is located entirely within the City of Wauwatosa, a first-ring suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As a landlocked community, Wauwatosa has limited vacant land available for new construction of any kind, an important reality that shapes how the District plans for its future.

The District maintains a significant footprint throughout the city, with schools deeply woven into the fabric of local neighborhoods. Many of the elementary schools are intentionally situated within residential areas, making them walkable and closely connected to the communities they serve.

Several secondary schools also serve as neighborhood landmarks. Wauwatosa East High School and Longfellow Middle School anchor their surrounding communities, while Wauwatosa West High School and Whitman Middle School are located along Center Street next to Eisenhower Elementary School, forming a unique JK-12 campus that sits adjacent to a westside neighborhood reflecting the District's long-standing integration into the city.

This report provides readers with the context behind the work of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee. It outlines the work that the Committee engaged in from May 2025 to February 2026 and details of the footprint recommendation based upon months of studying and deliberating.

Background

Before discussing the work and recommendation of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee, it is important to provide historical context.

Facilities History: 1970s–1990s

In the early 1970s, resident student enrollment was over 10,000 students. Flash forward to one decade later and resident enrollment dropped below 7,000 students, with the 1982–1983 school year having enrollment of 6,117. It was during this time that the Wauwatosa School District closed schools, including Fisher Elementary. The District retained the property of Fisher Elementary School.

The District made facility additions at Roosevelt, McKinley, and Washington Elementary Schools in 1993. Total student enrollment during the 1993–1994 school year was 7,326. That same year, Wisconsin enacted a revenue cap, establishing a formula that restricted how much school districts could raise taxes. Notably, during this period the District did not undertake any significant capital improvement projects at other schools.

Since 1996, the Wauwatosa School District has experienced declining enrollment yet has maintained the facility footprint established in 1983. Resident enrollment has not been above 6,000 students since 2011, with the exception of 2019 when it was 6,001.

Facilities History: Building age and deferred maintenance (1967–2016)

The age of school facilities in the Wauwatosa School District varies widely. Prior to 2018, the District had not constructed a new school building since 1967 (51 years). More than five decades passed without any new school construction or major renovation of secondary school facilities, placing significant strain on aging facilities that continued to serve generations of students.

With the exception of a set of facility renovations completed in 1993 (noted earlier), the District historically addressed maintenance needs on an episodic and reactive basis, rather than through a sustained, comprehensive capital improvement strategy. While these efforts helped keep buildings operational, they did not fully address the long-term infrastructure needs associated with aging systems, evolving educational expectations, and accessibility standards.

As a result, many District buildings entered the 21st century with original or obsolete mechanical systems, building layouts, and infrastructure. A detailed accounting of the age and condition of the District's school buildings is provided on page 6 of the October 2024 Board presented Long-Range Facilities Plan, which illustrates the scope and scale of deferred maintenance across the system.

This historical context is essential to understanding the current facilities planning challenges facing the District and the rationale behind recent and ongoing investments in school infrastructure.

In 2016, the District commissioned a facilities maintenance study. This study came on the heels of systemic mechanical and heating system failures at various schools. The District requested a list of maintenance items produced by

priority of need. However, due to the magnitude of what was identified, there was a larger push to review if the buildings even met the functional needs of the time.

Facilities History: Formation of the FAC (2017)

Within these local conditions, the District convened a Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) in 2017. The formation of the FAC followed a series of significant mechanical failures across District schools that disrupted instructional time and raised serious concerns about student safety and building reliability.

One of the most visible and costly examples was the 2017 critical hydronic heating system failure and subsequent flooding at Washington Elementary School, which forced instructional interruptions and drew public attention to the vulnerabilities of the District's aging infrastructure.

This incident was not isolated; rather, it signaled broader, systemic challenges affecting multiple buildings across the District and the increased risk of compromising academic and institutional continuity.

These events underscored the urgent need for a comprehensive, long-term approach to facilities planning. The FAC was charged with studying the condition of District buildings, assessing future needs, and developing recommendations to ensure that schools remain safe, functional, and capable of supporting high-quality teaching and learning for years to come.

In 2017, the District established a clear non-negotiable for the FAC: no elementary schools would be closed as part of the planning process. All recommendations were required to account for the continued operation of every existing elementary school. This directive has had lasting implications and continues to shape (and constrain) subsequent facilities planning. As a result, the Wauwatosa taxpayers have inherently agreed to absorb additional undefined costs to ensure that all elementary schools remain open.

Past community history (note: 2005 school closure Board decisions) have indicated that the community prioritizes keeping all elementary schools open.

Historically, when the concept of elementary school closure has been considered, electoral outcomes have indicated limited community support for that approach. As a result, these outcomes have informed policy decisions at the District administrative level.

Facilities History: The FAC recommendation and 2018 referendum

After extensive analysis, the FAC developed a recommended comprehensive facilities plan (Table 1). This table represents the projects of highest priority at the foundation, with the lowest priority at the top.

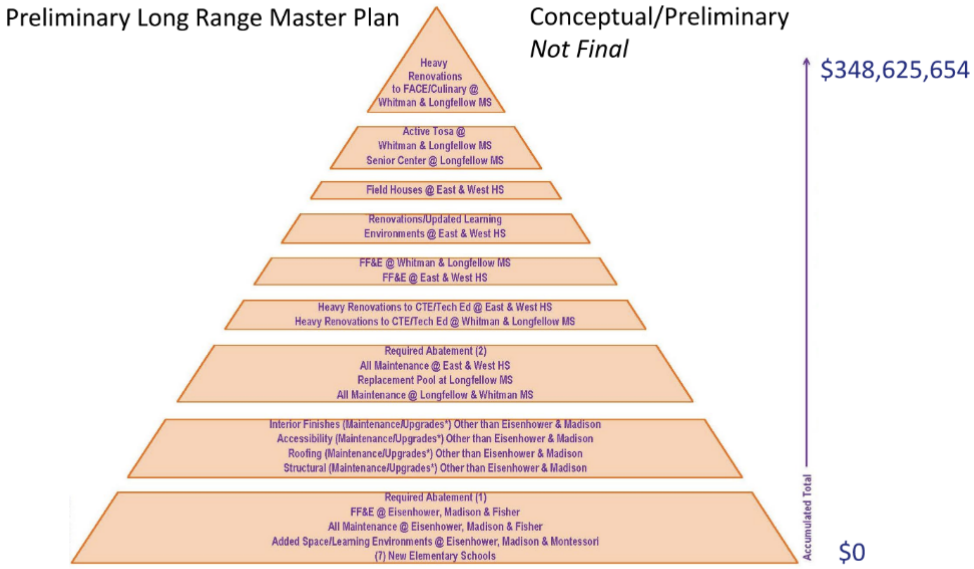
The plan included constructing seven new elementary schools and heavily renovating and modernizing Eisenhower and Madison, with the goal to bring all

elementary schools in the district up to a common standard identified at the time as the "Model Elementary School."

The District's secondary schools were not comprehensively included in the June 2018 recommendation. The proposed plan was to explore secondary school solutions in a future phase. Again, the plan was intentionally designed to avoid closing any elementary schools.

In 2017 dollars, the total estimated cost of the FAC's recommended plan was approximately $350 million.

Table 1



The community survey at the time indicated that the community was willing to tolerate a $150 million referendum. Using financial assumptions and a conservative analysis of community tax tolerance, the District advanced a more limited proposal. Therefore, the strategy established was to address the highest priority items in the foundation of the pyramid as well as ensure that all buildings receive some form of improvement.

Subsequently, in 2018, a $124.9 million referendum was placed on the ballot, reflecting assumed community tax tolerance at the District level. It passed with 61% approval. It was never intended to resolve all of the District's facility needs. Rather, the referendum represented a deliberate and incremental approach to addressing a much larger, long-term facilities challenge.

In the years following the 2018 referendum, however, future District leaders and community leaders have faced a significant challenge. The phased nature of the plan was not communicated consistently to the broader community. This gap in understanding is not attributable to any single individual or decision. During this period, the District experienced changes:

- communication leadership at the District level (2020);

- the unprecedented disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021); and
- administrative leadership (Dr. Means becomes Superintendent July 2021 and Dr. Marble becomes Chief Academic Officer July 2022).

As a result, the implementation and communication of the multi-phase strategy (and the reality that additional funding would be required to fully address facility needs) was never reinforced through a sustained, comprehensive communication campaign. Over time, this contributed to a disconnect between the original intent of the 2018 referendum and public understanding of what Phase 1 was designed to accomplish.

This lack of shared understanding has made subsequent facilities planning and community engagement more complex and challenging. Re-establishing that context is essential to ensuring transparency, rebuilding clarity, and supporting informed decision-making as the District continues to address its long-term facilities needs.

Facilities History: Phase 1 implementation and growing facility inequities

The $124.9 million referendum in 2018 funded the construction of four new elementary schools and addressed a set of critical maintenance needs across other District facilities. When viewed in isolation, Phase 1 has now created an imbalanced facilities landscape across the District. Some schools benefited from substantial capital improvements, while others continued to operate in aging buildings with unresolved infrastructure needs.

Said differently, Phase 1 only scratched the surface of the District's long-term facilities needs (Table 2). Fully addressing those needs requires a sustained, phased strategy, a strategy that acknowledges both the progress made and the work that remains to ensure equity, safety, and functionality across all schools in the District.



By 2021, four years after the FAC was first convened, the District reached a clearer inflection point. Inequities among elementary school facilities had become increasingly visible. Schools that received capital improvements through Phase 1 stood in stark contrast to those still operating in significantly older and functionally obsolete buildings.

Despite the passage of the 2018 referendum, the District's facilities continue to deteriorate. As a result, facility needs have increased and associated costs have grown significantly beyond the levels identified in 2018.

Core mechanical and building systems at the secondary level are operating beyond their intended life cycle, building layouts are misaligned with current instructional needs, and accessibility limitations have become more pronounced, further underscoring the gaps left unaddressed in the initial phase. The current estimated deferred capital improvement cost is $165 million for all four secondary schools. These costs do not include capital improvements addressing instructional and educational needs.

Collectively, these conditions have made clear that the District can no longer rely on incremental or reactive measures alone. A renewed focus on comprehensive planning and decisive action was necessary to ensure facility equity, safety, and long-term sustainability across the entire system.

Facilities History: Limitations of the FAC and development of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee

The work of the FAC and the recommendations that ultimately led to the 2018 referendum served as the foundation for what was always intended to be a comprehensive K-12 facilities plan. However, an important limitation of the FAC's work was that a fully defined plan for the secondary schools was never completed. As a result, significant questions regarding secondary facilities were left unresolved.

In response to the ongoing need to communicate the comprehensive facilities plan developed by the FAC in 2018 and to address both emerging and existing facility needs, District leadership convened a Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee in 2025 to examine long-term planning considerations. This Committee was charged to focus on the secondary schools because, while the FAC developed a comprehensive facilities plan, the phasing for addressing secondary school facilities was not part of that work.

In this context, the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee is advancing the work of the FAC, representing a continuation of the District's long-term strategic planning efforts and incorporating community input.

Central to that work has been a renewed and comprehensive assessment of the District's secondary schools, with the goal of restoring clarity, addressing inequities, and identifying a sustainable path forward within the constraints inherited from prior decisions.

In addition, several key elements of the elementary facilities strategy were not communicated with sufficient clarity. The concept of constructing three additional elementary schools (Washington, Roosevelt, and Jefferson) was not

clearly articulated and the scope and implications of the heavy renovations planned for Madison and Eisenhower Elementary Schools were not fully understood by those school communities at the time.

Facilities History: New WSD leadership and the next phase of long-range facilities planning

With new leadership, beginning in 2021, the District has taken deliberate steps to confront these difficult and previously unaddressed issues by developing a more complete and coherent plan. The 2024 facilities referendum directly addressed the growing gap in deferred maintenance and ADA compliance.

Since 2021, the District has established a timeline to construct five new elementary schools. This is based upon financing capacity and project sequencing. This can be found on page 124 of the Board-presented Long-Range Facilities Plan.

As the next phase of long-range facilities planning was undertaken during the 2022–23 school year, WSD leaders sought to update the Educational Space Adequacy (ESA) which was calculated for each school building using three industry-accepted methods (Castaldi, 1994; Minnesota Department of Education, 2018; Wauwatosa School District Long-Range Facilities Plan, May 2024, pp. 55-64). These calculations were leveraged to model various potential District grade range configurations and resulting building capacities:

1. capacity by desired class size;
2. capacity by learning environment area; and
3. capacity by gross building area.

While having these calculations is foundational to determining ESA, traditional ESA analysis is reliant in large part on mathematical means derived from the master schedule, District class size policy, and room/building square footage. Traditional ESA does not go far enough to describe the actual adequacy of the learning spaces within a building, nor does it describe the totality of the building's spaces to support the myriad functions and programmatic demands within its walls and on its property each day. In other words, ESA is not just about having adequate capacity. It must also address whether the space is suited for the programming scheduled within it now, and the envisioned changing needs of these programs over time. These facets of teaching and learning include, but are not limited to: space for resources, instructional strategies that involve movement and classroom flexibility, and safe storage.

Finally, the establishment of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee represents the current leadership's commitment to advancing the work that the FAC began. This effort is intended to nurture a comprehensive K-12 facilities strategy, one that brings clarity, equity, and long-term sustainability to both elementary and secondary schools across the District.

Analysis of Learning Spaces

Beginning in December 2023, leaders from the WSD and Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA) began reviewing the District's Strategic Plan (specifically objectives 1s, 2.6, 3.1, 3.5, 3.6, 5.6, 6.1, and 6.2). Recent comprehensive curriculum and programmatic review recommendations were also reviewed. From this initial review and research, the District decided to embark on a comprehensive analysis of secondary school learning spaces.

This work was anchored in the research of Basil Castaldi, the foremost recognized expert in the field of educational architecture. Castaldi (1994) suggests that school districts should engage in a "comprehensive expert study of the educational program offered by the school district" (p. 73). Such a study analyzes specific educational goals of the district and "covers all of the instructional experiences that pupils undergo in a school" (Castaldi, 1994, p. 73). This includes instructional materials, methodology, and techniques needed for each program and class, coupled with foreseeable changes to these in the future.

Further anchoring the expertise of Castaldi, such a study "is designed to discover and identify shortcomings in the educational program and to include suggestions that will overcome such deficiencies" (Castaldi, 1994, p. 73). Therefore, this analysis was positioned to do just that.

With this direction determined, the study aimed to answer the following key questions:

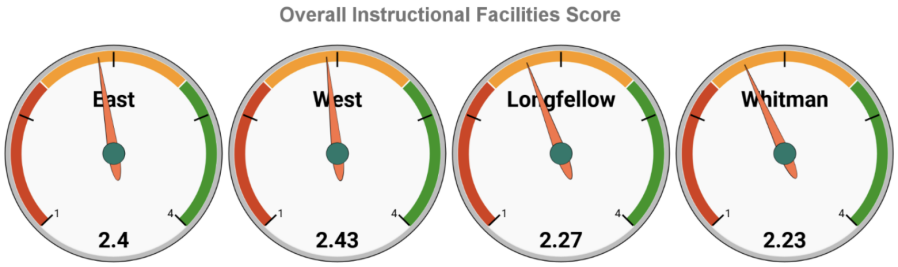
1. Do spaces support full programmatic offerings?
2. Is student experience consistent across schools?
3. Are classrooms flexible and equipped for research-based practices?
4. Are professional learning and collaboration spaces adequate?

As a result of reviewing District plans and goals, needed next steps in programmatic areas, and relevant research, the team developed 15 customized rubrics. These rubrics were developed by program area (e.g., mathematics, visual arts). A rubric was also developed for the overall building. These rubrics would later be used in the study to accomplish what Castaldi (1994) advises: "to discover and identify shortcomings in the educational program and to include suggestions that will overcome such deficiencies" (p. 73).

The team applied these rubrics to each classroom within the four secondary schools as well as the building as a whole. The District's Facility Study Team assessed spaces within all four secondary schools, and individual teachers were invited to assess the learning spaces that they access the most in a singular school. The study concluded with a written report which identified that ***not a single classroom was found to be sufficiently adequate*** to support teachers

in their instructional delivery or students in their learning (Table 3).

Table 3



Wauwatosa East High School

Despite its historic charm, many learning spaces are outdated. The greatest needs for improvement include world language and social studies classrooms, music and theater facilities, as well as the science classrooms 3D visual arts room, which presents safety hazards. Business education spaces were rated the most supportive. Lack of small group collaboration spaces and access to daylight were key concerns. Security, wayfinding, and library updates are also needed.

Wauwatosa West High School

Although West was built in the 1960s, its instructional environment is outdated. Areas most in need of improvement include visual arts, social studies, science, English, and performing arts. Circulation issues hinder student learning, while small group collaboration spaces and daylight access are lacking. Student restrooms, special education spaces, and administrative conference areas also need updates.

Longfellow Middle School

Natural daylight is the school's greatest asset. However, small and large collaboration spaces, as well as adequate power access, are lacking. Poor acoustics from HVAC and adjacent classrooms interfere with instruction. Many spaces still use inflexible furniture, limiting arrangements. Overall, the school requires significant updates.

Whitman Middle School

While daylight access is strong, limited space is a major issue. Small and large collaboration spaces are insufficient, and common areas lack size. The school is overcrowded, restricting movement and storage. Overall, it does not support a modern learning environment and needs major improvements.

With these findings in hand, the WSD was positioned to begin engaging the wider community in discussions on how to respond to this information, leading to the formation of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee.

Committee Purpose and Composition

The charge of the Committee was to answer the following essential question: ***Which secondary school facility model best equips WSD to implement and sustain an efficient and impactful instructional program?*** The term “efficient” is further defined as: (1) maximize space utilization, (2) staffing allocation, and (3) student experience. The term “impactful” is further defined as: (1) improved student achievement within the learning spaces and (2) further prepares students to thrive in their post-secondary pathways.

In answering this essential question, the Committee was also tasked with basing their decisions on the following decision-making criteria:

1. maximize students' academic growth and achievement;
2. maximize students' social-emotional development;
3. maximize the District's investment in allocating funds responsibly;
4. maximize modern learning environments for all students; and
5. maximize efficient facility usage.

Having a clearly articulated purpose allowed the WSD to seek out membership for the Committee. On April 8, 2025, the WSD launched its campaign to solicit Committee members. Interested individuals had until May 2, 2025, to complete the application. 50 individuals applied to participate.

On May 7, 2025, the District publicly announced the Committee of 25 members and on May 9, 2025, an updated Committee list was announced within the WSD's monthly newsletter "Tosa Times." The list is as follows:

One parent or guardian from each elementary school building and Wauwatosa Montessori (9):

1. Eisenhower: Vivian Dondlinger
2. Jefferson: Seth Flanders
3. Lincoln: Katie Triska Wiemer
4. McKinley: Abby Kortes
5. Roosevelt: Andrea Hoffman
6. Underwood: Patrick Zarling
7. Washington: Katharine Hudson
8. Wilson: Jonathan Ference-Burke
9. Wauwatosa Montessori: Lindsay Schiller

Two parents or guardians from each of the four District secondary school buildings (8):

10. Longfellow: Will Gilbert
11. Longfellow: Tyler Malzahn
12. Whitman: Pablo Bras
13. Whitman: Maura Riordan
14. East: Melissa Smothers
15. East: Martha Handrich
16. West: Charmina McGill
17. West: Sarah Noerenberg

Four Wauwatosa residents who do not currently have children attending schools in the Wauwatosa School District (4):

18. Liz Shickles
19. Martin McLemore
20. Edward Brennan
21. Sharon Muehlfeld

Four current secondary school staff members, one from each of the District's secondary schools (3):

22. Longfellow: Dana Federmeyer
23. Whitman: Matt Troilo
24. East: Michael Hayden

Note: There were no applicants to represent Madison Elementary and Wauwatosa West High School (staff). While four applicants were sought from among current Wauwatosa high school students, only one student applied but they later declined to participate.

Ways of Working - A Statement from the External Facilitator, Paige Richards

When this Committee first convened in May 2025, it consisted of *individuals* who had each volunteered their time to serve on behalf of WSD. Over the course of ten months, through sustained dialogue, study, and collaboration, this group of individuals evolved into a *cohesive, collaborative, well-informed,* and *highly effective Committee*.

The structure of the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee was notably forward-thinking. The District empowered a representative group of community members to engage in a professionally facilitated process designed to deepen their understanding of the complex, "wicked" policy challenges surrounding school facilities. Importantly, this work extended well beyond questions of physical infrastructure. The Committee examined interconnected governance considerations including enrollment trends, social-emotional learning, school finance, and academic programming.

As the external facilitator, I deeply appreciate the District's commitment to preserving an independent process. That autonomy ensured the Committee could explore all dimensions of the work comprehensively and candidly - surfacing trade-offs, testing assumptions, dissent, and engaging in rigorous analysis without constraint.

I am equally grateful to each Committee member. This was a significant undertaking. Members participated in numerous meetings totaling 40 hours of

structured work, in addition to school visits and extensive preparation outside of formal Committee time. They engaged deeply with materials, asked thoughtful and probing questions, and demonstrated a sustained commitment to understanding the issues at hand.

The Committee learned from WSD leadership, the Construction and Architectural team, leaders from the City of Wauwatosa, and members of the broader community. They posed a wide range of questions formally to WSD—more than sixty in total—to which WSD provided detailed responses. Through this iterative exchange, members strengthened their shared understanding and sharpened their collective analysis.

Throughout the process, the Committee adhered to established norms of collaboration and clear protocols designed to ensure all voices were heard. Members demonstrated curiosity, engagement, flexibility, and respect for differing perspectives. They approached their charge with seriousness and integrity. It was a respectful, collaborative, dynamic, and engaging process.

The Committee has conducted its due diligence. I extend my sincere thanks to them for their time, energy, and commitment to the Wauwatosa community and to WSD. It has been an exceptional experience to work with each Committee member and a District that places such a high level of trust in its community members. The District's vulnerability, flexibility and responsiveness in supporting the Ad Hoc Committee further strengthened the process.

All of these factors made my role as external facilitator both effective and deeply rewarding.

Process

The Committee held its first meeting on May 13, 2025. The purpose of this meeting was to support the group in becoming a collaborative Committee, ready to learn about options for the District.

Meeting outcomes included enhancing the collective understanding of:

- How the Committee will work together;
- What the work will look like;
- Why the work matters; and
- An overview of the work ahead

At this meeting, Committee members received binders with various materials to assist their efforts, including the *WSD Analysis of Learning Spaces Report*.

Between May and June, members of the Committee were led on tours of the four secondary schools in Wauwatosa by Dr. Marble, Dr. Means, and Kevin LaFountain to better understand the current state of the facilities. These tours were not comprehensive (i.e Committee attendees did not see every classroom in every building); rather, they highlighted specific areas within each building that the District had pre-selected, as well as additional spaces as requested by individual Committee members. The Committee saw all major common spaces and high use areas (e.g. cafeterias, gymnasiums, theaters, libraries etc.), as well as some specialty classrooms (e.g. chemistry, ceramics, culinary arts) in addition to the front offices, and each building's HVAC/furnace room.

Following the internal tours, Committee members were invited to tour more contemporary middle and high schools in three different geographical areas within Wisconsin to provide a basis for comparison. On these tours, Committee attendees were able to not only see the highlights of these modern learning spaces, but learn how they were planned for and funded in those communities.

External School Tours

- Madison Area (June 24, 2025): Toured Sun Prairie East High School, Sun Prairie West High School, and Middleton High School. These schools provided an opportunity to see a modern two-high-school district and a large comprehensive high school with recent updates.
- Fox Valley Area (July 24, 2025): Toured Ripon Middle/High School, Neenah High School, and Menasha High School. Ripon showcased a combined middle/high school that separates students for most purposes. Neenah provided an example of brand-new construction, while Menasha showcased a renovated high school emphasizing historic preservation.
- Milwaukee Area (August 7, 2025): Toured Nicolet High School and Franklin Middle School. Nicolet served as an example of a renovated high school, while Franklin represented a large, contemporary middle school.

September 2, 2025, marked the first regular meeting of the Committee. From that date until February 10, the Committee met weekly or bi-weekly on Tuesday evenings from 6:00–8:00 PM. An external facilitator, Ms. Paige Richards of Build Capacity Consulting, organized and facilitated these meetings. The minutes from each meeting can be found here.

September

The Committee met five times during September. The facilitator acclimated the group to the work, and members shared learnings from the external school tours in small groups. Our work consistently considered the needs of students as well as educators and staff.

The Committee also heard from City of Wauwatosa officials, District leadership, and construction and architect experts. On September 23, 2025, District leadership and the architectural firms shared expert opinions on the original seven WSD-proposed models (graphic on next page) These reports covered:

- Social Emotional Learning
- Academic Performance
- Human Resources
- Facilities Management
- Finance
- Architecture and Construction

Secondary School Proposed Model Summary Comparison

	Model A1	Model A2	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E	Model F
Closed schools	Longfellow, Whitman	Longfellow, Whitman	Whitman	Longfellow, Whitman	Longfellow, Whitman	None	None
Grade configuration	7-12	7-12	7-8 & 9-12	7-9 & 10-12	7-8 & 9-12	7-8 & 9-12	7-8 & 9-12
High school(s)	East & West	East & West	East & West	West	West	East & West	East & West
Middle school(s)	East & West	East & West	Longfellow	East	East	Longfellow & Whitman	Longfellow & Whitman
Modernization	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
New athletic fields/ courts/parking	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Swimming pool(s)	East only	East only	East only	East only	East only	All secondary	All secondary
New square ft.	164,300	164,300	0	46,500	209,000	0	0
Third floor East	Renovated	Renovated	Not renovated	Renovated	Not renovated	Not renovated	Renovated
Net new operating costs	-$1,505,000	-$1,740,000	$31,750	$584,000	$716,000	-$140,000	$0
Estimated Total Cost	$350,695,000	$309,960,000	$304,731,750	$251,584,000	$343,716,000	$149,860,000	$332,060,000

At the meeting on September 30, 2025 three new models were proposed by Committee members (details for these models can be found in Appendix A):

- Model G
- Model H
- Model I
- Model J

It was also at this meeting when the Committee engaged in a decision analysis to narrow down the now 10 models under consideration. The Committee narrowed the number of models for two reasons:

- Fewer models would allow for deeper analysis of each model
- School Perceptions, the group designing this fall's community survey for all Wauwatosa residents, indicated that fewer models would help the community provide better feedback

See the section titled “From 10 to 5” for more information on the decision-making process. The remaining models included A1, D, F, I, and H.

October

The Committee met twice during the first part of October. Members revisited sections of the *Secondary Analysis of Learning Spaces* report to better understand how facilities can maximize academic growth and achievement. They also engaged in collective learning regarding social-emotional learning. Additionally, the Committee voted to request cost estimates of the new models (I and H) by the architect team to better inform their study.

November

In November, the Committee met three times to explore best-fit model options through various criteria lenses. This work was conducted in four-person workgroups, prioritizing:

1. Maximizing social-emotional learning
2. Maximizing academic growth and achievement
3. Financial implications

At the November 18, 2025, meeting, a Committee member presented a new model via email, which became known as Model K. This model proposed maintaining the K–5, 6–8, 9–12 structure, closing Jefferson Elementary (redistricting to Wilson, Washington, and Lincoln), and closing Fisher/relocating the Montessori program.

December

The Committee met twice in December. At the first meeting, the Committee reviewed prior WSD decisions and its guiding question. The Committee voted not to advance Model K for further consideration, because it was submitted

after the deadline and based on direction from District administration that a recommendation to close an elementary school was beyond the scope of the Ad Hoc Committee's work.

WSD was open to the Committee's feedback on the survey and agreed to make edits, resulting in a shift of the print and mailing schedule, moving the survey's release to the week of January 5th. Updated graphics for the remaining models (A1, D, F, I, H) were provided by the architectural team and made available for public review on the District website. Finally, the Committee established talking points explaining why a "Do Nothing" model was not considered and why Model E (maintenance-only) was eliminated.

January

In January, the Committee met twice. The first meeting was the final evening of four person work groups in exploring best fit model options through the lens of the different decision-making criteria. Groups determined the benefits and challenges of the school models through the decision making criteria: maximize modern learning environments and maximize efficient facility usage.

February

The Committee met three times in February to review and provide feedback on drafts of this report, receive a briefing from School Perceptions regarding the community survey results, and collaborate on their portion of the presentation to the WSD School Board.

Decision Making

This section unpacks four key decisions made by the Committee:

1. The decision to narrow the models from 10 to 5 options
2. The rationale for not adding a "Do Nothing" option
3. The elimination of Model E (maintenance-only)
4. The Committee's final recommendation authored by the nominated representative, Andrea Hoffman, along with considerations and any dissenting recommendations from other Committee members

From 10 to 5

On September 30, 2025, the Committee used the Kepner-Tregoe Decision Analysis protocol to narrow down the model options. The decision to reduce the number of models from 10 to 5 was based on direction from WSD and School Perceptions to allow for deeper understanding and better community feedback via the survey.

The Committee prioritized the decision-making criteria in the following order, listed from highest to lower priority focus:

1. Maximize students' social-emotional development
2. Maximize students' academic growth and achievement. (Note: The scores for these top two priorities were very close)
3. Maximize the District's investment in allocating funds responsibly
4. Maximize modern learning environments for all students
5. Maximize efficient facility usage

Table 5

Models Voted to Be Studied	
Model	Committee Vote
I	258.72
F	253.54
A1	222.8
D	189.89
H	181.38

Models Voted to be Set Aside	
Model	Committee Vote
A2	170.96
G	169.98
C	144.45
E	137.04
B	134.79

Models brought forward by Committee members are in purple

Table 5 outlines how the models fared as a result of applying the analysis protocol. Note again that two of the five models that were chosen for further study were developed by Committee members.

Secondary School Proposed Model Summary Comparison

	Model A1	Model D	Model F	Model H	Model I
Closed schools	Longfellow & Whitman	Longfellow & Whitman	None	East, Whitman & Fisher	Fisher
Grade configuration	7-12	7-8 & 9-12	7-8 & 9-12	7-12	7-8 & 9-12
High school(s)	East & West	West	East & West	Longfellow & West	East & West
Middle school(s)	East & West	East	Longfellow & Whitman	Longfellow & West	Longfellow & Whitman
Modernization	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New athletic fields/ courts/parking	No	Yes	No	No	No
Swimming pool(s)	East & West	East only	All secondary	East, West & Longfellow	East & West
New square ft.	164,300	209,000	0	336,215	0
Third floor East	Renovated	Not renovated	Not renovated	Not renovated	Not renovated
Net new operating costs	-$1,505,000	$716,000	-$140,000	-$1,505,000	-$140,000
Estimated Total Cost	$367,495,000	$346,716,000	$348,860,000	$445,495,000	$361,860,000

Updated: November 2025

Project cost estimates have been updated after a comprehensive review conducted by the District's Construction Manager, Findorff. The current estimates are based on the most current market conditions (2025), in addition to concept space programs provided by PRA and a recently completed Existing Conditions Analysis by Zimmerman Architectural Studios. Estimates are based on current 2025 costing and do not include inflation or cost escalation.

Doing Nothing = Not an Option

After touring the secondary schools and reviewing extensive data on facility conditions, this Committee reached a clear consensus: continued inaction poses unacceptable risks to student safety, learning environments, and fiscal responsibility.

The buildings themselves tell the story. Years of deferred maintenance have compounded into serious concerns—from outdated mechanical systems to safety vulnerabilities to accessibility barriers that cannot be addressed with temporary fixes or with the District's current funding. These are not abstract problems; they are already daily realities for the students and staff who occupy these spaces.

WSD has reported that the current estimated deferred maintenance cost is $165 million for all four secondary schools. Below are select examples of the deferred maintenance in WSD secondary buildings (a comprehensive list can be found in the WSD Facility Assessment Compilation By School 05.21.24.pdf):

- Wauwatosa East High School
    - The steam boiler plant is old, in poor condition, very energy inefficient and provides inconsistent heating and cooling throughout the building
    - All exterior windows are uninsulated, inefficient and well beyond service life
    - Widespread ADA noncompliance in doors, hardware, and toilet rooms
    - Roof replacement needed for a significant portion of the building
    - Unsafe conditions in instructional spaces (e.g., science labs are not sufficiently equipped with safety equipment, ceramics studio lacks ventilation)
- Wauwatosa West High School
    - Current entry sequence does not meet modern secure entry standards
    - Roof replacement needed for a significant portion of the building
    - All exterior doors are in poor condition
    - Gymnasium and locker room facilities at end of useful life and non-ADA compliant
    - HVAC, electrical and building systems require renewal to maintain safe operation
- Whitman Middle School
    - Door hardware, door clearances, bathroom stall size, and bathroom hardware throughout the building does not meet ADA standards
    - Water infiltration causes flooding in multiple lower-level spaces during heavy rain events
    - Multiple plumbing and electrical systems are at the end of their useful life
- Longfellow Middle School
    - Elevator system is aged and needs full replacement
    - Electrical infrastructure (including main fire alarm system) require upgrades to support building needs and current code requirements
    - Interior finishes deteriorating (e.g., ceiling tiles failing, most interior doors throughout the building are in poor operating condition)

The financial calculus is equally stark. Maintenance costs escalate with time, and emergency repairs cost exponentially more than planned improvements. What we can address proactively will be far less expensive and disruptive than repairs we have to address reactively in the future. The question is not whether these issues will be resolved, but whether we will resolve them on our terms or in crisis mode.

Our community has demonstrated its commitment to excellence in education by previously investing in capital improvements and modern facilities that serve students well. Students of all grade levels deserve learning environments that

reflect that high standard.

Elimination of the Maintenance-Only Option (Model E)

The Committee overwhelmingly rejected Model E, which focused exclusively on deferred maintenance, and voted to eliminate it from further analysis (see above Table 5). This decision was informed by both financial analysis and direct observation of current building conditions.

This maintenance-only option would address critical infrastructure—keeping systems operational, meeting code requirements, and fulfilling safety obligations. The estimated cost for this work is now approximately $165 million, an increase that reflects the reality of construction inflation and the growing scope of deferred needs.

The Committee's school tours revealed a gap between what maintenance-only funding would accomplish and what our secondary students actually experience daily. While Model E would keep buildings functional, it would not modernize learning spaces, improve accessibility beyond minimum ADA requirements, or create environments that reflect contemporary educational practices. Students and staff would continue working in spaces that, while code-compliant, fail to support the quality of instruction our community expects.

Below are select examples of recommended building modernizations not reflected in the total deferred maintenance list in the WSD Facility Assessment. All four secondary buildings would benefit from these types of modernization (not an exhaustive list):

- Office, Student Services and entryway redesign/relocation for improved security and student/visitor experience
- Theater and music suite reconfiguration and technology upgrades to better accommodate the growth and success of these programs
- Remodeling of dark, low ceilinged cafeterias into a student commons with sufficient natural light and better layout for supervision and security purposes
- Outdated layouts, obstructed sightlines, non-functional gas valves, and non-functioning fume hoods prevent science classrooms from supporting meaningful hands-on learning
- Flexible and modern classroom furniture to allow for adaptable lessons and student collaboration
- Most classrooms and common areas would benefit from more natural light

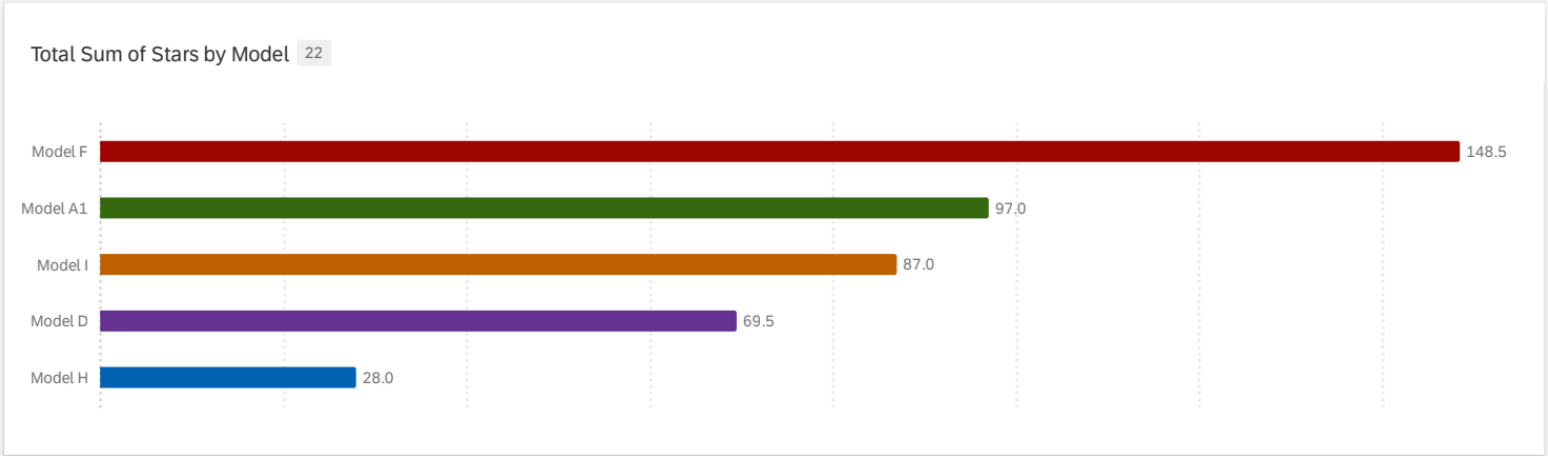
- Adjusting classroom layouts to be in line with current industry standards for classroom square footage
- Improve classroom layouts and accessibility of common areas beyond the minimum ADA requirements

The Committee discussed the balance between needs and wants, and the range of appropriate levels of investment for taxpayers. The consensus emerged that spending $165 million solely on deferred maintenance represents an inefficient use of resources and would result in these same modernization concerns being continually raised in the years to come. When compared to other models— which address the same infrastructure needs while also modernizing learning environments and improving long-term building efficiency—the maintenance-only approach would likely require substantial additional investment within a relatively short timeframe to adequately adapt these aging buildings to educate many future generations of WSD students.

The Committee believes that if the district is prepared to invest at this scale, that investment should position our secondary schools for the future, not merely preserve them in their current inadequate state.

Committee Recommendation and Rationale

The Secondary Ad Hoc Survey asked Committee members to rate each model on a scale of 0-10 stars and respondents were given the option to provide written feedback to the following questions: “What factors led you to support Model [X]?” and “What factors led you to oppose Model [X]?” 22 of 24 members of the Committee participated in this survey.



The models received the following average scores:

1. Model F 6.8 stars
2. Model A1 4.4 stars
3. Model I 4.0 stars
4. Model D 3.2 stars
5. Model H 1.3 stars

After 10 months of study, deliberation, community engagement, and careful application of the Committee's decision-making criteria, the Secondary School Ad Hoc Committee recommends **Model F** as the facility model best equipped to help the Wauwatosa School District implement and sustain an efficient and impactful instructional program.

Model F preserves all four secondary school campuses, configuring East and West as grades 9–12 high schools and Longfellow and Whitman as grades 7–8 middle schools. At an estimated total project cost of $349 million, the model funds light and heavy renovations across all four buildings, addresses $165 million in deferred maintenance and capital needs, and projects an annual reduction of approximately $140,000 in staffing and utility costs. All four pools would remain open or, in the case of Longfellow, be updated and reopened.

The Committee's support for Model F is grounded in each of the five decision-making criteria, prioritized in the order established by the Committee.

Maximizing Students' Social-Emotional Development

By maintaining four distinct campuses — two high schools and two middle schools — the model preserves school environments where students are more likely to feel known, supported, and connected. Research consistently links smaller school populations to lower rates of bullying, higher attendance, and stronger student-teacher relationships. Middle school students in grades 7–8 benefit from learning environments tailored to the unique developmental demands of early adolescence. High school students at East and West retain access to the full breadth of extracurricular activities, electives, athletics, arts, and performing arts programs that research shows are critical to students' sense of belonging and long-term well-being. Committee members repeatedly noted in their written feedback that reducing student access to these opportunities — an outcome more likely under models that consolidate buildings — could meaningfully harm students' social-emotional experience of school.

Maximizing Students’ Access to Extracurricular Activities

An important aspect of students' social-emotional development is maintaining and expanding access to extracurricular activities. Participating in these programs gives students a sense of purpose and belonging while strengthening their connection to school. By preserving all four existing secondary schools, Model F maximizes access to these opportunities. Athletics, music, theater, and other programs are seeing strong participation and community support, and have earned state and national recognition. We should continue to support these programs by ensuring access for the greatest number of students while providing improved facilities.

The Committee also considered the physical footprint of each school's property — Whitman (21.5 acres), Longfellow (19.89 acres), West High School (35 acres, shared with Eisenhower), and East High School (11.4 acres) — as certain models would create significant inequities in students' access to practice space and physical education. Under Model A1, for example, consolidating Longfellow students into East High School would reduce existing field space due to a required building addition, while concentrating more students on a site of just 11.4 acres. By contrast, moving Whitman students to West High School would still leave students with adequate space.

Maximizing Students' Academic Growth and Achievement

Model F creates the conditions for stronger academic outcomes by pairing modernized learning environments with school sizes that allow for more personalized instruction. The *Secondary Analysis of Learning Spaces* report found that not a single classroom across the four secondary schools was sufficiently adequate to support high-quality teaching and learning. Model F's renovation scope directly addresses this finding, modernizing science labs, performing arts spaces, visual arts facilities, collaboration areas, and common spaces across all four buildings. Students at both high schools retain access to high-demand courses and specialized programming that broader enrollment bases support. The Committee also noted that Model F preserves the district's flexibility to respond to future changes in enrollment or programming needs — an important consideration given that communities' needs and student populations evolve over time.

Model F also preserves something less tangible but equally important: the school identity and traditions that foster community pride and a sense of belonging. And as the nature of learning continues to evolve — driven by advances in technology, including AI — having modernized, flexible facilities positions WSD to adapt rather than react. This is not just an investment in today's students; it is a foundation for the generations that follow.

Maximizing the District's Investment in Allocating Funds Responsibly

While $349 million represents a substantial investment, the Committee concluded that Model F reflects responsible stewardship of district resources when evaluated against the alternatives. The $165 million in deferred maintenance must be addressed regardless of which model is chosen — these are not optional improvements, but necessary repairs to keep students and staff safe, meet code compliance, and keep buildings operational. Model F channels that unavoidable expenditure into a broader renovation strategy that simultaneously modernizes learning environments, rather than spending $165 million to simply halt the immediate failure of key systems. The model also retains all district-owned land and facilities — assets that, once sold or demolished, cannot be recovered.

Model F also presents the largest opportunity for cost savings in the final renovation plans. When initial cost estimates were prepared for the different models, the architecture team assumed that all renovated spaces would receive 70% heavy/30% light renovation. By only renovating existing spaces and avoiding additions or major reconfigurations, Model F presents the most flexibility in the final design. As final details of the renovation plans are worked out, there is room to decrease the square footage that requires heavy renovation, presenting cost savings while still achieving the overarching goals of Model F.

Maximizing Modern Learning Environments for All Students

One of the most consistent findings from the Committee's school tours and the learning spaces analysis was the inequity in the quality of instructional environments across the district. We believe that students at all four secondary schools will benefit from spaces that reflect contemporary educational practice — flexible classrooms, adequate natural light, functional science labs, collaborative spaces, and modern performing arts and visual arts facilities that meet the needs of our incredible, award winning arts programs. Model F's renovation scope addresses these deficiencies at all four campuses, ensuring that the quality of a student's learning environment is not determined by which school they attend. This commitment to equity across buildings was a priority for the Committee throughout its work.

Maximizing Efficient Facility Usage

Model F makes productive use of the district's existing building footprint. By configuring schools around developmentally appropriate grade bands — 7–8 at the middle level and 9–12 at the high school level — the model aligns building populations with program capacity at each site. Projected enrollment figures reflect appropriate school sizes given each campus's square footage and site acreage. Geographically distributed campuses also reduce commute burdens

for families, support walkability in surrounding neighborhoods, and ease traffic and transportation logistics across the city. Critically, Model F does not introduce busing, avoiding a significant and ongoing expense for the district. The planned renovations will also address decades of deferred infrastructure maintenance — including HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and air quality systems — creating healthier, more functional environments for students and staff.

Benefit to the Broader Community

Wauwatosa's secondary schools are more than educational facilities — they are community infrastructure. They anchor neighborhoods, host community events, and provide pools, athletic fields, theaters, and gathering spaces that serve residents of all ages. Model F preserves this infrastructure entirely. The reopening of Longfellow's pool is a concrete example: it restores a community resource that extends far beyond middle school students, serving the countless children who learn water safety — a critical, lifelong skill. This is one of many ways our secondary schools function as learning spaces and hubs not just for students, but for the entire city of Wauwatosa. The district's fields and gymnasiums are already in high demand by community organizations; closing any secondary school would only exacerbate this issue. Four campuses distributed across the city means every corner of Wauwatosa retains nearby, accessible school facilities. These neighborhood schools are a defining characteristic of our community — and a valuable one. This community dimension is not a secondary benefit of Model F. It is central to why this model best serves the district's long-term interests.

Community Survey Results

The Committee's recommendation is also informed by the results of a community survey conducted by School Perceptions and released in February 2026. The survey referenced building configurations rather than naming each model directly. The key question posed for each building configuration: "How important is it that the Committee explore this option?" were to be answered on a scale of "very important, somewhat important, somewhat unimportant, very unimportant, no preference, not sure."

For analysis purposes, School Perceptions focused on three sub-groups of survey respondents:

- Staff Residents - respondents who are members of the WSD staff and also live in Wauwatosa;
- Parent Residents - respondents who are parents of school children and live in Wauwatosa;

- Non-Parent, Non-Staff - the remainder of survey respondents who are not members of staff, do not have children in the school district, but are residents of Wauwatosa.

The concept at the core of Model F — that no secondary school buildings would close — earned the highest scores of any option presented and did so consistently across all three respondent groups. Among staff residents, 69% rated the no-closure option as important. Among parent residents, 71% rated it important. Among non-parent, non-staff residents, 55% rated it important.

By contrast, consolidation options (Models A1, D, and H) – particularly those involving the most significant building closures – scored lowest across all groups. The option to move 7th and 8th grade students to the Longfellow and West facilities (Model H), which would have closed the most buildings, received important ratings of only 24–30% across groups, with 66–68% rating it unimportant.

Considerations

To answer the essential question — *Which secondary school facility model best equips WSD to implement and sustain an efficient and impactful instructional program?* — the Committee has ranked Model F first based on the information available at the time of its decision. In doing so, the Committee also emphasizes the following considerations that the Board and district leadership should weigh as the decision making process moves forward.

There Is No Single Right Answer to This "Wicked Problem"

After 10 months of study, the Committee examined the current state of WSD's secondary school facilities, explored a range of potential models, and deliberated carefully over each model's benefits and drawbacks. Despite this extensive process, the Committee did not rate any model highly — ratings ranged from 1.3 to 6.8 on a 10-point scale (see page 22 for full details). This reflects the genuine difficulty of the problem, not a failure of analysis.

Each model carries its own financial challenges and impacts to the community. Nevertheless, the Committee believes that any model that meaningfully addresses deferred maintenance and modernizes WSD's schools will benefit students and the broader Wauwatosa community. The absence of a perfect solution should not delay action — the cost of inaction, both financial and educational, continues to grow.

Reversing Prior WSD Decisions Would Change the Analysis

The Committee recognized that its directive was bound to secondary schools, but it was impossible to examine that question in isolation. Prior WSD decisions — e.g. an open enrollment drawdown, moving 6th grade to elementary schools, and the decision to keep all elementary schools open — have meaningfully shaped current enrollment patterns and influenced the constraints the Committee worked within. The recommendation and rationale for Model F is made within the current landscape.

In addition to this report, the Committee recommends the Board review the qualitative and quantitative results of the community survey, in which many responses reference an openness to revisiting prior WSD decisions. Should the Board consider revising any of these decisions, the Committee's analysis and rankings should be revisited.

Operational Costs and the Referendum Cycle

Model F does *not* significantly reduce the district's operational footprint or per-pupil operating costs. Maintaining four secondary campuses involves ongoing staffing, utility, and maintenance expenses that other models — particularly those consolidating buildings — would reduce. The Committee recognizes that this recommendation does not break the district's cycle of periodic referendums, and that sustained investment in school facilities will require ongoing community support and state funding. This consideration is compounded by an enrollment reality that the Board should keep in view: secondary enrollment has declined by approximately 500 students over the past decade, and projections suggest continued decline. The survey itself acknowledged that by 2035, all high school students could fit into one building. The community is aware of this context — and still chose, by a substantial majority, to prioritize the exploration of education models that keep all buildings open. That said, the district should continue to seek operational efficiencies that do not significantly impact instructional quality or student experience, and should communicate transparently with the community about the long-term cost implications of this footprint.

Renovation Scope and Cost Management

The $349 million estimate is based on assumptions about the proportion of heavy versus light renovation required across all four buildings. Committee members noted that, once detailed facility planning begins, there may be opportunities to reduce the total cost by dialing back the scope of heavy renovation — particularly at Longfellow and West — while still achieving the core goals of the model. The district should approach the planning process with rigor and flexibility, seeking to maximize the impact of every dollar invested without locking into assumptions before detailed assessments are complete.

Dissenting Opinions

The following statements are drawn directly from Committee members' written responses in their final vote on these models. These are a representative sampling of comments, not an exhaustive list.

Notes in Opposition to Model F

On long-term fiscal sustainability and enrollment trends:

"Given the school funding situation in Wisconsin, committing our district to periodic capital maintenance on four secondary school buildings in a time of decreasing enrollment is irresponsible and will only doom the city to periodic cycles of facing down even more referenda than we already need just to keep things as-is. We need models that reduce operating costs and long-term capital expenditures."

"I also have a grave fear that the community will not provide the funding needed to implement Model F. Given the current economic environment nationwide and in Tosa, any referendum is a gamble, and this model really only works if the money is committed to keep all four buildings in good shape in the long term. I do not think that is likely to come to pass."

"I do not think this model makes sense with the enrollment numbers [that were presented to us]. Keeping both middle school buildings open with 2/3 capacity (only 7th and 8th graders) does not seem fiscally responsible."

On the need for decisive leadership:

"Model F does not show the decisive and bold leadership the Wauwatosa community requires at this critical time. It is recognized that change is difficult but given student population numbers and the current overcapacity the secondary school buildings represent, it would be a mistake to spend this amount of money to merely kick-the-can down the road. Bold leadership from district leaders is required now to align the future expected student numbers to proper building capacity and thereby staffing levels for the next 50 plus years. Model F does not accomplish this. Model F will lock the district into maintaining existing facilities and staffing levels for under-populated schools for years to come."

On programming risk and facility efficiency:

"The projected reduction in enrollment poses a real threat to current programming. I am concerned by the idea of losing some of the 'niche'

programming that is strongly supported in our community like theater, orchestra, languages, and arts. This model is not an efficient use of facilities, resources, or staff."

"Preserving the current four school model does not allow for enhanced offerings. If enrollment continues to decline, fewer students will operate in the same space which is not an efficient use."

On community trust in district administration:

"Given overall declining enrollment numbers, and (from the survey data) deep distrust throughout the community about the current WSD administration's ability to spend money well or make strategic decisions about schools (e.g. closing or not closing them, prioritizing available ADA money on ADA improvements, pushing curriculum that means students spend nearly all of their school day on screens, etc.), even if this model passed in a referendum, I don't think our community can handle the long-term costs and needs of four buildings for secondary education."

On East-West disparities:

"This model maintains separation between East and West sides of Wauwatosa, only strengthening the academic disparities already present within the district."

Notes in Strong Support of Other Models

The following quotes represent Committee members who affirmatively supported a model that did not receive the highest score in the Committee's voting process. These are a representative sampling of comments, not an exhaustive list. Comments are organized by model and listed in the order in which they received points below Model F, most to least points.

Model A1 — 7–12 campuses at East & West; close Longfellow & Whitman:

"Model A1 is the best long-term fit for Wauwatosa. It minimizes transitions, offers operating savings, opens up possibilities for vertical teaming and challenging classes for high-achieving students, and right-sizes the district's building footprint. Given the school funding situation in Wisconsin, committing our district to periodic capital maintenance on four secondary school buildings in a time of decreasing enrollment is irresponsible and will only doom the city to periodic cycles of facing down even more referendums than we already need just to keep things as-is."

"Model A1 represents the best opportunity for the district to bring secondary schools into the future while 'right-sizing' building capacity to current and projected student population numbers. While it is recognized that change is

difficult, the time is now for district leadership to take bold and decisive action to close schools and properly align facility capacity to student census. To merely update ALL existing secondary schools will force the district to maintain under-utilized buildings far into the future."

"If the District is committed to keeping 6th grade at the elementary schools, then I think closing the middle school buildings makes sense. Longfellow and Whitman would perpetually be 2/3 full and in need of major maintenance/improvements. I think investing more money into really improving two buildings (East and West) is more fiscally responsible."

"Two high school campuses provide more academic and extracurricular opportunities for students. Middle school students will also have access to advanced classes and assistance when secondary educators and the SEL teams are located at the same campus. Following this capital improvement investment, maintain schools using existing annual capital maintenance fund dollars and not by recurring operational referendums."

Model I — Four secondary schools; close Fisher; relocate District offices and Wauwatosa Montessori:

"I support models that allot separate buildings for middle school from high school. [...] It cannot be denied that the [Fisher] building and land are not being used to their full potential; they are valuable resources that could be available to the community in resolving this situation."

"Support from the community including staff and parents, it provides an annual reduction in staffing and utility costs, and it will provide great improvements to very needed and very important secondary buildings. It also provides the reduction of the building footprint by removing Fisher showing good faith to the communities concern about footprint in Wauwatosa. This also provides slightly more yearly cost savings than the other 4 building options."

"This model also reduces the district's footprint without the loss of any neighborhood school."

Model D — Single high school at West; Single middle school at East:

"A single, larger high school can offer a broader range of classes and programs, including AP and dual-credit courses, technical education options, and more specialized electives. School resources could be pooled rather than duplicated, allowing for more efficient and effective use. A larger high school would also reduce inequities influenced by which side of the city a student lives on."

"4 of the 5 expert resources recommend this solution as optimal. Financial efficiencies come with fewer buildings: less maintenance, lower utility costs, fewer administrators, fewer teachers with the ability to maintain programming.

One high school / one middle school model allows the district to support ALL program offerings — curricular and extracurricular. It also supports staff most efficiently and consistently supports special education and student services."

"Enrollment is declining nation-wide, as in Wauwatosa and will continue. The decision to limit open enrollment also contributes to our declining student population. If two high schools are maintained and enrollment continues to decline, then we will saddle ourselves with the problem of decreased course offerings. The high schools are in serious need of updates and by consolidating to one, we can provide better facilities with better learning spaces, creating more opportunities for our students. This option also unites the community, rather than continuing the needless competition between east and west within our own community."

"This is the most equitable option that was considered. Additionally, given the forecast of student populations going forward this option is the most fiscally responsible."

Model H — 7–12 campuses at Longfellow & West; close Whitman & portions of East for community resources:

"In a DREAM BIG scenario, I love this model. I think creating a brand new 7-12 school at the Longfellow site for students on the East side of town, it would become the pride of Wauwatosa right at the center of town. Additionally I think the community would greatly benefit from East being turned into community athletic facilities and performing arts space."

"Model H represents an opportunity to 'right-size' secondary schools to the existing student population and bring remaining schools up to modern educational standards. It also aspires to create further community spaces for a theater, fitness and aquatic center, while utilizing the historic East High location. The East High school building has outlived its practical life span as a school. To spend money on upgrading the building is not really practical as it will never be brought up to modern efficient building standards. Money spent on improving this building is considered 'lipstick on a pig.' Therefore, a tear down and repurpose would make more sense for the community."

Additional written statements from individual Committee members are available in Appendix B of this report.

Appendix A - Detail of Member Submitted Models

Model G

Closed Schools:
Whitman - closed as a middle school, keep building and property
Longfellow - repurpose items from existing building (lighting, HVAC, lights from softball field, etc.), sell building and property

Relocated Schools: Eisenhower Elementary & Playgrounds to Whitman building & site

Relocate Programs: Recreation Department to Whitman building

Grade Configuration: 7-12

Middle & High Schools: East & West Sites

New Athletic Fields/Courts/Parking: Improvements to existing facilities at either Whitman or West sites, East continues to use Hart Park or Whitman/West sites. East & West continue to use Breitlow Field.

Modernization / Renovation: Yes, renovate East & West to accept 7-8 students and improve learning spaces (STEM, Music, Culinary, Trades, etc.) and general spaces (Safety, Accessibility, Natural Lighting, open spaces for student/staff collaboration, spaces that can be used for connection with the community).

East Site: Renovate Third Floor and spaces to improve building while maintaining historic aspects of building as defined by the community, New HVAC entire building, add natural lighting, etc.

West Site: Repurpose items from Eisenhower, demolish Eisenhower to reconfigure West property and modernize.

Swimming Pools: East (WIAA competition pool) & West. Whitman property ? if needed for recreation programming along with the high school properties and Hoyt park pool.

New Square Ft, Net New Operating Costs, Estimated Total Cost: tbd WSD Administration

Future Development: Whitman property with combined private/public funding, donors, etc.

Model H

Closed Schools:

Whitman - closed as a middle school, keep property and relocate Administration offices, additional district storage and facility maintenance / garage requirements if possible.

East – Demolish existing building except swimming pool and theater space.

Relocated and Refurbished Schools: Whitman relocated to West High with new added space and refurbishment. East High relocates to new addition at Longfellow site. Longfellow Middle is refurbished.

Relocate Programs: T.B.D. by administration and School Board

Grade Configuration: 7-12 (Middle schools and High Schools must be kept separate)

Middle & High Schools: Longfellow & West Sites (Maintain East - West school affiliations)

New Athletic Fields/Courts/Parking: Improvements to existing / revised facilities T.B.D. by architects.

Modernization / Renovation: Yes, renovate Longfellow & West to accept 7-8 students and improve all new remaining learning spaces. (Separation of middle and high school students mandatory in plan)

Overall learning spaces: Add other spaces to be used for connection with community where possible.

East Site: Demolish majority of East High building preserving swimming pool and theater space. Keep East High property. Move high school programs to refurbished and new Longfellow location.

West Site: Demolish Whitman and reconfigure programs into new refurbished and added onto West High location. Whitman becomes Administration offices, storage and central facility maintenance.

Swimming Pools: East (WIAA competition pool and community access) & West. Refurbish pool at Longfellow property if needed for student programs.

New Square Ft, Net New Operating Costs, Estimated Total Cost: T.B.D. - WSD Administration

Future Development: Sell Fisher building site and put plan in place to relocate administrative offices to newly built Whitman location. (T.B.D. by architect and WSD School Board)

Model I

Closed Schools:

Fisher Building - keep Breitlow fields

Relocated and Refurbished Schools:

A. Wauwatosa East High School - third floor is not renovated
B. Wauwatosa West High School
C. Longfellow Middle School - Design space for either Montessori School or district administration offices, swimming pool remains closed
D. Whitman Middle School - Design space for either Montessori School or district administration offices

Relocate Programs:

Montessori School and District Administration

Grade Configuration:

7-8 Middle Schools

9-12 High Schools

Middle & High Schools: Current Configuration

Middle Schools: Longfellow and Whitman

High Schools: East and West

New Athletic Fields/Courts/Parking:

Improvements to existing facilities at either Whitman or West sites, East continues to use Hart Park or Whitman/West sites. East & West continue to use Breitlow Field.

Modernization / Renovation:

Yes, renovate all four schools to improve learning spaces (Music, Culinary, Trades, etc.) and general spaces (Safety, Accessibility, Natural Lighting, open spaces for student/staff collaboration, spaces that can be used for connection with the community).

Overall learning spaces: Add other spaces to be used for connection with community where possible.

East Site: Renovate school, no change otherwise

West Site: Renovate school, no change otherwise

Swimming Pools: No net change

New Square Ft, Net New Operating Costs, Estimated Total Cost: No new space added. Total Cost TBD

Future Development: Sell Fisher building site, keeping Brietlow fields

Model J

Closed Schools:

Whitman Middle School

Fisher Building

Relocated and Refurbished Schools:

Renovate West High school to create 7-8 and 9-12 spaces

Renovate 3rd floor at East if necessary

Relocate Programs: Relocate Montessori School and District offices to Longfellow

Grade Configuration:

7-8 at Longfellow

9-12 at East

Combined 7-8 and 9-12 at renovated West location

Middle & High Schools:

Middle only: Longfellow

High school only: East

7-8/9-12 at West

New Athletic Fields/Courts/Parking:

Improvements to existing facilities at either Whitman and/or West sites, East continues to use Hart Park and/or Whitman/West sites. East & West continue to use Breitlow Field.

Modernization / Renovation: Modernize and renovate East, Longfellow, and West

Overall learning spaces: Add other spaces to be used by community where possible.

East Site: No net changes

Whitman Site: Demolish Whitman and reconfigure programs into refurbished and added onto West location.

Swimming Pools: Keep current configuration

New Square Ft, Net New Operating Costs, Estimated Total Cost: Addition of new space attached to West to allow for the 7th and 8th grades. Total cost TBD

Future Development: Sell Fisher building site, keeping Brietlow fields, District to determine future of Whitman site

Appendix B - Committee Member Statements

Jonathan Ference-Burke, Parent, Wilson Elementary/WSTEM

Statement Concurring in the Committee's Recommendation

I join the Committee's recommendation. Although the final choice was not my personal preference, I'm proud of the Committee's thoughtful work and collaboration and happily support the result. I write separately to highlight a few process improvements that would strengthen public confidence and help future Committees do their best work.

The Committee reached its recommendation despite several avoidable process issues that compressed our work and limited deliberations as the Committee reached its final stages.

- Late survey timeline and late-breaking information. The community survey, intended to provide early directional input, was not sent until January 2026. Results arrived just in time for our vote – a literal day before voting opened – but not with enough time for meaningful reflection and group discussion. Likewise, at the end of the final meeting, the Committee learned of plans to discuss a new facilities-needs approach with the Board. The Committee was not given time to understand or weigh this development.
- Shifting goals of survey and unclear process. What was initially

designed as a high-level survey of community views kept evolving, becoming a more detailed, fact-based comparison of models. Several community members told me they felt confused and that the survey felt like a strange compromise, seeking preferences while also suggesting that there were finalized plans with concrete price tags assigned. Moreover, the Committee had to advocate to receive the promised final review of the survey in November. That review turned out to be essential: a Committee member identified a significant factual error, missed by the survey authors, in time to stop printing and correct it.

- Confusion regarding Committee's scope of decisionmaking. It took too long to clarify the Committee's scope, especially around financial considerations, tangentially related issues (such as elementary footprint and K–6 configuration), and whether recommendations could extend beyond selecting a model. This consumed valuable meeting time and created avoidable stress in at least one elementary community.

To be clear, I do not attribute these problems to bad faith. They reflect WSD's sincere effort to be responsive to concerns and pivot. But responsiveness without clear timelines and boundaries can read as uncertainty, which erodes trust and makes hard decisions harder. I saw first-hand similar dynamics during the WSTEM closure process, where the twists and turns in the process, at least in part from well-meaning attempts to compromise, exacerbated difficulties in the community.

As Wauwatosa faces increasingly difficult decisions, I hope we apply the lessons from the 2025–26 Ad Hoc Committee: set timelines early and stick to them; define scope and decision criteria up front; communicate major new information promptly; and protect adequate time at the end for deliberation before voting.

Sarah Noerenberg, Parent, Wauwatosa West

To the Secondary Ad Hoc Committee members, Dr. Means, Dr. Marble and Paige Richards,

I applied to serve on the Secondary Ad Hoc Committee because I have a deep and personal investment in our community and our Tosa schools. My four children have received an exceptional education in Tosa schools—an education made possible by outstanding educators and educational leaders within those buildings, not simply the buildings themselves.

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to serve on this Committee. It is composed of thoughtful, dedicated individuals who bring diverse perspectives and a wealth of knowledge. Throughout this process, I have witnessed a shared

commitment to excellence and to doing what is best for the students of the Wauwatosa School District and the Wauwatosa community.

Over 40 hours of Committee work have been devoted to reviewing research and data, evaluating facility models, and carefully weighing options to develop a recommendation that would best support the implementation and long-term sustainability of an efficient, high-impact instructional program for students in grades 7-12 in Wauwatosa.

I deeply appreciate the time, effort, and respectful dialogue that has preceded the development of the forthcoming Secondary School recommendation. Decisions of this magnitude are complex, and I value the seriousness with which this responsibility has been approached by the Committee.

After careful consideration, however, I am unable to support a recommendation that focuses solely on the secondary level. I believe long-term facilities decisions must be approached through a comprehensive K–12 lens. Our schools operate as an interconnected system; changes at one level inevitably influence the others—academically, operationally, and financially.

Following the 2018 referendum, four of nine elementary schools were heavily renovated or reconstructed. The remaining five are as old as, or older than, the secondary buildings the District has determined no longer adequately support today's educational needs. The district's Long Range Facilities Plan (2024) state[s] that these elementary schools will remain untouched for 20 to 40 more years.

Dr. Marble's research, and the research provided to Committee members, assert that the design and maintenance of learning spaces directly influence student and staff experiences and outcomes. If we accept that modernized spaces matter at the secondary level, that principle must apply consistently across grade levels. I cannot reconcile acknowledging the importance of updated learning environments for secondary students while deferring meaningful improvements for elementary students for decades. On January 20, Dr. Means described himself as "heartbroken" by the inequities between older and newer elementary schools. I am unable to ethically remain "heartbroken" for the next 20-40 years. The only recommendation that I would be willing to support at this time is one that is a feasible, comprehensive K-12 long range plan.

A comprehensive K–12 recommendation would allow us to:

- Ensure fiscal responsibility by aligning investments with current realities and long-term sustainability
- Right-size facilities based on actual and projected enrollment
- Maintain equitable and appropriate learning environments across all grade levels
- Reflect the values and expectations of the Tosa community as a whole

In my opinion, moving forward with a secondary-only plan risks creating future imbalances in capacity, programming, and resource allocation—challenges that

may require additional disruption and costs to address later. I believe that our Wauwatosa community deserves a solution that is cohesive, transparent, and grounded in a districtwide perspective.

For these reasons, I respectfully abstained from voting for an identified secondary-only model to the Board. Rather, I strongly advocate to the WSD Administration and School Board for the development and consideration of a comprehensive, fiscally responsible K–12 facilities plan with a clear and realistic timeline.

In closing, I extend my sincere gratitude to my fellow Committee members. Their dedication to our students and community challenged me to remain curious, stretch my thinking, and arrive thoughtfully at this conclusion.

Patrick Zarling, Parent, Underwood Elementary

1. Competition Pool for Model F: If Model F is implemented, I believe we should plan for a competition pool. Given our location within 15 minutes of the greater Milwaukee area, this would be a valuable asset.

2. Committee Extension: I suggest that this Committee be extended for future endeavors. I recommend it remain strictly volunteer-based, with leadership positions (such as presidents or directors) limited to two-year terms. I believe this Committee serves as an excellent bridge between the city and public surveys.

Liz Shickles, Wauwatosa Resident

The original charge of this Committee was to study seven proposed models, which were devised before the Committee was formed. This group of 24 individuals willingly dove into our work, each bringing our own personal situations and professions. We realized very quickly how thorny a problem this would be to tackle, and made use of every minute of meeting time we had available to share our thoughts, concerns, and ideas with one another.

It became clear to me about halfway through this project that the starting point of our work ought to have been philosophical. We ought to have begun with the question, “Should there be <u>any</u> 7-12 schools in Wauwatosa?” That is the question that weighs the social-emotional needs of our students. That is the question that weighs the pros and cons of teachers needing to only teach in one school building during the day, rather than run from one to another. We eventually found our way to that question, but instead our starting point was tactical, asking, “Which configuration of these existing buildings is ‘best’?”

I advise the current and all future permutations of the Wauwatosa School Board and District Administration to begin this kind of work by asking big questions, considering the trade-offs of all possibilities, and weighing one-time decisions versus ongoing needs.

I also advise that the current and future School Board and Administration members spend more than the ordinary amount of time rebuilding trust throughout the Wauwatosa community. Regardless of where blame or credit may lie for decisions made in the past, what the Wauwatosa community deserves and needs now is clear-headed leadership, and forward-thinking decisions.

Andrea Hoffman, Parent, Roosevelt Elementary

I support the Committee's final recommendation and rationale, but wish to register significant concerns about Wauwatosa East High School's building envelope and available acreage. The building's age, the cumulative limitations of previous renovations, and the constraints of its footprint and acreage together pose serious challenges to delivering a safe, modern learning environment for future generations of WSD students in a fiscally responsible manner.

Several construction professionals, made available to the Committee by WSD, noted that building a new high school from the ground up would likely be less expensive *and* produce a higher-quality learning environment than undertaking another round of heavy renovations to the East building. For this reason, I saw the benefits of Model H — which proposed a new 7-12 school at the Longfellow site. I understand the hesitance to pursue that option given its higher estimated total cost; however, it bears noting that Model H's cost also included sunsetting some academic portions of the East building while preserving its pool, athletic facilities, and theater as community resources. Given the historical significance and community value of that building, this distinction matters when weighing the true long-term tradeoffs.

Whether a 7-12 model is the right approach for WSD students is a question worth serious consideration on its own merits. I raise Model H here simply as an example of more creative thinking about the facilities and sites available to us — thinking that weighs student academic achievement and community benefit alongside fiscal responsibility to taxpayers.

If the WSD leadership and the Board are committed to a comprehensive, long-term financial and facilities plan, a deeper analysis of the East building is essential — one conducted alongside construction professionals to honestly assess the cost implications of further heavy renovation versus new construction.

On a broader note, I echo the Committee report's own "Considerations" section: *"any model that meaningfully addresses deferred maintenance and modernizes WSD's schools will benefit students and the broader Wauwatosa community."* As a parent of a first grader and incoming kindergartner in the Wauwatosa School District, I would be proud to send my children to any of WSD's secondary schools once their deferred maintenance and modernization needs are addressed — because I believe it is ultimately the teachers, staff, and administrators who truly shape the experience of our students.

Finally, as these conversations continue, I strongly urge WSD leadership and the Board to remain actively engaged with the members of this Committee. As volunteers, we have collectively invested thousands of hours reviewing research and background materials, preparing for Committee meetings and presentations to the Board, touring WSD schools and facilities in other communities, and consulting experts in social-emotional development, student academic growth, facility design, school construction, and Wauwatosa city government — as well as non-parent community members, WSD parents, students, teachers, and administrators. That depth of knowledge and perspective is a resource. Do not let it go to waste.

I close by thanking the following parties:

- Wauwatosa School District leadership for convening this Committee and providing the research and background information that informed our work over these many months.
- The Wauwatosa School Board for thoughtfully considering our recommendation and individual points of view.
- Our facilitator Paige Richards for structuring and guiding the Committee's work as the process evolved, and for creating a safe and productive environment to wrestle with this "wicked problem."
- The Roosevelt Elementary school community and PTA for allowing me to represent you in these discussions and for participating in the ongoing feedback loops.
- Most importantly, my fellow Committee members. Your individual points of view are woven throughout this report, and you have each represented your constituencies well across our many months of discussion. I am glad to have met you all through this work and look forward to opportunities to continue building a stronger community together.