School Expansion Feasibility Update

An overview of site-specific challenges limiting previously considered expansions.

October 2025

LEE COUNTY SCHOOLS

Key Points

Assumptions |

To our knowledge, Southern Lee High School is the only school designed for future expansion. We are unsure where the assumption came from that existing schools were designed for expansion.

Limitations |

Acreage, core facilities (cafeteria, gym, restrooms, etc), sewage capacity, traffic, utilities, etc.

Growth Trends |

The bulk of growth in Lee County is centralized to one general location. Expanding Deep River or J. Glenn Edwards does not eliminate the issue.

Research |

Research shows that the optimal size of an elementary school falls between 500-700 students.
Source:
https://www.woodlandschools.org/storage/file/5446/School%20Size%20Effects-%20Review%20and%20Conceptional%20Analysis.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

PRIORITY 3:

Operational efficiency and long-term sustainability

GOAL 3A:

By 2030, LCS will maintain its facilities to support 95% optimal usage, ensuring efficient resource management and long-term sustainability.

STRATEGIES

- Research market rates for skilled labor and explore opportunities for additional certification to ensure competitive compensation, attract top talent, and sustain high-quality facility management.
- Evaluate the feasibility of contracting custodial services for evening and nighttime cleaning to optimize resources, maintain facilities efficiently, and ensure schools are ready for daily operations.
- Strengthen communication and transparency with the public by clearly sharing facility planning, capacity utilization, and mediation efforts to build trust and foster community engagement and growth strategies.
- Establish a sustainable, scalable plan for infrastructure, technology, and equipment to accommodate growth while leveraging funding sources such as e-rate grants and other resources.
- Adopt automation tools for internal communication and service requests to improve response times, enhance coordination, and minimize downtime in facilities and operations.
- Conduct a comprehensive facilities audit to assess current and projected space needs, allowing for strategic planning for short-term facility adjustments and long-term capacity growth.
- Optimize operation procedures, including procurement strategies and contract management, to maximize cost-effectiveness, ensure timely resource allocation, and maintain modernized district policies.
- Establish partnerships with organizations to enhance enrollment forecasting and support data-driven planning.
- Obtain funding from Lee County through the Capital Improvement Projects plan to support district initiatives.

Out-of-Capacity Table

	Capacities	Month-1	Forecasted Month-1 ADM									
	2024-25	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35
Elementary Schools												
BT Bullock Elementary	599	503	513	539	533	555	578	627	695	766	831	887
Broadway Elementary	599	488	521	548	567	585	606	626	649	672	689	704
Deep River Elementary	599	549	566	587	607	639	661	716	771	825	866	901
Greenwood Elementary	683	571	596	605	603	624	655	650	668	688	705	718
J Glenn Edwards Elementary	683	572	592	620	638	662	729	769	814	859	890	916
Tramway Elementary	599	554	549	546	551	562	561	562	564	570	574	580
J R Ingram Jr Elementary	683	414	424	424	450	478	523	539	570	601	625	650
WB Wicker Elementary	825	575	587	596	608	610	629	655	671	689	701	713
Totals	**5270**	**4226**	**4348**	**4465**	**4557**	**4716**	**4941**	**5144**	**5403**	**5671**	**5882**	**6069**
Middle Schools												
East Lee Middle	800	524	499	508	528	574	642	700	752	792	838	894
SanLee Middle School	900	818	837	879	892	935	962	1030	1079	1154	1187	1230
West Lee Middle	800	514	504	517	584	608	656	691	736	768	815	875
Totals	**2500**	**1856**	**1840**	**1903**	**2004**	**2118**	**2260**	**2421**	**2568**	**2714**	**2840**	**2999**
High Schools												
Lee County High	1675	1427	1382	1301	1300	1341	1392	1480	1569	1689	1850	1998
Southern Lee High School	1200	1166	1165	1178	1267	1322	1369	1465	1520	1575	1705	1787
Lee Early College	300	235	235	235	235	235	235	235	235	235	235	235
Totals	**3175**	**2828**	**2782**	**2713**	**2802**	**2899**	**2996**	**3180**	**3323**	**3499**	**3789**	**4020**
Special/Alternative Schools												
Bragg Street Academy	160	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Floyd L Knight Children Center	245	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
System Total	**11350**	**8971**	**9031**	**9143**	**9424**	**9793**	**10259**	**10807**	**11356**	**11945**	**12573**	**13149**

Utilization

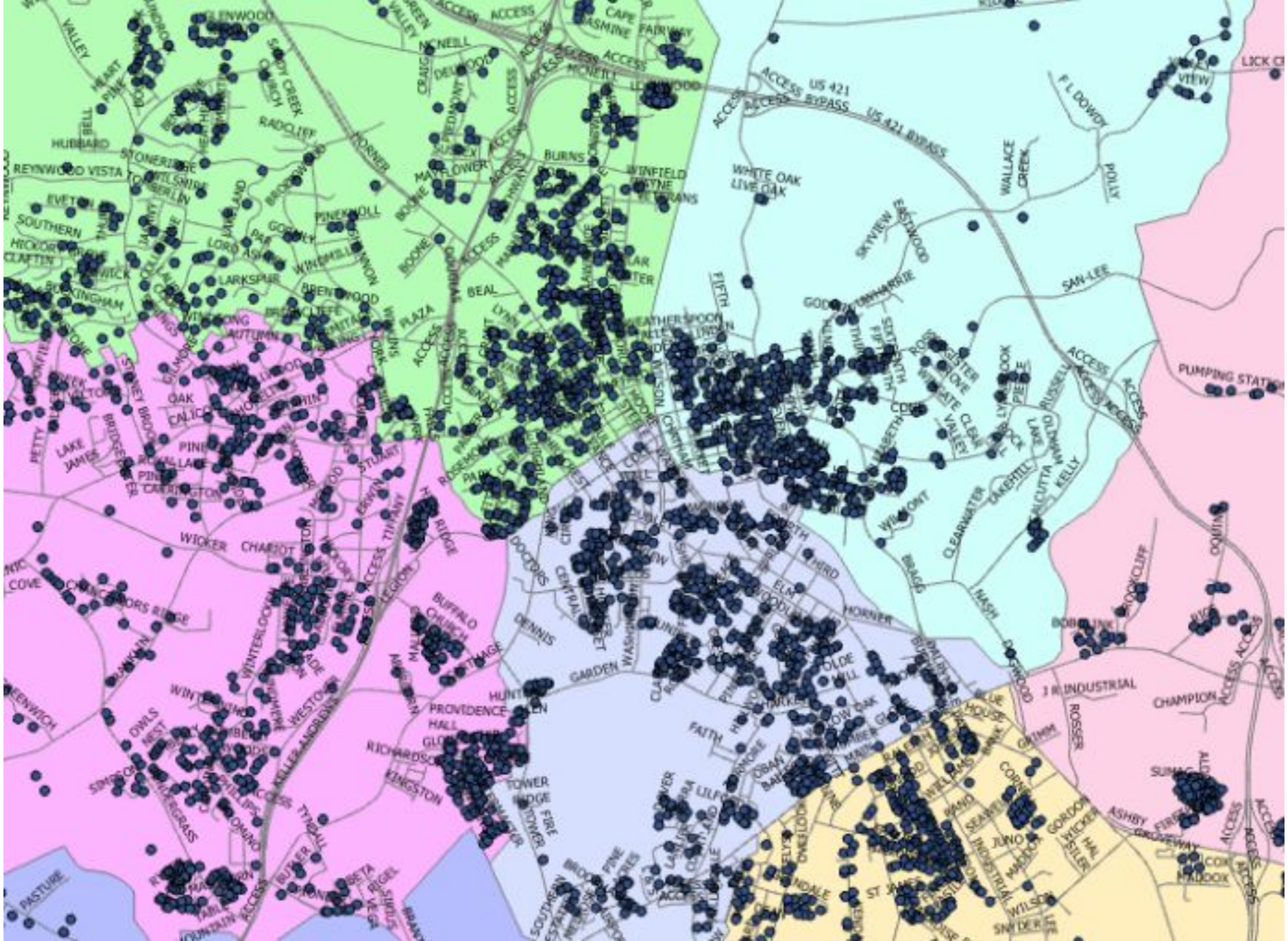
- **< 95%**
- **95% - 100%**
- **100% - 105%**
- **> 105%**

1. 2024-25 Month-1 ADM provided by DPI.
2. Capacities provided by LCS (8/2025), mobile units not included.

OOC Date: 8/8/2025

ITRE

Lee County Schools: Student Distribution (2024-25)


GLENWOOD
VALLEY
MCNEILL
ACCESS
CAPE
JASMINE
FAIRWAY
US 421
US 421 BYPASS
BYPASS
F L DOWDY
LICK CR
VIEW
RADCLIFF
HUBBARD
BELL
HEART PINE
REYNWOOD VISTA
STONERIDGE
WILSHIRE
BERLIN
EVETON
SOUTHERN
HICKORY
CLAFTEN
BUCKINGHAM
LARKSPUR
PINEKNOLL
WINDMILL
BRENTWOOD
BOONE
MAYFLOWER
BURNS
WINFIELD
VETERANS
WHITE OAK
LIVE OAK
WALLACE CREEK
POLLY
SKYVIEW
EASTWOOD
SAN-LEE
FIFTH
GODWIN
HARRIE
WEATHERSPOON
BEAL
PLAZA
AUTUMN
OAK
CALICO
PINE
LAKE JAMES
PETTY
PUMPING STATION
RUSSELL
OLDHAM
KELLY
LAKEHILL
CLEARWATER
WILMONT
BRAGG
NASH
WICKER
CHARIOT
LEGION
BUFFALO CHURCH
TIFFANY
RIDGE
DOCTORS
CENTRAL
DENNIS
GARDEN
WASHINGTON
ELM
HORNER
THIRD
DOGWOOD
J R INDUSTRIAL
ROSSER
CHAMPION
BOBOLINK
BROOKCLIFF
WINTERLOCHEN
WESTOVER
KELLER ANDREWS
PROVIDENCE HALL
RICHARDSON
KINGSTON
TOWER RIDGE
FIRE TOWER
FAITH
OWLS NEST
SIMPSON
TYNDALL
BUTLER
BETA
BIGEL
PASTURE
HUNTER
OBAN
CORNER
JUNO
GORDON
WICKER
ASHBY
ALDO
SUMAC
GROVEWAY
MADDOX
WILSON
SNYDER
ST JAMES
INDUSTRIAL
SEAWELL
WILLIAMS
PINE

Deep River Elementary

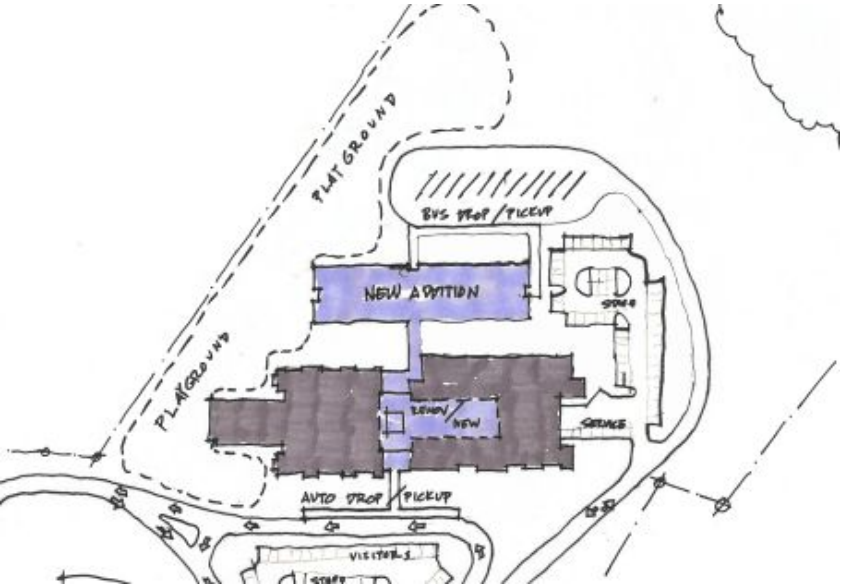
Address: 4000 Deep River Road

Acreage: 58

Current Limitations / Issues:

- Existing building was built in 1998
- Sewage pipe expansion needed - currently runs over 6 miles to connection
- Upgrades and renovations to existing parking lot, sprinkler system and HVAC
- Cafeteria centrally located within building
    - Classrooms surround majority of cafeteria making expansion difficult
- Adding 300 students would require staff increases to include teachers, support staff, counselors, administration

Deep River Elementary



**Deep River, B.T. Bullock, Broadway and Tramway each have same layout. Broadway is land locked and unable to be expanded.

Estimated Costs to Increase Capacity by 300:

Renovate existing core facility: $3,610,000
Reconstructed Area: $2,730,000
New Addition: $13,300,000
Sitework: $3,000,000

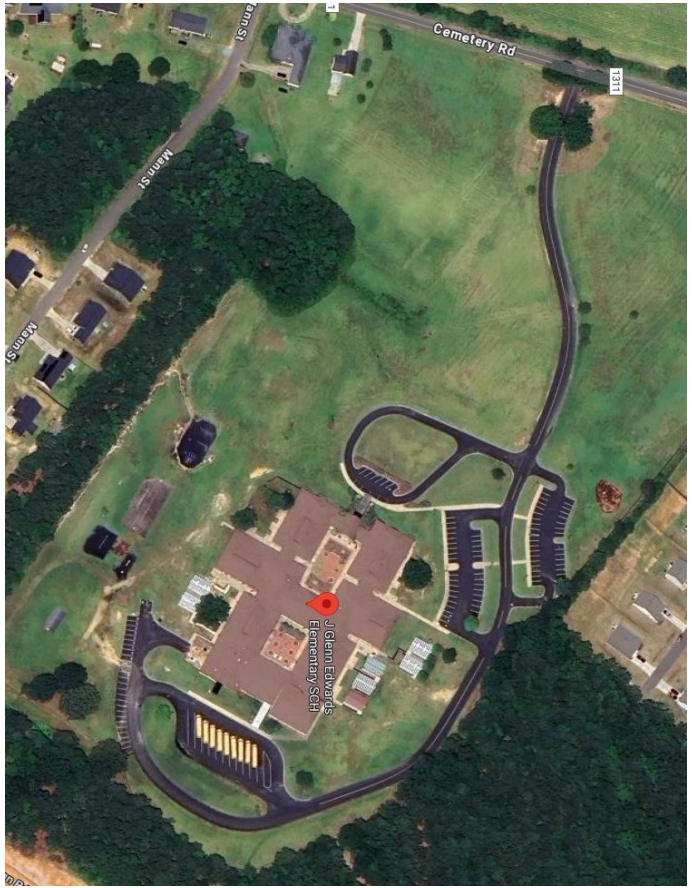
$22,640,000

Contingency @ 5%: $1,132,000
Total Construction: $23,772,000
Design, Engineering, Const. Administration: $1,664,040

TOTAL PROJECTED COST (Less Furniture): $25,436,040

**New build estimated at $56 million*

J. Glenn Edwards Elementary



Address: 3115 Cemetery Road

Acreage: 29

Current Limitations / Issues:

- Existing building was built in 1987
- Limited land availability for expansion that would allow connection to existing facility
- Adding 300 students would require staff increases to include teachers, support staff, counselors, administration
- We do not have estimated costs to expand JGE but it would likely be a similar cost to that of Deep River
    - J.R. Ingram has same layout

Other Factors / Logistics

Financial & Strategic Considerations

- Projected cost to expand is almost half the cost of a new school ($25 million vs. $56 million)
  - One new school can be built for around the same price as expanding two schools
- Minimal improvement in long-term capacity issues
- “Band-aid” solution that delays the inevitable need for a new school given anticipated growth

Construction & Infrastructure Impact

- Not a summer project - would take 12-18 months to complete
- Would like require costly temporary classrooms and utility rerouting during construction - the school will not close
- Unable to achieve energy-efficient standards within an older structure
- Renovation triggers code compliance upgrades to the *entire* building

Operational & Maintenance Impact

- Old infrastructure increases maintenance costs (roofs, plumbing, electrical)
- Additional staffing needed and most not covered by state funding if added to existing school (teachers, TAs, custodians, bus drivers, counselors, administrators)

Other Factors / Logistics

Educational & Programmatic Impact

- Overcrowding limits use of shared spaces (cafeteria, gym, media center)
- Traffic and parking congestion impact arrival and dismissal
- Difficult to create flexible learning environments that meet current instructional models (small groups, etc.)

Community & Growth Considerations

- Concentrates population in one area, increasing traffic and infrastructure strain
- Limits ability to serve new neighborhoods in growth zones
- Gives the appearance that there was a lack of planning for growth that is clearly coming

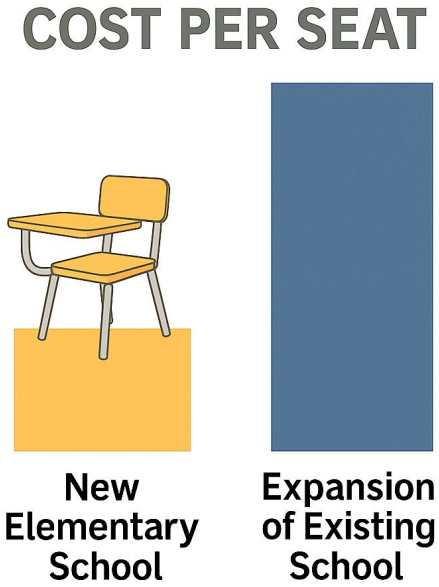
By The Numbers...

Up Front Totals:

- New 850-seat school: $56M
- Expand +300 seats: $25.4M

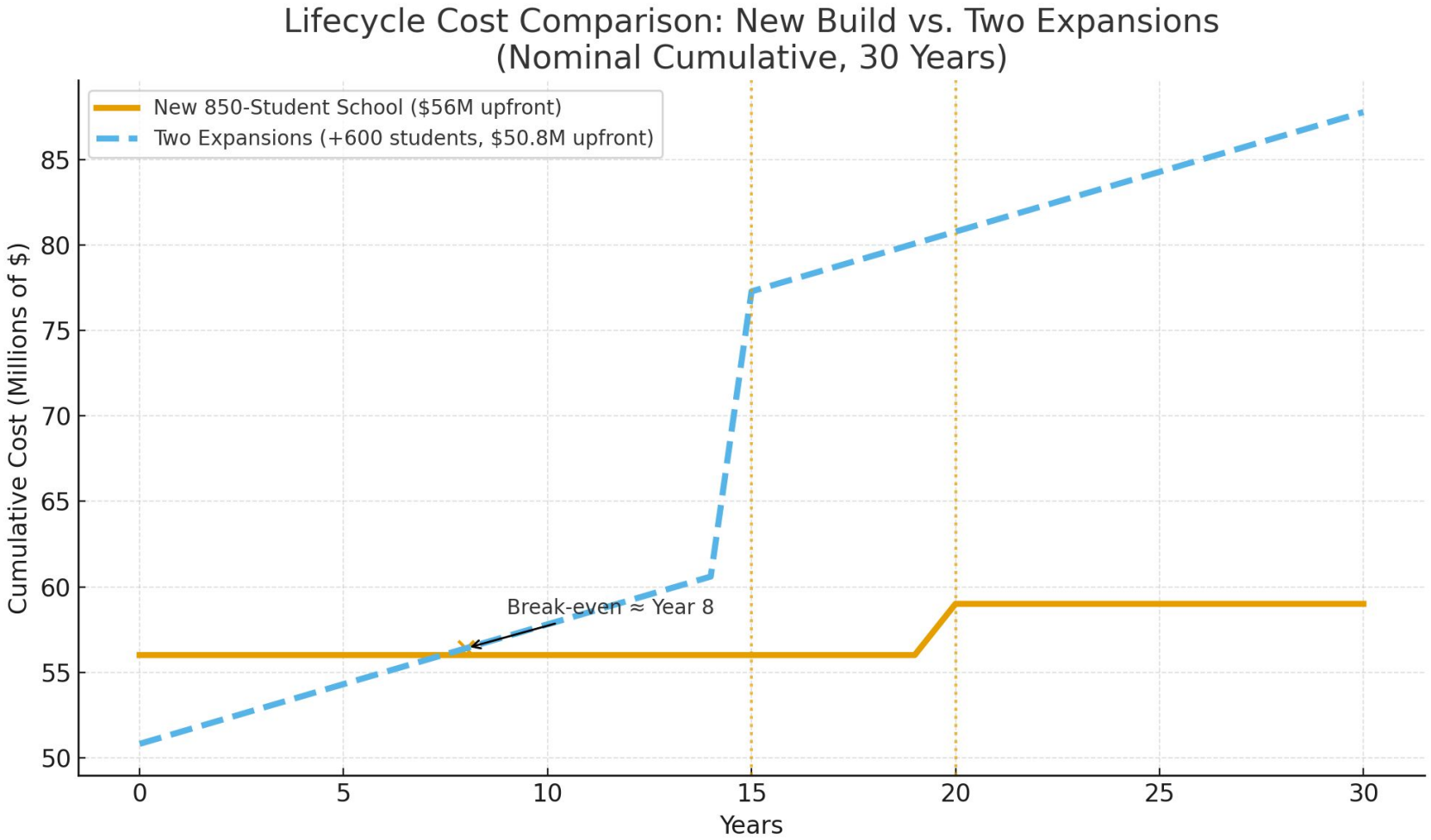
Cost Per Seat

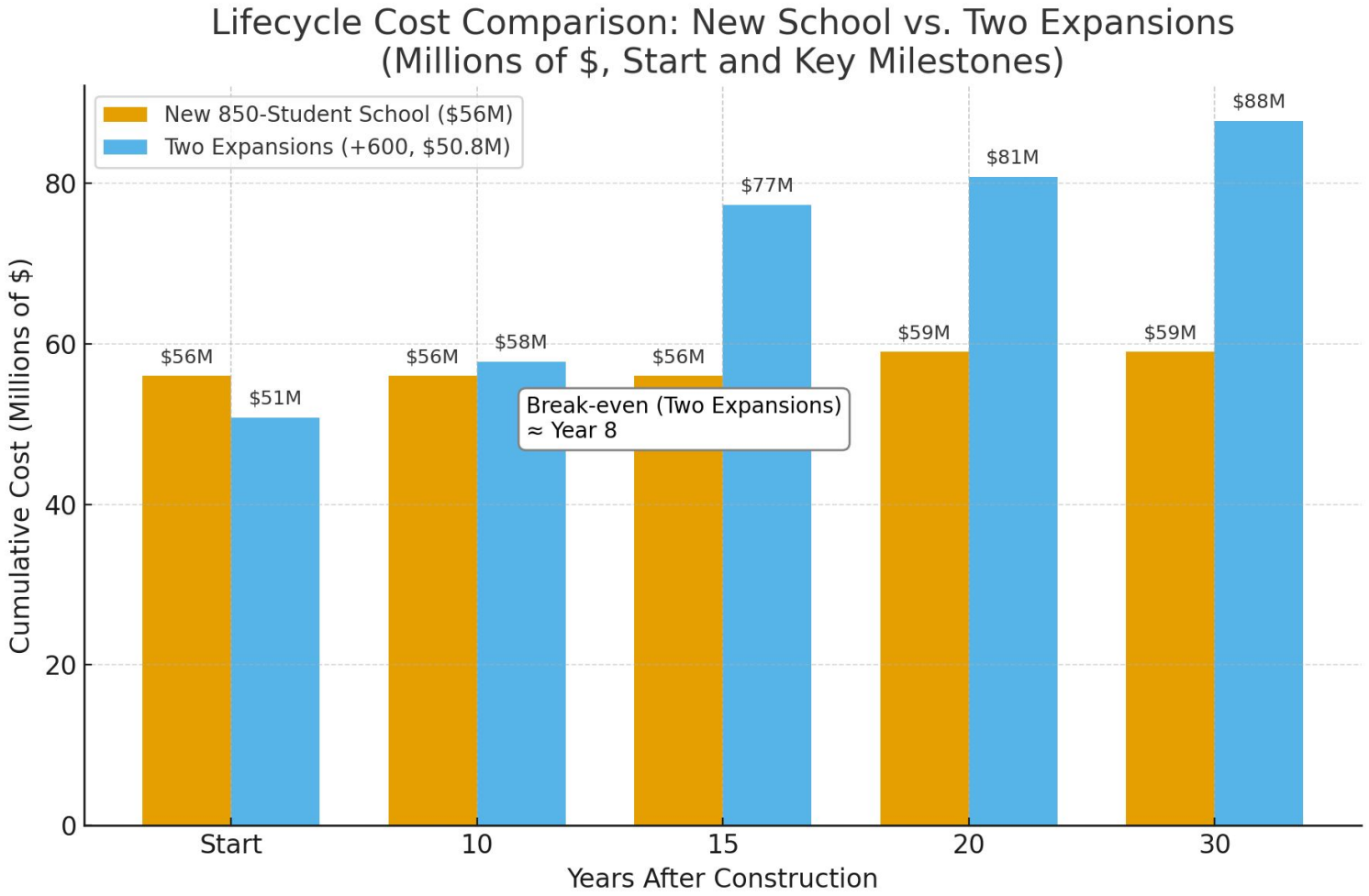
- New build: $65,882/seat
- Expand +300: $83,333/seat



30-Year Life Cycle:

- New build:
  - lower utilities/repairs
  - major system replacements not needed for 20-25 years
  - Predictable budgeting - lower annual maintenance and minimal energy repairs
  - 50+ year life cycle
- Expand +300:
  - legacy systems (boilers, plumbing, wiring) still age at original rates
  - Average maintenance and repair costs 1.5-2x higher per square foot versus new build
    - Likely $350k/yr higher than new build
  - 15-20 year life cycle


Lifecycle Cost Comparison: New Build vs. Two Expansions
(Nominal Cumulative, 30 Years)
New 850-Student School ($56M upfront)
Two Expansions (+600 students, $50.8M upfront)
Break-even ≈ Year 8
Cumulative Cost (Millions of $)
Years
50
55
60
65
70
75
80
85
0
5
10
15
20
25
30


Lifecycle Cost Comparison: New School vs. Two Expansions
(Millions of $, Start and Key Milestones)
New 850-Student School ($56M)
Two Expansions (+600, $50.8M)
Cumulative Cost (Millions of $)
0
20
40
60
80
$56M
$51M
$56M
$58M
$56M
$77M
$59M
$81M
$59M
$88M
Break-even (Two Expansions)
≈ Year 8
Start
10
15
20
30
Years After Construction

In Conclusion

Even though expansion looks cheaper at first, by year 25 the total taxpayer cost nearly catches up – and the new build continues to save money each year after.

Based on updated site assessments, schools that some considered for expansion face physical, financial or infrastructure limitations that make expansion impractical.

This information is provided to ensure transparency and accuracy in ongoing discussions with county leadership.

QUESTIONS?