

Board eyes plan to address rapid growth, aging campuses

With growth of the district moving at a blazing pace and a review of an outside facilities audit identifying aging campuses in need of upgrades or replacement, the Pasadena ISD Board of Trustees is considering a plan to address these issues.

According to MetroStudy, it is estimated that there will be 6,220 closings on new single family housing units within the district by 2007. In addition, more than 10,000 lots for future developments have been identified in Pasadena ISD. Enrollment is also predicted to climb from 46,133 to more than 52,000 students by 2006.

"The growth that they have predicted is upon us, and more families continue to move into our district almost daily," said Pasadena ISD Superintendent Dr. Rick Schneider. "That means more and more students will be attending our schools. We anticipated this growth, but this is far beyond what anyone projected. We are about two years ahead of our original growth projections."

For the past year, the Future Facilities Committee, comprised of more than 80 community members, examined the growth trends and suggested what steps the district should take to brace for the future.

The committee presented a plan to the Board for review that includes \$339.86 million in new facilities and upgrades and renovations to many campuses and would require a 3-cent increase on the tax rate. Once the board formally approves the plan, it would require voter approval of the package to set the projects in motion.

Major aspects of the proposal includes the building and implementation of middle schools that would house fifth and sixth grades, the construction of a sixth high school to relieve projected overcrowding at Dobie and Memorial high schools, two new elementary schools, replacement campuses for five schools and several other renovations.

"We had a difficult task and we not only wanted to present a plan that addressed growth, but one that was sensitive to the taxpayers," said Emory Gadd, who co-chaired the committee with businessman Ben Meador. "As we met over the past several months, we could not ignore the demographic numbers in certain areas. Also, when coming up with this plan, we

didn't just wanted to look at the bricks and mortar aspect. We wanted to look at the educational issues and benefits."

Here is a look at the proposed facilities plan:

Middle school concept

The district is looking at another transition to middle schools that will provide some of the same academic and social benefits for today's pre-teen students. The middle school concept would serve as a transition between elementary and intermediate schools. New campuses housing fifth and sixth graders would provide more directed instruction specifically for those students that many feel are too old for elementary school and too young for intermediate school.

"This structure could assist with the academic and social development of the district's fifth and sixth grade students, making the transition from elementary school to intermediate school much easier," said Vicki Thomas, deputy superintendent of campus development and planning. "Under the plan, elementary schools would house pre-k through fourth grade. Middle school would include fifth and sixth grade students. Intermediate school would include grades seven and eight.

The proposal includes the De Zavala and Morris Fifth Grade Centers eventually holding fifth and sixth grades. De Zavala's conversion would draw sixth graders from Jackson Intermediate School. The campus currently enrolls students who live in the Kruse, Richey, Morales and Gardens elementary attendance zones.

With growth still rapidly on the rise in the South Belt area, the plan would call for the Morris campus to serve those sixth graders who would attend Beverly Hills. The campus would serve Atkinson, Moore and Meador elementary schools. At the present time, the Morris Fifth Grade Center will serve all elementary schools in the South Belt area. If the middle school

concept was implemented, such a campus would be constructed on land owned by the district on Blackhawk and served students from Burnett, Stuchbery, Frazier and a new elementary proposed for the Riverstone Ranch area, along with Thomson Intermediate School.

The recommended plan calls for the eventual creation of 10 middle schools in Pasadena ISD. Each middle school will be paired with several surrounding elementary schools and one intermediate school. They will establish, as closely as possible, a true feeder pattern from kindergarten through eighth grade in which all students at an elementary school will attend the same middle school and those students will attend the same intermediate school.

Five additional middle schools will be built in the initial phase of construction. These schools will serve the areas around

The exact location is unsecured at this time, but it would serve students from South Shaver, Pomeroy and Sparks elementary schools, along with Southmore Intermediate School.

* Rebel Arms property - This property was purchased by the district and is located along Genoa-Red Bluff. This campus would serve Genoa, Teague and Turner elementaries, in addition to Bondy Intermediate.

* Roberts Property - Located just west of Witt Road near Highway 3 and South Shaver. This middle school would accommodate students from Young, Freeman, Garfield and Pearl Hall elementary schools, as well as Miller Intermediate.

* Hobby area - The location is unsecured currently, but a future location in this area would serve students from Jessup, Matthys and South Houston elementary schools, along with South Houston Intermediate.

The middle school concept marks the first time in more than 40 years that the district is considering a fundamental change in its school structure. If approved and funded, new campuses housing fifth and sixth graders, would provide more intense instruction directed specifically at those students that many feel are too old for elementary school and too young for intermediate school.

In addition to the academic and social benefits, district officials say the change would address the school overcrowding at the elementary and intermediate level.

"By taking the fifth grade out of elementary school and the sixth grade out of intermediate school, we are opening up a number of classrooms at every school in the district," said Schneider. "Freeing up this classroom space will give our elementary and intermediate schools room to grow without increasing the student/teacher ratio."

The Future Facilities Committee rec-

ommended this proposal based upon available research that centers on the closer match between the intellectual, emotional and social development of fifth and sixth grade students. Vicki Thomas, deputy superintendent for campus development and planning, is a former intermediate teacher and principal. She believes strongly that students will benefit from the new environment.

"Sixth graders are still young children. There are huge differences in their development when compared to an eighth grade student who is currently housed on the same campus," she said. "The same holds true for fifth graders at the elementary level. The gap in social development and behavior between a first grade student and a fifth grade student is obvious."

Thomas says the feeder patterns of the middle schools will allow the schools to develop a more aligned curriculum and instruction program across all grade levels.

6th High School proposal

The rapidly increasing enrollments at Dobie and Memorial High Schools prompted the committee to propose a plan for sixth high school that would relieve both schools of potential overcrowding.

According to demographic studies, enrollment could reach over 4,400 students at Dobie by 2008. The plan would reduce Dobie's enrollment to a more manageable 2,800 students. A wave of new housing units in the Memorial attendance zone has bolstered the school's projected enrollment.

Officials say the projected enrollment numbers support the need for a sixth high school, which could be located west of State Highway 3 in the southwest portion of the district.

Memorial High School additions

New housing developments, along with more on the way, have brought more pupils into Pasadena Memorial High School, which was originally designed to hold an enrollment of 2,000 students. As the school prepares to enter its second year with freshmen, junior and senior classes, an enrollment of 1,600 students is being projected. Future residential developments have been identified near Beltway 8, which could result in cramped surroundings on the campus. To that end, the Future Facilities Committee suggested the addition of 28 classrooms to the schools, as well as the expansion of the cafeteria, library and the addition of a field house for boys' athletics.

If the proposal were approved, the additions to Memorial would increase enrollment capacity to 2,700 students. The

housing growth in the Memorial area is far ahead of projected studies.

New elementary schools

The tidal wave of housing growth and drastically increasing enrollment numbers in the south and western regions of the district prompted a proposal to build two new elementary schools.

One new elementary campus would be built in the Jessup Elementary area on Blackhawk. This would alleviate overcrowding at Jessup, which demographers said could have an enrollment of 1,500 students by 2008.

The other proposed elementary campus would be located on property owned by the district just south of the current Riverstone Ranch housing development. The school would relieve projected enrollment gains in the Frazier Elementary attendance zone as the Riverstone development expands.

Replacement schools

An outside facilities audit conducted over the course of a year found that the age and condition of five campuses warranted replacement schools. The committee's proposal suggests replacement campuses for Kruse, Richey and Pearl Hall elementary schools, along with San Jacinto and Southmore intermediate schools.

The age and structural concerns of the older wings of Kruse make it a candidate for a replacement campus. Officials said there is no room on-site to address the construction of new wings. Under the proposal, the school would be constructed at a new location near its present site to preserve its historical neighborhood connection and provide additional acreage to De Zavala.

The audit also found the 54-year-old Richey Elementary campus in need of replacing because of age and structural issues. If a new campus was built, the replacement school could be built in phases on the original site. Pearl Hall Elementary was constructed in the 1950s and has had no major renovations in recent years. The committee recommends replacing the existing school with a new campus to handle enrollment growth, resolve persistent air quality issues and provide South Houston High School with additional acreage for expansion of athletic fields.

Structural issues addressed by the audit persuaded the committee to recommend replacement schools for San Jacinto and Southmore intermediate schools. Proposed replacements for the campuses would be located within their respective attendance zones. ●

Proposal identifies needs for upgrades to 26 facilities

The Future Facilities Committee's plan is also addressing needs for upgrades and renovations to 26 campuses and district facilities, many of which were cited in an outside study.

Magellan K-12, a nationwide firm that specializes facilities studies for public schools, conducted a year-long review of all the campuses in Pasadena ISD. The study found a variety of needs on various campuses and Magellan then presented those to the Future Facilities Committee.

After reviewing the facilities study and consulting with the district's facilities and construction department, the committee included the following upgrades to campuses and facilities in its proposal to the Board of Trustees.

* Auditorium renovations - This would include upgrades to auditoriums at Beverly Hills Intermediate, Pasadena High School, Sam Rayburn High School and South Houston High School.

* Queens Intermediate - Classroom renovations, student restroom renovations, entry door repairs and ADA compliance issues, air conditioning upgrades, signage and piping upgrades.

* Red Bluff Elementary - Classroom renovations, student restroom renovations, roof upgrades, asbestos abatement, air conditioning, signage and piping upgrades.

* Memorial Stadium, Phillips Gymnasium - Restroom renovations, ADA compliance required upgrades, pressbox renovations, air conditioning, signage and electrical upgrades.

* Bailey Elementary - Office additions and renovations, student and faculty restroom renovations, parking additions, storm drainage upgrades, electrical, lighting and exit signage upgrades.

* Miller Intermediate - Office renovations, student restroom renovations, upgrades to entry doors, air conditioning and lighting.

* Freeman Elementary - Student restroom renovations, upgrades to doors and roof, asbestos abatement, air conditioning, lighting, piping and signage upgrades.

* Jensen Elementary - Student restroom renovations, entry door upgrades, asbestos abatement, air conditioning upgrades, improvements to lighting, exit signage and sewer issues.

* Fisher Elementary - Student restroom improvements, entry door upgrades, parking additions, upgrades to roof, air conditioning and lighting.

* Gardens Elementary - Office renovations, student restroom improvements, replace windows, improvements to site and storm drainage, roof upgrades, asbestos abatement, air conditioning improvements, exit signage and sewer upgrades.

* McMasters Elementary - Student restroom improvements, asbestos abatement, air conditioning, lighting and piping upgrades.

* Meador Elementary - Lighting improvements, student restroom renovations, improvements to entry doors, roof and air conditioning upgrades.

* Thompson Intermediate - Entry door upgrades, asbestos abatement, air conditioning improvements, upgrades to lighting, exit signage and piping.

* Young Elementary - Student restroom improvements, entry door upgrades, storm drainage additions, improvements to air conditioning, lighting and exit signage.

* Garfield Elementary - Air conditioning improvement, student restroom upgrades, entry door improvements, exit signage and electrical upgrades.

* Frazier Elementary - Electrical upgrades, student restroom renovations, improvements to air conditioning, entry doors, lighting and exit signage.

* South Shaver Elementary - Improvements to entry doors, upgrades to student restrooms, electrical and sewer issues.

* Morris Fifth Grade Center - Student restroom improvements, upgrades to lighting, air conditioning and exit signage.

* Pomeroy Elementary - Front office additions and renovations, improvements to site and storm drainage, asbestos abatement, upgrades to air conditioning, lighting, piping and exit signage.

* South Houston Elementary - Improvements to student restrooms, storm drainage, lighting, exit signage and sewer.

* Teague Elementary - Replace windows, upgrades to entry doors, improvements to student restrooms, air conditioning, exit signage and electrical issues.

* Sparks Elementary - Student restroom improvements, upgrades to entry doors, air conditioning, storm drainage, exit signage and lighting. ●

