

Pullman Public Schools—Renovation and Construction Bond

FAQ Part 2 - January 16, 2012

Find Previous FAQs and other information about the bond at <http://www.psd267.org/bond>

Will there be an opportunity to salvage material from the current high school and possibly capture some of the character of the current school by incorporating materials from the current high school into the new spaces?

- It is a challenge to demolish and salvage materials from schools because of the tight timelines, especially in a phased project such as this. However, the bid specifications can include such requirements, which could add costs to the project. This will be considered during the design phase.

Will community members have the opportunity to react to design progress periodically throughout the design process?

- We expect that the community will be provided updates and opportunities to react to the progress during design and prior to sending the final design to bid.
- The architects attended two community forums this past fall where the community was invited to comment and provide input as the architects developed the conceptual design. This would be a useful process to follow as design work continues.
- Various committees will be used to develop education specifications for the projects. We expect to invite staff and community members with specific interest and/or expertise to participate.

You have chosen to size the school for 1000 students and build enough classroom space for 900 students now, leaving the potential to add more classrooms later when enrollment demands materialize in the future. Why have you chosen 1000 students as the measure for common spaces? Why not larger?

- It is impossible to precisely predict future enrollment growth. Current enrollment studies by the state and our own staff, along with input from the experience of our architects suggest that this is a reasonable size.
- If we build too small, we could be faced with the need to expand the school in a relatively short period of time. On the other hand if the school is oversized, we will have tied up local resources in a facility that is not fully utilized for some time. It is reasonable, then, to target a school size that current projections predict enrollment will be in a decade or so. Predictions beyond that have diminished reliability.
- A high school with the capacity for up to 1000 students is thought to be an ideal size, balancing cost efficiencies as well as maintaining a positive school climate in which students are known by staff and do not become anonymous or lost in the crowd.

Will there be enough parking at the high school?

- There are minimum parking requirements based on the school size. So sufficient parking will need to be designed into the site plans. Of course, there may be times when parking needs for large or multiple events may exceed these parking requirements. Scheduling and planning can help avoid these inconvenient occurrences.

Will there be handicap parking with accessible access to the entrance?

- Yes. In addition to this being a legal requirement, it is the right thing to do.

Will the school be LEED certified?

- State-funded school construction projects greater than 5,000 square feet are required by chapter 39.35 RCW to incorporate high-performance features into their school design and construction. School districts can use either Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) 2009 or Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol (WSSP) 2010. The Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol (WSSP) is modeled after the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) green building protocol adapted to fit Washington schools. WSSP is a self-certifying standard developed to help school districts comply with the goals of the law. It is a planning tool that allows designers to plan a high-performance school while considering the regional, district, and site-specific possibilities and constraints for each project. The categories in the protocol include those related to Site, Water, Materials, Energy, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Planning and Operations.

Will there be consideration given to walking and bicycle friendly access to the high school?

- Yes. The district is currently participating in a *Safe Routes to School* study in conjunction with Whitman County Public Works. It is expected that the design will incorporate recommendations from the study to the extent it is possible and feasible.

Will the new school be more secure than the current high school?

- Considerably. The conceptual design for the new high school provides two main access points into the school. Unlike the current multiple building design, which has 80 doors, most of which are not secure, the new school will have adequate emergency exit doors that are secured from entrance. Public access is planned for two main entry points.

Will there be energy savings when the new school is built, and, if so, how much?

- There will be significant energy and cost savings. It has been difficult to pin down exact savings because only conceptual designing has been done.
- Architects and project managers have estimated \$40,000 - \$45,000 in annual energy savings in today's costs. We have also been told it could be considerably more. Actual savings can only be accurately estimated when the final square footage space has been determined and the design is complete.

Do families of choice student (students living in another district but attending Pullman Public Schools) pay local property taxes?

- No. Local property taxes are tied to property ownership, not school attendance. The district does not collect local tax dollars from students' families who live and own property outside the district boundaries but choice into the district. On the flip side, property taxes remain in Pullman when families live in Pullman but choose to have their children attend school in another district. Additionally, schools are restricted by law from denying access to choice students in most cases.
- The school district receives federal and state operating allocations of about \$6000 per student per year for both resident and non-resident students enrolled in the district. The local M&O tax, for example, contributes another approximately \$2000 per student per year (these are very rough estimates). To deny a choice student in order to save the \$2000 would mean giving up the \$6000 in federal and state funding that comes with a choice student.
- This issue is further complicated in Pullman because some choice families, living in another community, also work and/or own businesses in Pullman. They contribute to the community and to the schools through taxes on non-residential property. Especially in the past, it has been difficult for some families to acquire housing in Pullman, although this has improved in recent years with the construction of new residential properties.

Why can larger schools be built in Idaho for less than in Washington?

- Recently it has been pointed out that construction costs in other locations and of other types are sometimes less than school construction in Washington and specifically in Pullman. It is understandable to compare the cost of constructing a school building with the cost of other kinds of facilities and between different communities and states. However, there are a number of variables that result in noticeable ranges in construction costs per square foot.
- An important question to ask for comparison is what is included in a construction budget? For the Pullman School District projects—elementary expansion and high school redesign—the budget includes extras that are important to the community such as upgrades to outdoor and indoor athletic facilities and a fully equipped instructional theatre, both of which will be available for used by the community as well as students. The high school is sized for 1000 students with classrooms for 900 to accommodate future growth.
- Climate, geology, topography, local construction circumstances, phasing, and temporary housing of staff and students are all considerations included in the budget. The budget also includes necessary furnishings and equipment, and everything necessary to design, construct, and prepare the new school and classrooms for teachers and students to walk in and begin class.
- Comparing Washington construction to that of other states, such as Idaho, is somewhat of an “apples to oranges” endeavor. Sales tax alone is about a 2% cost difference. According to information provided by architects working in both states, Idaho does not require prevailing wages, which would save \$10 to \$15 dollars per square foot. There is no energy code and no sustainability requirement in Idaho saving another \$4 to \$6 per square foot. Construction on a new site does not require phasing or temporary housing of students that are estimated at \$10 per square foot for Pullman.
- Idaho does not require mandatory constructability review, value engineering or construction management as mandated in Washington. In addition, things like the availability of general contractors, mechanical/electrical, and subcontractors can add costs in travel and per diem needed to get sufficient professional and trade workers to the job site in Pullman. This can add another \$10 to \$15 dollars per square foot.
- While there is a premium to construct schools in Washington State and in Pullman, the result is buildings that are durable, energy efficient, and safe. We can point to recent school construction in Pullman—the three elementary schools and Lincoln Middle School—as examples. That does not mean that school construction is inferior in Idaho or other states. What is the case in Washington is that additional costly processes are required to verify that the quality will be high.
- The Pullman construction project budgets are comparable to similar recent Eastern Washington school projects. According to architects who designed both school projects and projects for WSU, the budgets are estimated to be 20% less than a project of comparable size on the WSU campus.
- Finally, Pullman School District is required to offer the project through competitive bidding. The district along with its architects and project managers will do everything possible to obtain a favorable bid for the projects. Should the costs be less than budgeted, the options include returning excess funding to the taxpayers, or, if the community desires, using the funds to make further capital improvements throughout the district.