

Facility Task Force considers security and safety at school

The Springfield School Facility Task Force considers security and safety near the top of its list of priorities as they examine data following a series of meetings and a tour of the school building earlier this year.

The School District had a facility study done to help identify physical plant needs when experiencing problems with the current heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system. ISG's multi-disciplinary team visited Springfield Public Schools and performed a comprehensive site and facility evaluation. (ISG helps private and public sector organizations transform and optimize their operational environments through research, benchmarking, consulting and managed services.) This included an analysis of existing conditions of the site, interior and exterior building, plumbing, mechanical and electrical conditions as well as security, technology and programmatic considerations.

The Facility Task Force was organized by the Springfield School District to be advisory to the Board of Education as they considered ISG's assessment. The Task Force was asked to examine data and information and develop recommendations to the school board regarding various facility projects.

While considering a major mechanical restoration, the school board determined it prudent to simultaneously analyze facility needs that complement best practices, school safety, space redesign to meet today's educational standards, demands placed upon the facility, and community needs.

Standards in school building construction have changed dramatically through the years, so a view of the entire scope was necessary to determine best plans for appropriate improvements.

The Springfield Public Schools building was constructed circa 1908, and the first addition in 1922 provided the building with a new larger boiler room. In 1926, the space that is now the elementary school gym was added. Other additions in 1935, 1951, 1960, 1963, 1978, 1991, 1993 and 1994 make up the current facility, which totals approximately 168,450 sq. ft.

Security considerations

The School District Facilities Committee reviewed concepts that would provide a more secure and safe environment for the children, staff and members of our community who utilize the school daily.

The question to the Facilities Task Force was: If the school district was able to address these needs, what would you like to see that include? What would be the best means of addressing these needs?

Secure entrances and a main entrance that could serve day and night school and community usage would greatly improve security and safety for our campus, said the Facilities Task Force.

The two primary entries adjacent to the administration areas of the school building do not currently have secure vestibules that require visitors to be checked in before continuing on throughout the building. At the elementary wing, relocating a pair of doors and upgrading the hardware of the office door could provide such security. The northeastern entrance at the district offices, however, would require a new secure vestibule addition due to the close proximity of open stairs to the entry.

The high school principal/administrative office is on the second floor and not accessible to the public. The majority of visitors who come through the district office need access to the high school office and staff.

There is a concern that existing entrances are not controlled. Visitors must "buzz" for admittance to the building, but not forced to enter through a controlled entrance.

Today's standard in construction of schools include a main entrance with administrative office and a controlled entrance where one immediately accesses the building.

The district monitors two entrances for afterschool activities and the district monitors two entrances for afterschool activities and two different entrances for daytime school use. It would be most functional and provide a "safer school environment" if one main entrance existed that could be utilized for both day and night.

All exterior doors should be outfitted with door position switches tied into a monitoring system. The school should be aware if doors are being opened and/or propped open. Additional surveillance cameras should be added inside and outside the building.

Visibility prominence brings clarity to where visitors are to enter and "check-in" and for after-school events.

Visitors to the school, especially after school hours, don't really have a clear understanding where to go.

Safety concerns

The Facilities Task Force also recommends improvements for parent "pick-up and drop-off areas." The zone on Burns Avenue is problematic. Snow can't be cleared along the grass boulevard. Children are dropped off and climb over the snow while exiting vehicles. At times the snowbank can get slippery, causing concerns that children might slip under a vehicle.

Along the south side of the elementary department on Wilson Street, snow can't be cleared along the grass boulevard. Children climb over the snow to come and go from the school.

And on Burns Avenue, it is difficult to meet vehicular traffic along the parent "drop-off" area on that narrow street; it basically becomes two-way traffic on a one-way street.

About the Task Force

The School District Facility Task Force was formed to be advisory to the Board of Education. The 29-member Task Force was asked to examine data and information and develop recommendations to the school board regarding various facility projects. The committee is a diverse group of community members with varying backgrounds and viewpoints

including: Erin Nelson, Mark Brown, Matt Horkey, Robert or Jessica Potter, Clayton Kretsch, Lindsey Beyer, John Ryan, Charles Tews, Dennis Tauer, Chris Gartner, Chris Rothmeier, Paul Pieschel, Brenda Anderson, Tiffany Trapp, Sara Groebner, Katie Mueller, Jim Rogotzke and Glenn Schmitz along with school staff members Darla Brown, Jen Altermatt, Paul Dunn, Amber Vogel, Paul Arnoldi, Adam Meyer and Troy Hoyt, and administrators Superintendent Keith Kottke, High School Principal Pat Moriarty and Elementary Principal Jeff Kuehn.

The School District Facilities Goal: The school facility is a vital community asset and the school district must ensure the community's investment in the facility is maintained and that the infrastructure and the school facility are designed to optimize student achievement, staff performance, and the needs of our school community in a safe sustainable, and modern environment.