

# Green Bay Area Public Schools—Facilities Master Plan Phase 1

Green Bay, WI

PRA Project #150218-01 | August, 2016







## Introduction

Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA) is honored to work with the Green Bay Area Public School District (GBAPS). Master planning is an important task for any school district to undertake. A well-developed plan can serve as a guiding document for years to come. In the case of GBAPS, this is particularly important. With a rich diversity of school types and educational opportunities spread across multiple municipalities in forty two separate buildings, understanding and developing a cohesive plan is an essential step to moving the District forward into the future.

The process of developing a facilities master plan begins with collecting and analyzing data. Much information has been generously provided by District staff. Of particular note are enrollment history, building room assignments and other data regarding the configuration and history of the educational buildings in the District portfolio. Other information has been provided by outside vendors such as enrollment projection data developed by Applied Population Laboratories (APL).

In addition to empirical data, it is critical to understand the realities of activities happening in the schools themselves. Over the course of several weeks, I had the great opportunity to visit each school in the District. At each location, I met with the building principal to discuss facility strengths and challenges as well as operational needs. At several schools we also had the opportunity to engage community members to hear from a parent's perspective. Tours of each building to visit classrooms and see firsthand how the buildings are functioning provided great background knowledge for development of a future facilities plan.

The community served by GBAPS is diverse. A wide array of services are provided by the District to meet the needs of many different types of learners. Family support is a growing need in many of the District's schools. Community partners providing services to students and families is a growing part of the activity within many schools. Wrap around care is available in some, but not all of the buildings. Space for meetings with parents or places for community groups to gather is also a growing demand.

Through our time in the schools and our many discussions with District leaders, what has become evident is the building facilities are increasingly out of step with the functions they serve. Much of the building stock in the District is quite old. Some portions of buildings date back as far as 1910. It is important to note that despite their age, the buildings appear to have been well maintained and remain functioning as they were designed.

It is here where we encounter the challenge posed by the existing facilities. Generally, the buildings and spaces being used today by GBAPS were designed for a different time, a different approach to educational delivery and different community needs. This challenge is in no way unique to Green Bay.

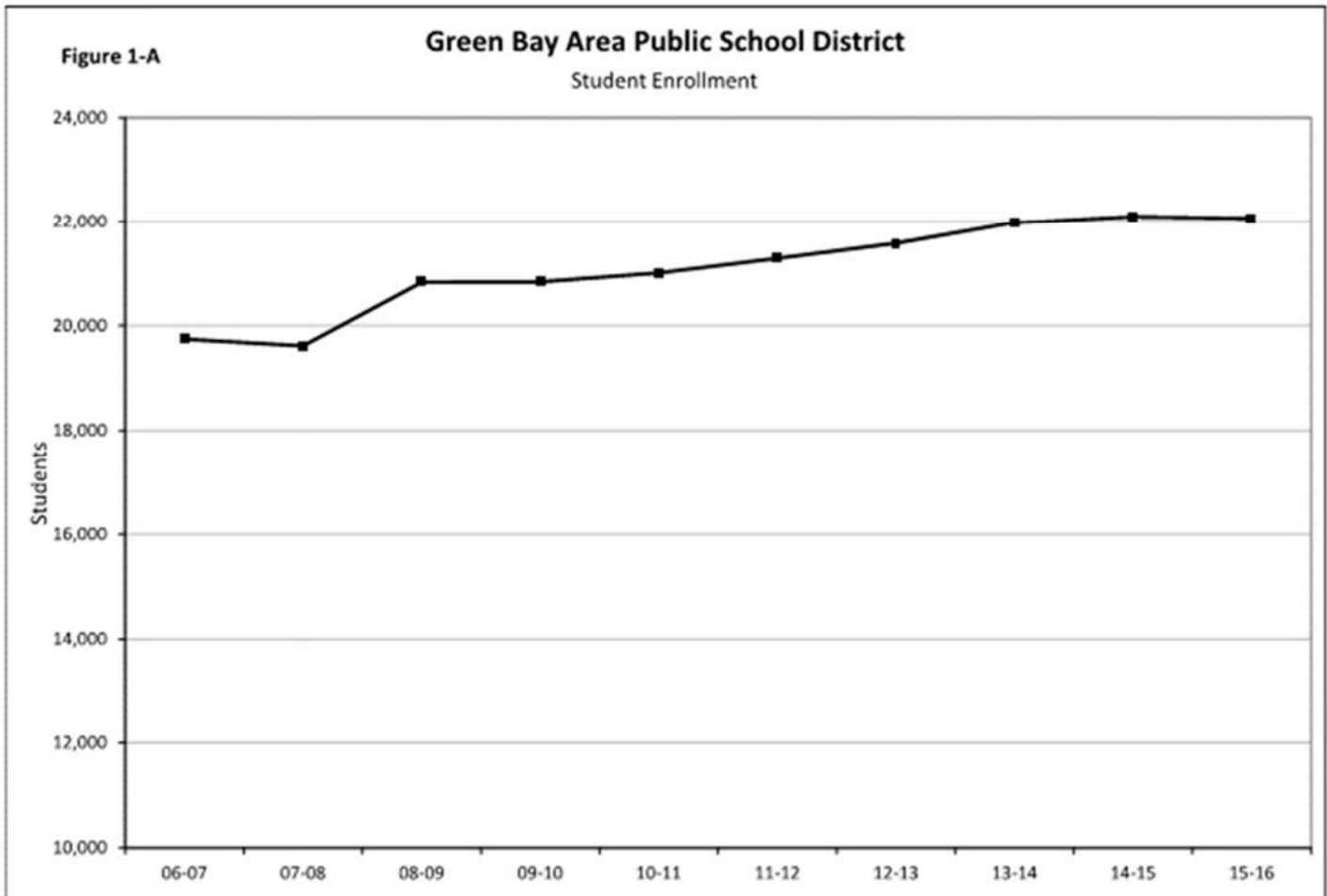
School districts across Wisconsin and the nation are faced with similar challenges. Current educational delivery requires greater flexibility and greater variety in teaching spaces. Flexible learning spaces are often larger than classrooms that have been built for much of the last century. To support the variety of learner needs and prepare students for career and college readiness, school buildings are changing to more closely reflect the environments into which graduating students will enter after their K-12 educational career.

Master planning efforts will focus initially on identifying and addressing high level facility needs at each building throughout the District. As the plan is implemented through time, more detailed and specific actions for each of those buildings will be developed to enable physical changes to occur.

## Enrollment

School districts and the communities that they are composed of are dynamic in nature. Their sizes grow and decline over time. Often, cyclical patterns of demographics can be distinguished among older, established neighborhoods. It is natural that the schools built to serve those neighborhoods also see the influences of changes in the surrounding community. Such is the case in the Green Bay Area Public Schools.

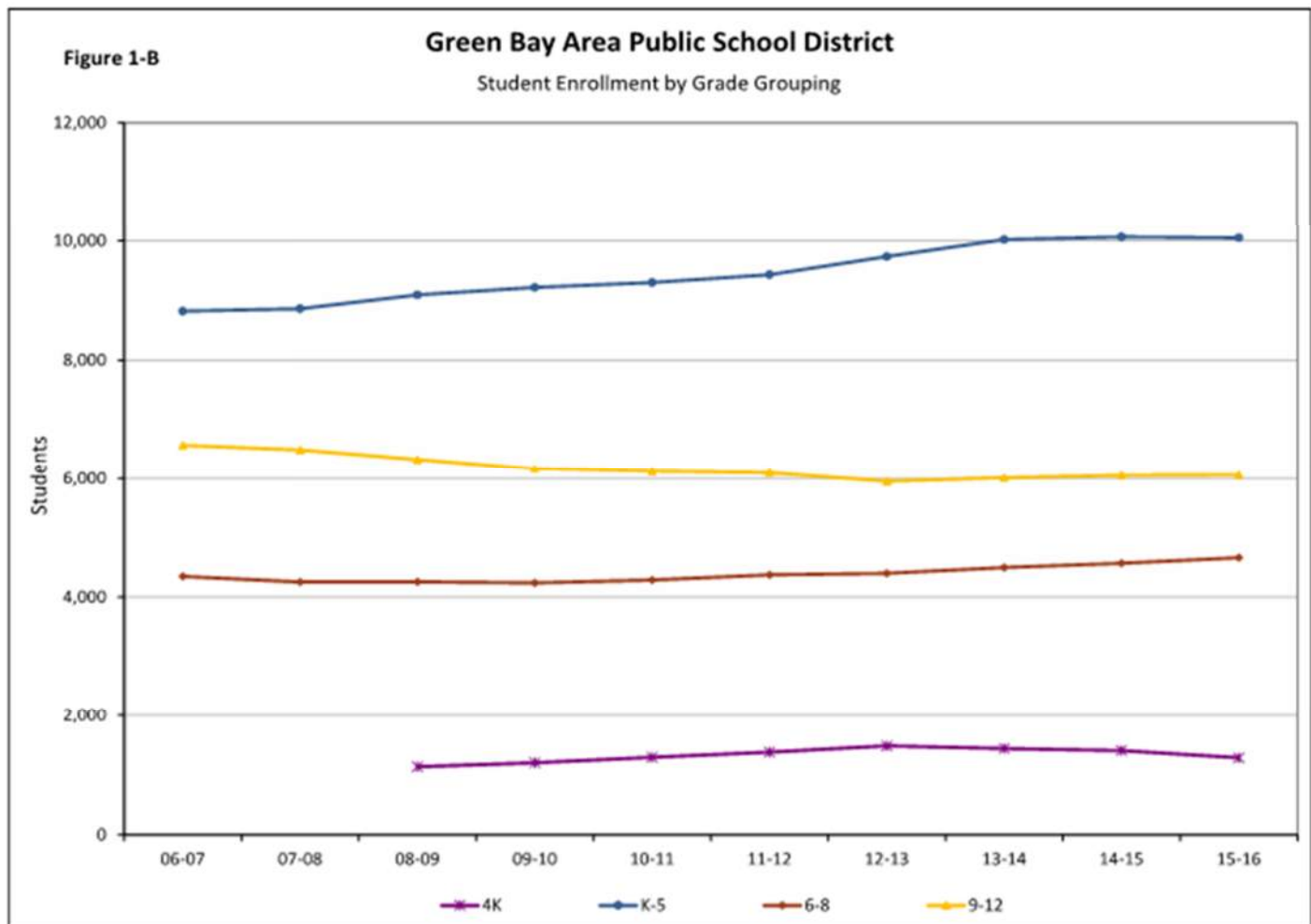
Over the past ten years, the District has seen an overall growth in student enrollment. The chart provided below shows the trend that has been ongoing since the 2006/07 school year.



Source: Applied Population Laboratory Report Dated March 2016

Broken down by grade level grouping (elementary, middle school, high school) the data reveals some other differing trends. The following chart shows greater enrollment growth at the elementary level, marginal growth at the middle school level and a slight overall decline at the high school level. Again, these numbers are aggregate and do not represent what is being experienced at an individual building level.

Overall, the District has experienced enrollment growth of approximately 2,320 students since the 2006/07 school year. This represents an increase of 11.8%. It should be noted that during this period of time, Four Year Old Kindergarten (4K) was added to the District offerings. This expansion of programming resulted in the addition of approximately 1,300 students as of the 2015/16 school year. Excluding the addition of 4K students, the District has seen a growth of approximately 5.2% over the past ten years.<sup>1</sup>



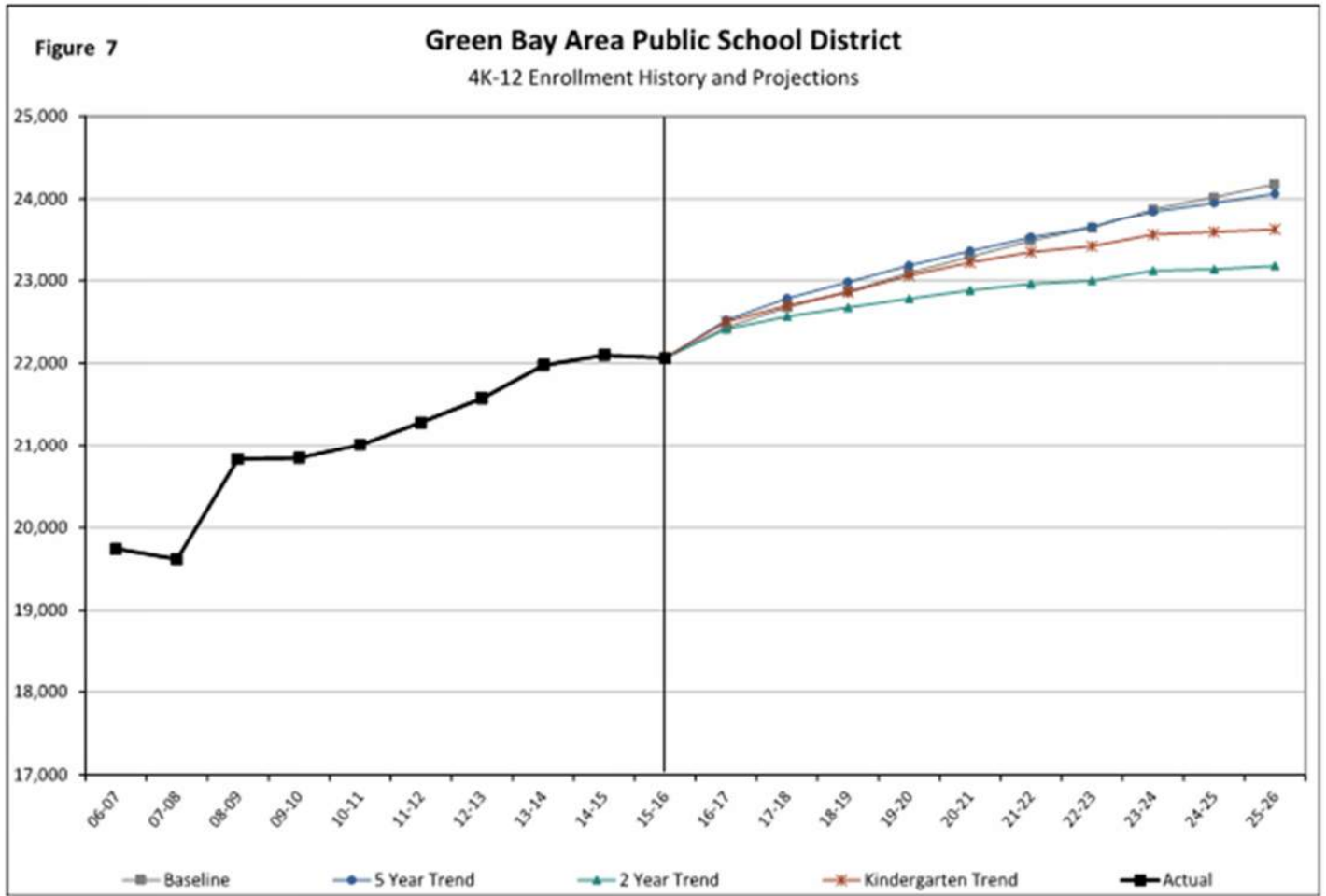
Source: Applied Population Laboratory Report Dated March 2016

While total student enrollment has increased over the last ten years, no new facilities have been constructed to keep up with added demand. Red Smith School was the last new building constructed in 1998. To accommodate the increased number of students and growth in programming, the District has purchased and renovated several buildings including Froebel Garden of Early Learning, Minooka Hill School and the Leonardo da Vinci School. Two other facilities have been rented to accommodate the Early Learning Center, Head Start programming and John Dewey Academy of Learning.

In an effort to study options to handle growing enrollment numbers, a group called the Enrollment Management Task Force was organized in 2007. In the fall of October, 2008 the group delivered recommendations to the Board of Education. As a result of community input, one recommended option to address capacity was to rent space in underutilized private school facilities within the District. This led to the District leasing space at two locations in the community to house the Early Learning Center, Head Start programming and the John Dewey Academy of Learning. Some renovations have been completed at these facilities to make them more conducive to the programming located there.

While the majority of 4K students are accommodated in District owned or rented facilities, it is important to note that many students attend community based partner providers.

To look forward to the future, enrollment projections have been prepared as part of the same aforementioned report for the District. Several projection models were provided but as can be seen in the following chart, all show continued overall growth in enrollment for the foreseeable future. This continued trend will increase pressure on capacity within the District’s existing building stock.



Source: Applied Population Laboratory Report Dated March 2016

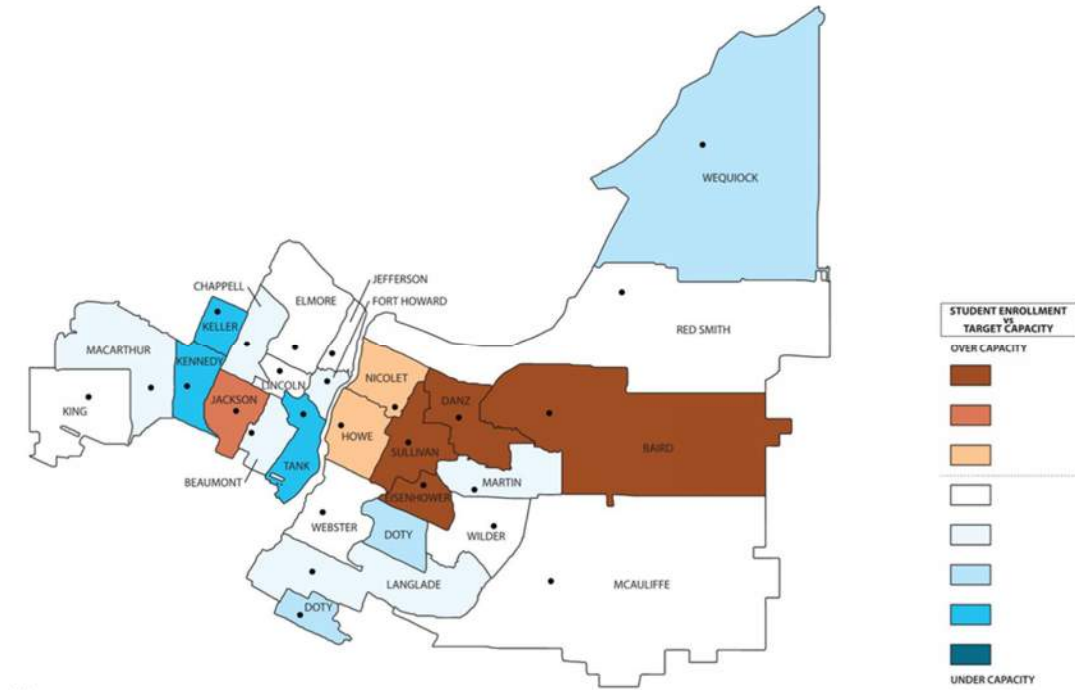
The data above reports the straightforward change in total number of students enrolled with the District over a ten year period. What it does not communicate is the change in demographic makeup of the student body served. The last decade has seen an evolution in the diversity of student and community needs. Growth in demand for specialized programming has put further pressure on space needs at the existing school facilities.

Over the last ten years, the number of students that qualify for free or reduced lunch has increased significantly. In June of 2007, 46.37% of students were eligible while in June of 2016, that number had increased to 60.47%. While this metric is not directly correlated to an overall increase in demand for specialized services, it is generally a good indicator of a demographic driven change in need.

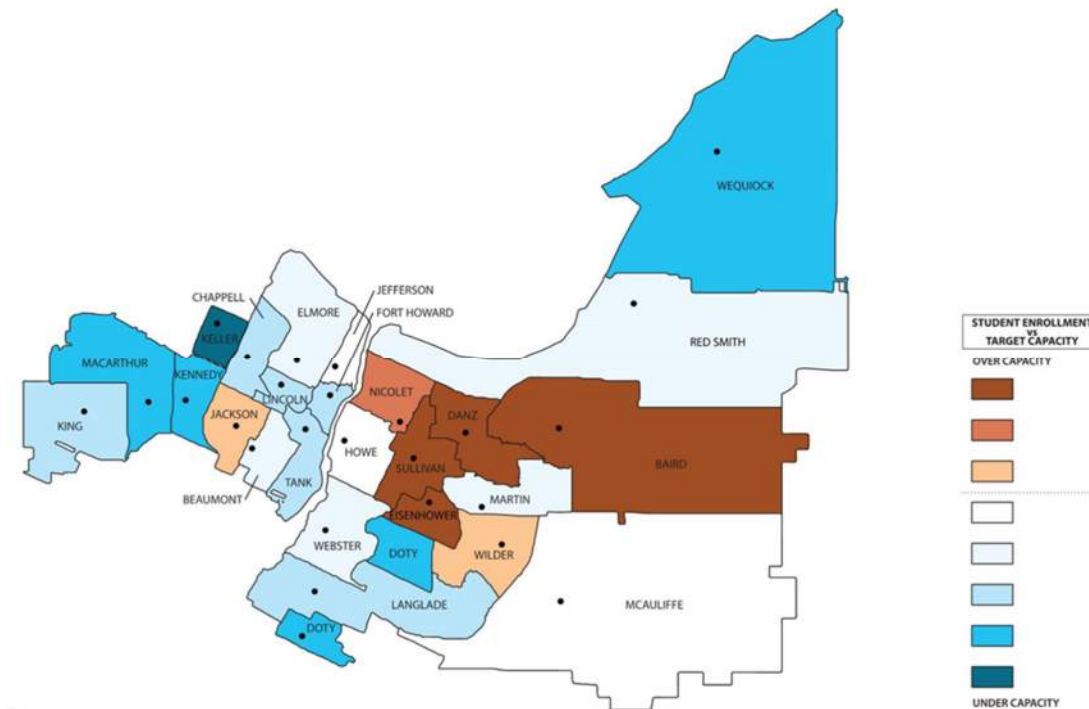
Increased demand for spaces to accommodate programming to meet the requirements of Title I have led to reassignment of space within many buildings around the district. Reading support rooms, intervention rooms, ELL support spaces and other similar program needs have contributed to capacity pressure at many locations.

## School Capacity

Available capacity (or lack of adequate capacity) varies across the district. The following diagrams indicate where specific schools stand relative to the number of students the building is currently configured to serve. Graphics represent current capacity pressure and projected pressure into the 2020/21 school year for elementary, middle and high school buildings.

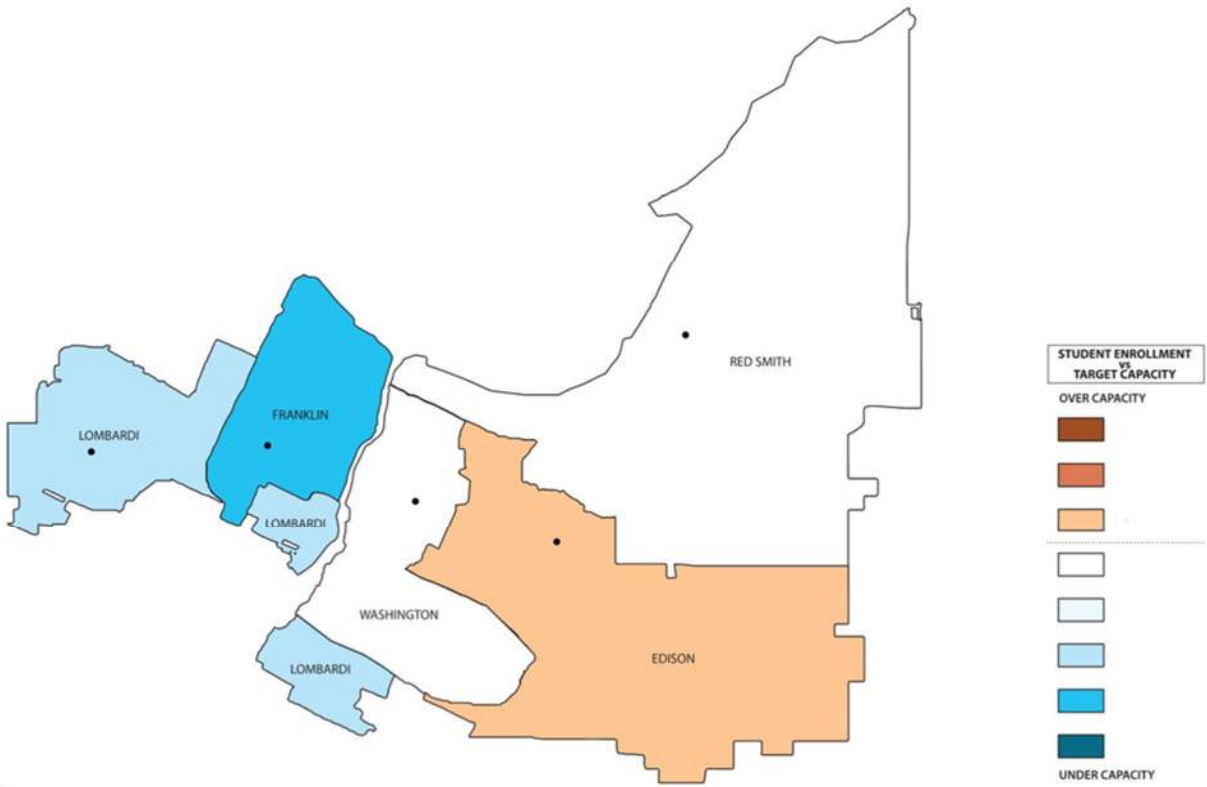


Elementary Schools – 2016/17

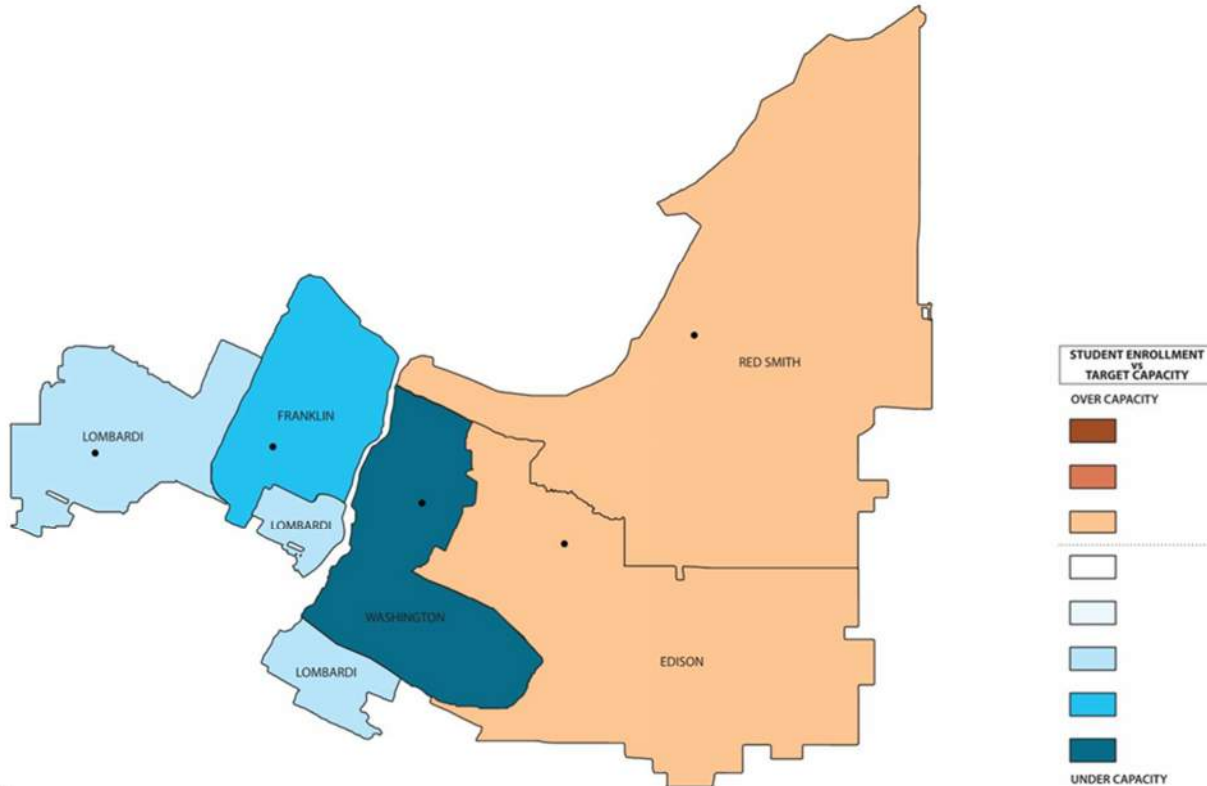


Elementary Schools – 2020/21

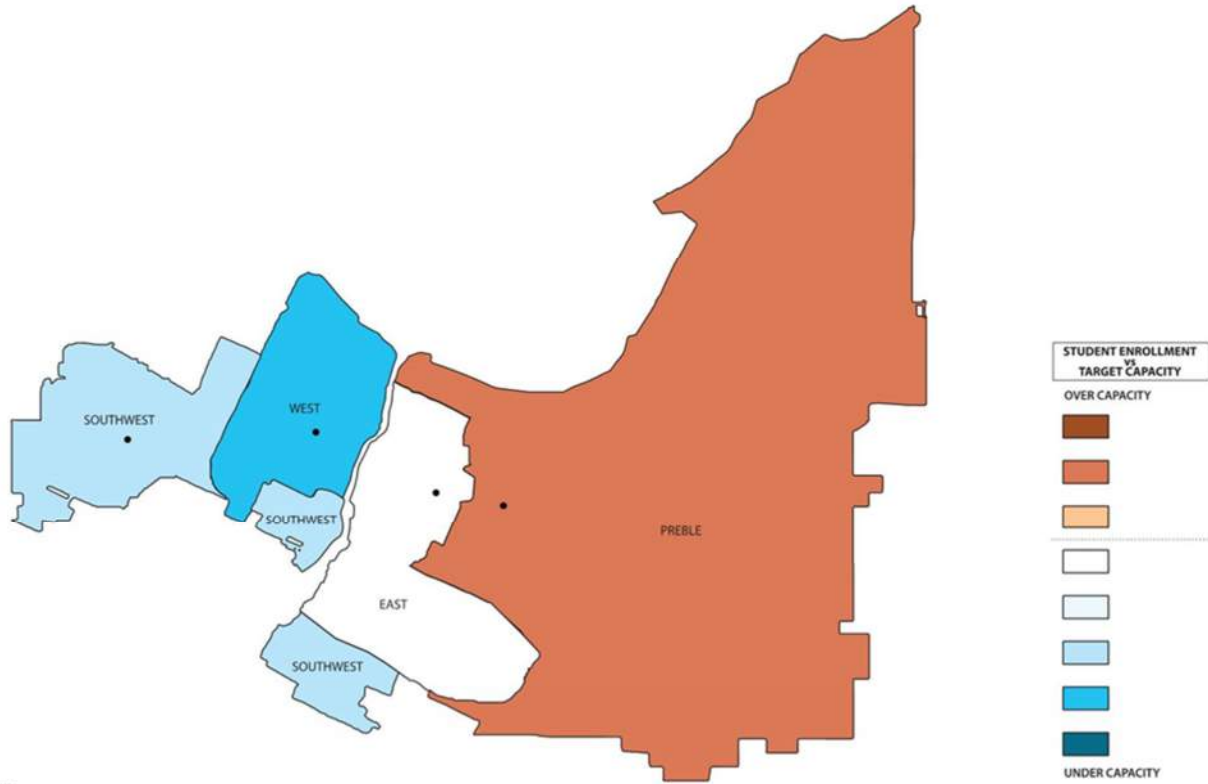




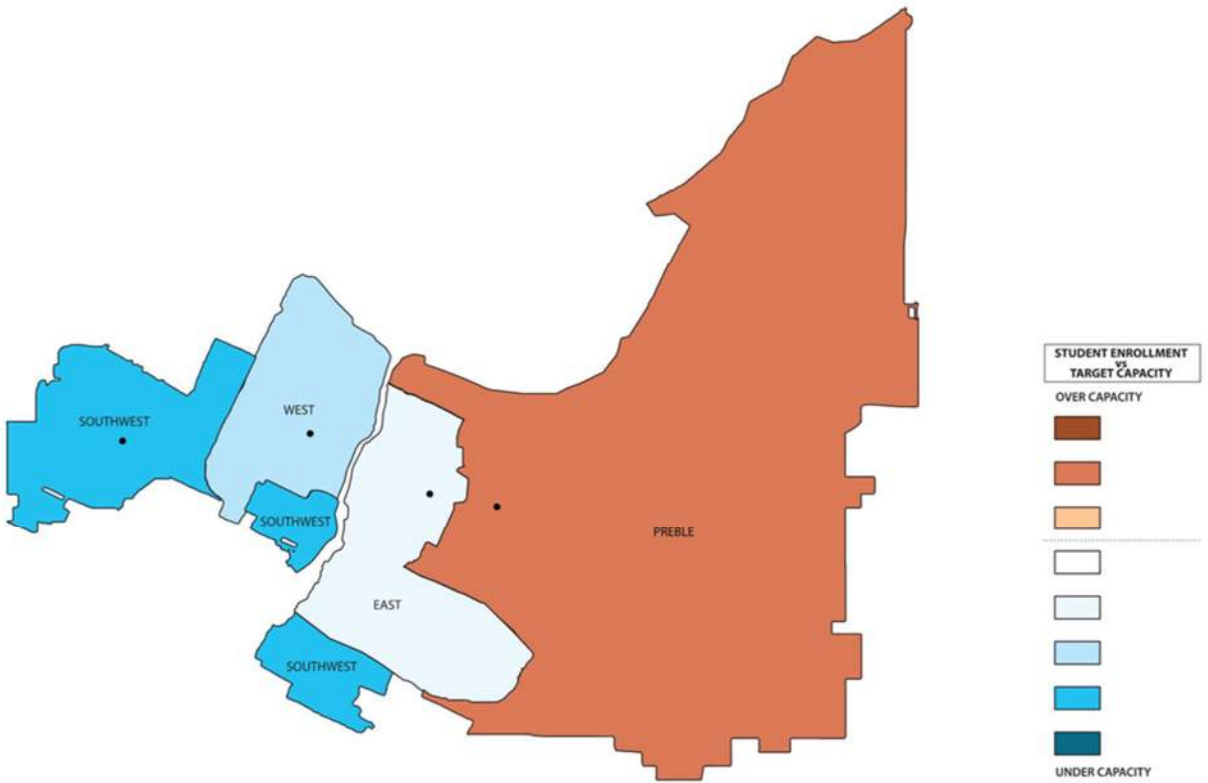
Middle Schools – 2016/17



Middle Schools – 2020/21



High Schools – 2016/17



High Schools – 2020/21

As the preceding graphics indicated, there exists a wide range of conditions within the many buildings in the District. At the elementary level, a distinct area of schools on east side of the river are significantly over capacity. Conversely, several schools north, south and west of that area are either near or below their capacity. Projected enrollment within five years indicates a general continuation of that trend toward greater pressure at schools that are already beyond their target capacity.

At the middle school level, a similar trend can be seen. Currently, only Edison Middle School is over capacity. Projected future enrollment matches that seen in the elementary schools with continued growth toward the east and available space in the western buildings.

The High Schools are not predicted to change significantly. Preble High School is very large and over its target capacity. This school is projected to continue to grow in enrollment into the future while the other three high schools will continue to operate below their functional capacity.

## Variables Potentially Impacting Enrollment

Enrollment projections are important tools for any school district to plan for future facility needs. Projects however can only anticipate changes based upon known variables. The further out in time a project gets, the more likely changes in underlying assumptions are.

Two potential variables exist that could impact the student enrollment numbers – open enrollment and the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (school vouchers). The implementation of these programs allows for greater mobility of students both into and out of Green Bay Area Public Schools. The impact of these two programs is not yet known and cannot yet be factored into the enrollment projections but should be monitored as implementation of this long range facilities master plan takes place over the coming years.

## Facilities Needs

To develop specific long term responses to facility needs across the District, we must first identify what those needs are. As discussed previously, enrollment capacity is a significant issue that to varying degrees impacts many schools. In some ways, this may be the simplest need to understand as the ramifications of too many students in a given facility is usually readily identifiable to an outside observer.

- **Capacity Balance:** As demonstrated earlier, significant differences in available capacity exist across the District. In some areas of the District, additional capacity will need to be added to meet the growing enrollment demand. This may be achieved through expansion of some buildings and through the addition of completely new schools. Many of the older buildings within the District are located adjacent to public parks and consequently have sites that are too small to accommodate building expansion. Several open parcels of land are currently owned by the District and should be considered as potential sites for new schools.

Some schools have available capacity within them. When viewed in the context of flexible learning spaces as will be discussed shortly, this may be an asset as it inherently increases the flexibility of an educational facility. Available capacity also provides opportunity for additional programming that the District may wish to develop in the future. A recent example of this practice is the founding of the Da Vinci School with available space at Langlade Elementary. The District was able to utilize existing space to more fully develop new programming before making a significant investment in facilities.

- **Maintenance Needs:** Facility maintenance is an ongoing need of any building, regardless of age. Historically, the District has funded projects through allocations within the regular operating budget. The budget for the past school year (2015/16) was \$3.5 million. These funds are used to address items such as roof replacements, HVAC equipment replacement, lighting upgrades and other regular operational needs. Should the District pursue larger expansion or renovation projects at existing buildings within the context of a referendum question, maintenance items at those buildings affected would typically be addressed as part of the larger project to capitalize on inherent efficiencies of scale.

## Modern Learning Spaces

As noted previously, the variety and diversity of educational services being delivered daily in the GBAPS is increasing as is the case in most Districts around the state and country. This change along with continually evolving educational practices focusing increasingly on more targeted, personalized learning lead to the need for more flexible and adaptable learning environments. Collectively these are often referred to as “modern learning environments” or “student centered learning environments.” These types of learning environments often are composed of several different types of spaces all working to support the students, staff and community that they serve.

It is the vision of the Board of Education that all students in the Green Bay Area Public Schools have equitable access to modern learning spaces. Given the variety of building configurations and in many cases, the age of the current building stock, implementation of many of the following elements will have to be carefully considered.

- **Classrooms:** In modern learning environments, classrooms remain the primary educational spaces where students spend the majority of their day. These spaces are typically larger in size than classrooms of the past. To promote flexibility and ease of reorganization within the room for small group or collaborative learning, rooms are now sized between 900 and 1,000 square feet. Existing classrooms within the District vary widely in size but are mostly smaller than would be found in a modern facility.

Modern classrooms also have other elements that were not typically included in the past. Connections to adjoining rooms or breakout spaces to promote collaboration are common. This is often accomplished through sliding pocket door panels or sometimes “barn doors.” Additional glass fronting corridors and breakout spaces provides greater visibility and natural light transmittance. Writeable walls surfaces including white boards, writable paint or glass surfaces are widespread to provide students and teachers multiple places to learn and collaborate within the room.

- **Furniture:** Furniture is an element that can have tremendous impact on the flexibility of a learning space without requiring significant modification to the building itself. To facilitate flexibility within a classroom, desks with fixed chairs have given way to light weight, mobile tables and chairs. Additional pieces with a classroom provide variety for students to find their ideal learning place. Standing height desks, soft seating, even elements like bean bags allow for comfortable, welcoming places that students want to engage in collaborative learning.
- **Breakout Spaces:** On any given day at any school with the District, students and staff will likely be found working outside of a classroom in a corridor. This is not unusual or unique to Green Bay. This teaching and learning is occurring in corridors not because hallways are great places to learn but because this is often the only place to go. As discussed previously, the greater variety of activities that now occur on a day to day basis within a classroom often spills out of the limited space available.

Modern learning spaces often include areas outside of classrooms call breakout spaces. These spaces are intended to provide properly designed and configured places for small group work, individual study or teacher/student one on one sessions. Breakout spaces typically are visually connected to surrounding classrooms with windows or glass walls to allow staff to supervise both simultaneously. Soft, flexible furniture is also a key element to provide comfortable places to sit and work. Often these spaces will also include technology and writeable wall surfaces for presentations by students and staff.

- **Project Rooms:** A common issue within school buildings at all levels within the District is a shortage of places to meet. These meetings can include staff meetings, parent meetings, student group meetings and student/staff project collaboration meetings. Inclusion of small (typically around 100 to 150 square feet) project rooms in several locations throughout a school building provides additional flexibility and places for the variety of meetings that happen every day.

Often called “project rooms,” these spaces play an important role in supporting project based learning curriculum within a school. These rooms provide places for students and staff to set up and develop over a period of time, days or sometimes weeks, a specific project. Project rooms are often located and used in conjunction with a breakout space as common learning area for multiple classrooms working together on a collective effort.

- **Makerspaces:** Makerspaces are rooms that are designed with project based learning in mind. Sometimes called “messy spaces” they typically include hard flooring surfaces for easy cleaning. Sinks for cleaning and hand washing are also provided. These rooms are additional spaces for group learning and collaboration where students can work with their hands to further develop ideas learning in the classroom. Makerspaces are created with the same objective of maximum flexibility as other spaces previously defined.
- **Professional Collaboration Spaces:** As pressure has mounted in various school building in the District, teachers and administrators often have had to turn over spaces for professional learning and development to teaching spaces. A professional collaboration space is fitted with furniture that, like in the classrooms, is flexible and comfortable in nature. These spaces also serve as meeting areas to help increase options for the variety of functions that happen within every school as already discussed.
- **Student Commons:** Several elementary schools in the District do not have dedicated facilities for serving student meals. This function is typically accommodated currently in a gymnasium which often poses as scheduling challenge.

A student commons is designed to serve more functions than a typical cafeteria. These spaces do still support the needs of a school’s food service but also are utilized as large group gathering areas. Furniture is typically varied and while selected for durability and ease of cleaning, it is also selected to be comfortable and welcoming. A successful student commons is a place that can be used for active teaching and learning as well as a place for students to gather to collaborate or work independently during open times during the day.

- **Community Space:** As collaboration between Green Bay Area Public Schools and many community partner has grown in recent years, spaces that allow for greater interaction at the schools while preserving security are in need. Many services need to have locked storage, gathering space or other specialized facilities that are accessible to both the staff and students within the school during the day but also to families and other community members. These spaces should have easy access from a clearly defined entry.

## Specialized Programming

GBAPS has developed several specialized programming tracks beginning in some cases at the elementary level and continuing through high school. These programs offer unique opportunities to students in the community. As programming has been developed and grown at various schools around the District, in some schools the facilities have not been adapted to serve their unique needs.

The performing arts track spans Kindergarten through twelfth grade and is located at three buildings, Webster Elementary, Washington Middle School and East High School. At Webster, a dedicated stage and performance space is needed for the students. Properly tuned music practice rooms and instrument storage should also be provided as part of a renovation program. At East High School, an auditorium exists but a reorganized and larger pre-function space should be provided to better support larger scale productions put on as part of this educational track. At all schools, the identity of the performing arts program should be celebrated and readily apparent as a part of the character of that learning community.

A STEM learning track is developing beginning at King Elementary, continuing at Lombardi Middle School and completing at Southwest High School. To fully support a STEM based curriculum, grade appropriate science labs, makerspaces and other flexible collaborations spaces should be added to each school. As noted above, the unique programming should be clearly identifiable throughout the building.

Other specialized programming within the District include Bay Link Manufacturing at West High School and City Stadium Automotive at East High School. These two programs are examples of a changing mindset in technical education. Whether for already developed programs or for others yet to be envisioned, now is a period of great change in the education of students for engineering, manufacturing and career training. At each of the four main middle and high school buildings, spaces should be thoroughly renovated and rethought to provide students environments more in line with those of modern workplaces. Renovated space should also look at proximity to other related curriculum and should be more visible and accessible to a broader array of students.

### Next Steps

- **Community Engagement Sessions:** Four sessions will be held over four separate nights in September at each of the main high schools in the District. These sessions will be opportunities for community members to engage with the planning team to learn more about these issues identified in this report and provide valuable feedback to the District.
- **Facilities Task Force:** The Board of Education will be assembling a group of representative community and District stakeholders to review facility information and develop solution options for recommendation back to the Board. This group will meet through the month of October with a final recommendation to the Board in November.
- **Community Survey:** A community-wide survey will be conducted in November to solicit further feedback regarding the recommendations brought forward by the Facilities Task Force.
- **Facility Master Plan:** PRA will present the final Facility Master Plan document to the Board of Education in early December.

The culmination of the master planning process will be a document that can be used by the District and the Community to guide facility investments for years to come. The data, input and vision that are being collected now will be woven into the plan to help position Green Bay Area Public Schools for continued growth and success.



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