BUILD A BETTER GRINNELL

Priority Need Report

K-12 Buildings and Infrastructure

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Executive Summary

- *Improve K-12 Buildings and Infrastructure* was selected as the #3 priority in the community needs prioritization survey.
- Grinnell has three elementary schools (one PreK-G2, one K-G2, and one G3-G4), a middle school (G5-G8), and a high school (G9-G12).
- Most of Grinnell's schools are nearing or past a school's average lifespan. According to a 2021 contracted facilities assessment, all of the schools except the high school have significant issues with either their condition (exterior and interior, including mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and technology), the ability of the learning spaces to meet a modern curriculum, or the capacity relative to Grinnell's peers, particularly in terms of square footage required for a 21st century educational environment. Costs of renovations to the condition issues alone was estimated at the time to be around $40 million.
- Efforts to pass two different bonds on three dates since 2015 for new schools and renovations have failed. The most recent bond proposals involved a consolidated K-5 school and improvements to the middle and high schools.
- Many research participants feel that Grinnell is not keeping up with its peers. In addition to a range of specific concerns with the condition of the buildings, participants are concerned that the dated schools were not designed for modern teaching methods, do not meet current safety standards, are expensive and ever more difficult to maintain, and make attracting teachers and a broader workforce to Grinnell more difficult. The middle school and elementary schools were identified as most problematic.
- Some also believe that there are too many schools, leading to cost inefficiencies, difficulty coordinating across schools, inequities for students, and too many transitions that harm learning, though this issue is more widely contested. Any effort to consolidate will require addressing the concerns of those who voted against the previous bonds.
- The support for improving K-12 buildings and infrastructure is broad and cuts across typical social divisions in the community.
- The causes of the problem were discussed primarily in terms of why the community has not been able to pass a bond measure. Participants believed that these include disagreements over whether or how much consolidation should be done, whether new buildings are necessary, and if so, where they would be located in the community. People also feel connected to the current schools and see that students are currently getting a good education. The cost was also significant. Most importantly was the distrust and failures of communication between interest groups.
- Most participants believe that figuring out what can be done that addresses enough concerns to build a supermajority is going to require communication and trust building. The entire community will need to be involved to identify a solution that is politically feasible.
- Though the efforts to pass a bond have been contentious for the community, there is reason to be hopeful and the community appears to be strongly in support of its schools and education.
- Research participants offered a range of suggestions for addressing concerns. An appendix of policies and best practices from other communities is included in the research.

Background, Purpose & Scope

Build a Better Grinnell 2030 Project
This Prioritized Issue Report represents one product of the non-partisan Build a Better Grinnell 2030 Community Visioning project (or BABG 2030). The broader project has involved an assessment of Grinnell's strengths, needs and visions for people who live and work in the community, or rely on resources within Grinnell, through a collaborative approach focusing on community input and engagement. The project's ultimate goals include:

- Building community pride and facilitating positive branding by identifying community strengths
- Enhancing organizational connections and community cohesion and building a commitment to action around a set of priorities through a collaborative and broadly participatory process

- Facilitating community growth and development for the next decade by identifying and illuminating the local context of a prioritized set of needs, together with community assets and policy options that are actionable, impactful, and easy to understand.

BABG 2030 is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge program. Co-funding is provided by the City of Grinnell, Grinnell Mutual, Grinnell College, and the Claude & Dolly Ahrens Foundation. The project is guided by a 20+ person steering committee representing a broad range of local constituents and community members.

The BABG research has taken place in three main phases, all involving significant community input: 1) an identification of the range of assets, strengths, and needs in the community; 2) selection of seven priority needs; and 3) a deeper assessment of each of the prioritized needs. The methodology is discussed in greater detail under the methodology section. The main products of this research will include:

- A broad-based assessment of Grinnell. This document will cover a broad range of themes and community services (e.g., healthcare, childcare, aging, food, housing, recreation, education, etc.),

providing an overview of community strengths, assets, and needs.
- A community-based identification and prioritization of needs.
- Detailed assessments of each of seven top prioritized issues.

The Prioritized Issue Reports
The seven needs prioritized by the community were, in order:

1. More variety of restaurants.
2. Improve quality of drinking water.
3. Improve k-12 buildings and infrastructure.
4. Improve or expand mental health care services.
5. Improve roads & road maintenance.
6. Less racism.
7. Higher wages or lower prices.

This document represents the detailed assessment for *Improve K-12 buildings and infrastructure*.

What this Report Is, and What it Is Not

Our primary goal with this report is to provide the community with information to help stakeholders make informed choices and address the prioritized need. At its core, this is a participatory community-based needs assessment. It is an effort to bring in diverse voices of persons who live, work, or rely on Grinnell for resources, together with input from individuals who have worked in the community to service the needs in question or otherwise might be considered experts. Our goal in seeking community-wide input is both to empower community members to participate in community development, as well as to better understand the experiences surrounding each identified need, how the need affects members of the community, what underlying causes people see leading to the issue, the obstacles they personally face and that the broader community may face in resolving the issue or ameliorating its impacts, ideas they have for what can and should be done, and what they see as strengths and assets in the community that may contribute to solutions.

The goal of this report is not to answer each of these questions definitively. In some ways the core of this report reflects the results of a community-wide brainstorming session (e.g., where everyone in a room shares ideas on Post-it notes that all go on a board and are then organized by themes). The review of problems, impacts, causes, and solutions are provided from the perspective of members of the community, not the research team nor the project steering community. We have sought to gather input broadly from the community, particularly from those who may not frequently have a voice in decision making, and to share that input here. We believe that listening to and giving voice to such community members is valuable in itself and can be a means to solve problems. To highlight this value, we share the following vignette. At the end of one focus group hosted by a low-income community member in her home, she used our provided script to ask if there was anything else the participants wanted to add. One responded, "I'm just grateful to be able to, to be allowed to participate, that maybe my opinion matters."

As is good practice in brainstorming sessions, we have not attempted to edit or filter input, nor are we trying to be arbiters of whose ideas are correct or not. Rather we have gathered lots of ideas and sorted them into themes. We do attempt to make note when there are contradictory views, or when there are clear factual inaccuracies. However, we believe it is valuable to represent all the voices who shared their ideas with us. Experiences differ, perspectives differ, even experts can disagree on underlying causes, and there are usually multiple possible solutions to any problem. Additionally, people make decisions on how they understand a situation, so even if all experts agree that some perspective represents a misunderstanding, knowing what the misunderstandings are and how common they are can be valuable to decision makers. Also, we expect that those who take on these issues will have expertise at the table.

While the experiences and ideas shared by members of the community is the core of the report, we also share additional information to help decision makers reach their own conclusions about what part of the problem might be addressed and how. This includes an overview of the current Grinnell context related to the prioritized issue in terms of relevant infrastructure and resources, key measures, historical information, key inflection points, and ongoing efforts, as well as comparisons to a selected group of peer communities. In most cases we have also sought to provide our own input (making it clear when this is the case) to the community asset list when we have identified relevant organizations or other assets that did not come up in interviews, surveys, or community sessions. Finally, we provide some information on policy options pursued in other communities, and assets available outside of the community (e.g., funding resources or resource hubs), though these are not intended as endorsements.

Who Is this Report for?

Each issue report is intended for those organizations and individuals interested in addressing some aspect of the issue or well positioned to do so. The Build a Better Grinnell Steering Committee plans to help as necessary to bring such persons together to discuss the findings and consider next steps, though any group is welcome and encouraged to make use of the findings of this report.

In most cases, multiple action priorities can be identified with a diverse range of possible solutions for each issue. It is possible that a single well-positioned group or organization will elect to take on all priorities related to a single issue. It is also possible that different groups will tackle different action priorities and possible solutions. It is possible that only one or a limited number of action priorities will be taken on. It is possible that new coalitions or interest groups will form to take on issues with no other "home," or alternatively with many possible homes. In the spirit of community-based development, we hope that members of the community most impacted by these issues will continue to be included in decision making in ways that positively inform the details of action plans. While we provide a review of community input below, we mostly review the challenges or concerns that exist under current systems, not potential ones. Users of the services in question can provide valuable insight.

How to Use the Data

The experiences on the nature of the problem and its impacts or consequences should help to understand where some of the key areas of concern are within each of the broader issues. Those sections of the report address who is affected and how. Causes or obstacles that people have identified can be looked at as possible intervention points suggesting areas for solutions. These, together with community members' specific suggestions for solutions as well as policy options tried elsewhere, provide a range of ideas.

In determining what ideas to pursue, one might start by considering which of the impacts or problem areas should be prioritized, and what causes or solutions relate most closely to those. A policy analysis approach is to start with a specific problem or part of the problem, identify a number of possible solutions (evidence-based or community generated), and then compare the options in terms of key criteria such as cost, feasibility (could this approach be used in Grinnell given things like available infrastructure and the political or cultural climate), and efficacy (if the solution could be implemented, how much of the problem is it likely to solve). This weighing of options can benefit from considering the resources and strengths available in the community or those that could be brought to the community that might support different solutions. Those making use of the document should also apply their own understanding and experience of the community. Another strategy is to apply force-field analysis, which considers what the forces are both in favor and against a particular solution, and considering how forces in favor might be strengthened and forces against diminished to enable action.

In each section where we report on community input, we provide data on the number of community sessions, interviews, and surveys in which an idea was identified. Such counts can be useful for getting a sense of where there is consensus on who is affected and how and may indicate good areas for intervention. Relatively high counts may also indicate areas where there is consensus on obstacles and possible solutions.

We suggest thoughtful caution on how much weight is given to the "counts." Much of the detail in this report is gained from the listening sessions and focus groups. These are very useful for gaining a sense of the diversity of concerns, experiences, and ideas. They are also useful in getting people to talk to one another. They <u>do not</u> serve, however, as a random or representative survey. Not everyone participates equally, and just because an issue isn't raised in a session doesn't mean that no one agrees with it or is thinking about it. The potential of bias decreases some the more sessions that are held. Still, something raised in 10 sessions is not necessarily more common or important than something raised in 8. Additionally, just because something was raised in many sessions doesn't mean that it was more impactful than something raised only by a few persons. Also, minority opinions are not necessarily less valuable in considering solutions. Innovation often reflects a change from the consensus view on how to do something. This is not to suggest that the counts are not useful, just that they should not be used to apply too much nuance and should be considered with other factors in mind. It is up to those who organize to take action to review the data provided and decide what solutions seem most important and probable given the totality of evidence.

Methods

Research was conducted through three primary phases, though some of the data collection (particularly gathering archival materials and key stakeholder interviews) has continued over the entire research period.

Phase I: The Community Visioning Survey

A community-wide visioning survey ran from December '22 through March '23 and asked individuals who live or work in Grinnell, or rely on Grinnell for key resources, twelve open-ended questions concerning what they felt were the strengths and needs in the community. In total, 603 surveys were completed, and 120 additional individuals provided a response to a single question posed on Facebook or in person. Since many surveys were taken by groups (as large as 15-20 people), it is impossible to know precisely how many participated in total, but the research team feels confident that it was over 10% of the Grinnell population.

To process the data from the open-ended surveys, the research teams sorted responses into general categories (e.g., healthcare, or things to do) and then identified and organized data into sub-categories (e.g., more mental healthcare services, more community events). There were many cases in which the same distinct response was only provided by a few people. Rather than creating hundreds of sub-categories, we looked for ways to group many of these responses together under a shared theme. For example, individuals asking for Indian, Thai, Vegetarian, or a wide range of restaurants were all grouped together under "greater variety of restaurants."

Subcategories that reflected more than 1% of all responses or had a high number of very specific responses (e.g., events for teens or teen hangout spaces) were selected to move forward to a prioritization phase. Forty-six issues were identified in the open-ended survey. The data from phase one is available at www.buildabettergrinnell.org.

Phase II: Prioritization Phase

Our next step was to determine which of the forty-six issues were most important for those who live, work, or rely on Grinnell for resources. The follow-up *Needs Prioritization Survey* asked individuals to select and rank up to seven issues. The survey also asked for demographic data so we could better determine who was most affected by the range of issues, and we invited individuals to provide their contact information if they were willing to participate in follow-up focus group on the prioritized issues. It was launched on May 9, 2023, and closed on July 16. We distributed the survey widely, promoted it frequently over ten weeks, and received 1270 complete surveys from individuals.

We identified the top choices for a range of demographic groupings using a rank-order voting method. This data, as well as additional details on the methodology is available on www.buildabettergrinnell.org. The top five issues to follow through to phase three were determined by taking the top two issues identified by lower-income respondents and the next three issues from all respondents.[1] The method and the selection process were determined and publicized prior to distributing the survey. Our definition of lower-income corresponded roughly to Iowa's definition for use with Medicaid eligibility (varying by household size).

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[1] Grinnell College student responses were multiplied by .3 to weight their responses relative to their population as a proportion of Poweshiek County.

The top five issues identified through the prioritization survey are:
1. Improve Quality of Drinking Water
2. More Variety of Restaurants
3. Improve K-12 Buildings and Infrastructure
4. Improve or Expand Mental Health Care Services
5. Improve Roads and Road Maintenance

The steering committee selected the final two issues to move to the next stages from among those highly ranked needs that did not make the top five through the prioritization survey. The committee took into consideration issues of equity and the overall welfare of the community, as well as what other initiatives are already underway in the community. The two issues selected were:
6. Less Racism
7. Higher Wages or Lower Prices

There were other issues that steering committee members discussed as important concerns for the community, particularly those affecting lower-income families, such as affordable housing and childcare. *Higher wages or lower prices* was seen by many as a good final pick both because it was ranked third by lower-income individuals and seventh by all respondents. It was also seen as a potentially good way to hear more from those members of the community with financial challenges about what issues were most important.

Phase III: Community Sessions (Listening Sessions, Focus Groups, and Community Hosted Discussions)
The final research phase focused on gaining more detailed information from the community to better understand the prioritized issue. This was done primarily through community listening sessions, focus groups, and community hosted discussions.

We scheduled one listening session and three focus groups each month between late September and mid-December 2023, for twelve sessions total. We frequently advertised these throughout the community, and specifically reached out to individuals who provided contact information and indicated an interest in participating in this stage in the prioritization survey. Listening sessions were all held in public spaces in the Grinnell's Drake Community Library and open to the public on a walk-in basis. Focus groups were also primarily scheduled for the library,[2] were limited to 6 participants, and required signing up. Attendees at these were paid. We also hired six individuals from lower-income households to conduct up to seven focus groups each (one on each issue) with their friends and family. We provided funding for a meal for the group and left it up to them how many and which issues they elected to address.

For improving K-12 buildings and infrastructure, we had 7 Sessions in total, including 3 focus groups (we were unable to generate a group for 9 of the scheduled sessions), 3 listening sessions, and 1 session that was hosted by a low-income community member in their home. In addition to having challenges filling focus groups, the sessions were not well-attended as a whole, averaging 3-4 attendees each. We believe that this relatively low participation is offset by the fact that six of the community sessions included individuals who currently or previously worked in the school system or were associated with the previous effort to pass a bond related to infrastructure improvements. Also, given those efforts, there is a fair amount of information and public commentary in available through archives.

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[2] Some other arrangements were made when in the interest of scheduled participants for some issues.

At all sessions, participants were asked to share their experiences and identify what they saw as the nature of the problem, its impacts on their lives, their thoughts on why it exists, what obstacles are faced in addressing it (for them and the community more broadly), their ideas for possible solutions, and strengths and resources in the community that might be helpful. A full list of questions used to guide these is provided in Appendix 4.

In listening sessions, all participants were given an opportunity to respond to each question. The goal was to give everyone a chance to contribute what they would like, but it is not required that they respond at all. Focus groups are generally intended to be more dynamic. A list of questions served as a guide, but participants were also encouraged to have a conversation, and the sessions were given more flexibility to explore directions that might not have been foreseen by the facilitator. Because attendance was typically not too large at the listening sessions (under a dozen for each), these often had more of a character of a focus group with discussion amongst members.

Focus groups have weaknesses and strengths as a research tool. They are not intended to get every participant to respond in detail to every question. They cannot be used in the same way as a detailed questionnaire where we can generate a random sample and have statistically valid conclusions about a population. They are very useful for fleshing out a range of experiences and ideas on a topic, somewhat like a brainstorming session, particularly taken in their totality (i.e., across a handful of sessions, lots of ideas get raised). Thus, after a set of focus groups, a researcher usually will have a good sense of the right questions to ask for a questionnaire and the range of possible responses, but they would not necessarily be accurate in determining whether there might be a statistically significant difference in how a population responds to the questions. Focus groups can help to understand when there is a broader cultural understanding of an issue (e.g., shared ideas about it), and what the cultural norms or shared ideas are. This is in part because they are useful in getting people to talk to one another about an issue, creating a context for group analysis where an idea can be more fully explored and where new ideas or understandings may be generated.

Sessions were recorded, transcribed, and then individually coded using the overarching questions to sort responses and identify recurring themes and unique perspectives.

Interviews with Local Experts and Key Stakeholders

Early in the research process, before identifying the prioritized issues, we held over seventy interviews with individuals involved in a range of community services and community development. The goal was to gain input from a broad mix of community leaders and experts from a range of content areas (e.g., arts and entertainment, business, health, education, etc.). Each interview primarily focused on understanding the community needs, ongoing efforts, and assets related to that area. These were largely intended to inform the project's broader, but less detailed, community assessment. During each interview, individuals were also asked more generally to comment on what they saw as key needs in the community and recent successful or promising community development efforts. Detailed notes or transcriptions were generated from every interview.

After identifying the community priorities, the interviews were reviewed for any mention concerning the prioritized issue by using a range of search terms (including word bases) associated with the issue (e.g., school, educat, elementary, bond, Fairview, Davis, Bailey, GHS, GMS). We focused only on responses relating to school infrastructure and did not attempt to incorporate perspectives on educational programming not directly related to facility needs. All relevant information was extracted and coded into themes similarly to the community session data. The list of all organizations interviewed is provided below. While none of our interviews focused specifically on the school infrastructure, relevant input was provided in nine interviews, several of which were held with members of the school district and generally included some discussion of infrastructure. These are bolded below.

- Bayer Crop Science
- Capstone Behavioral Health (multiple)
- Central Iowa Community Services (CICS) Grinnell Iowa
- City of Grinnell (Multiple)
- Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation (multiple)
- Community Support for Immigrants (CoSi)
- Davis Elementary
- Door of Hope
- Drake Community Library
- First Presbyterian Church
- Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation (multiple)
- Grinnell Area Arts Council
- Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce
- Grinnell Area Mental Health Consortium-JPK Fund
- Grinnell City Council
- Grinnell Community Early Learning Center
- Grinnell Counseling
- Grinnell College (multiple, including mental health)
- Grinnell Christian Church
- Grinnell Fire Department
- Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance
- **Grinnell-Newburg School District (multiple)**
- Grinnell Parks and Recreation
- Grinnell Police Department
- Grinnell School of Music/Studio E
- Grinnell State Bank
- Healthy Homes Family Services, Int. Mental Health Counseling
- Hey Grinnell Did You Know (Facebook)
- Imagine Grinnell
- KGRN Radio
- Iowa Kitchen
- Link Grinnell
- Mayflower Community
- Mid Iowa Community Action (MICA)
- Poweshiek County Emergency Management
- Prairie Lakes Church
- Region 6/People Rides
- Rotary Club
- SeaJae Properties
- Total Choice Shipping and Printing
- United Way Grinnell College
- UnityPoint Health
- Welcoming Communities

Review of Archives (Web and Paper)

Throughout the research process, we gathered and reviewed all nature of documents we could find associated with community development and assessments in general and a range of content areas common to comprehensive community assessments, and specifically related to the prioritized issues (once identified), through literature searches and requests to key stakeholders in the community. These materials were used to produce the *K-12 Buildings and Infrastructure in Grinnell* section below. They were also reviewed for mentions of concerns and needs, as well as assets, and were particularly important for understanding perspectives of individuals opposing the bond measure, as these were not well represented in community sessions.

To the extent possible, we also gathered data from four peer communities selected by the steering community (Decorah, Fairfield, Pella, and Waverly) to better understand Grinnell's relative strengths and weaknesses as well as to look at how those communities may have addressed similar issues (Decorah, Fairfield, Pella, and Waverly). Once gaining a clearer sense of the nature of the issue from focus groups, we also looked for ideas for possible solutions from communities around the country, focusing on ones like Grinnell, as well as other non-local potential assets and resources (e.g., organizations and funding).

Review of the Visioning Survey and Prioritization Survey

Once the prioritized issues were identified, we returned to both earlier surveys. The open-ended visioning survey was reviewed to extract any data relating to the prioritized issue. For example, in the case of K-12 schools, we went back to look in detail at every mention (using a handful of key words) to identify what, beyond "better school infrastructure" was said. All responses were extracted and coded similarly to community session data. Finally, we pulled information from the prioritization survey to show how different demographic groups ranked the issue.

K-12 Buildings and Infrastructure in Grinnell, Iowa

The city of Grinnell is part of the Grinnell-Newburg school district, which serves an area of 220 square miles and includes Oakland Acres, the unincorporated community of Newburg, western Poweshiek County, and far eastern Jasper County. The district includes five schools made up of three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, all of which are located in the city of Grinnell and collectively serve 1663 students (as of 10/23).[3]

In FY 2024, the school expects a revenue of $2.01m and expenses of $21.37m, for a deficit of $.95m. This will be paid out of the general fund, which will drop to $2.31m. Around 54% of GNSD budget comes from the state, 43% from local levy tax, and 3% from federal sources. Salaries and benefits account for 78.7% of expenses, followed by purchased services (10.2%), and supplies (6.8%).[4]

Grinnell's Schools and Enrollments

Bailey Park and Fairview are Grinnell's two elementary schools and cover kindergarten through 2nd grade. Fairview also includes Pre-Kindergarten. All students then attend Davis elementary for third and fourth grade, Grinnell Middle School for fifth through eighth grade, and Grinnell High School for ninth through twelfth grade.

Table 1 shows enrollment in each school as of Feb. 2024. Total enrollments across all schools over time (2017-2023) can be seen by the line graph in Figure 1. The accompanying trendline shows a decreasing total enrollment of 1.5% per year. Figure 1 also shows the average class size[5] for four clusters of grades (pre-K to 2nd, 3rd to 4th, 5th to 8th, and 9th to 12th) between 2017 and 2023 as clustered columns. The chart shows a relatively large group of younger students (by class size) worked their way through the grades from 2017 to 2023. While class sizes in the high school decreased from 2017 to 2021, they increased from 2021 to 2023 reaching an average class size of 131. The average class size of Pre-K through 4th grade has not exceeded 120 since 2019.

Table 1: Grinnell-Newburg Schools and Enrollments (Feb. 2024)[6]

|	Fairview	Bailey Park	Davis	Middle School	High School
Grades	Pre-K – 2nd	K – 2nd	3rd – 4th	5th – 8th	9th – 12th
Enrollment	242	138	229	445	489

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[3] "Grinnell-Newburg School District State of the District Administration Presentation," March 27, 2024
[4] "Grinnell-Newburg School district State of the District Administration Presentation."
[5] Pre-K have been lumped into a single "class".
[6] "Grinnell-Newburg School District State of the District Administration Presentation."

Figure 1: Enrollments Over Time[7]

Figure 1: Enrollments Over Time
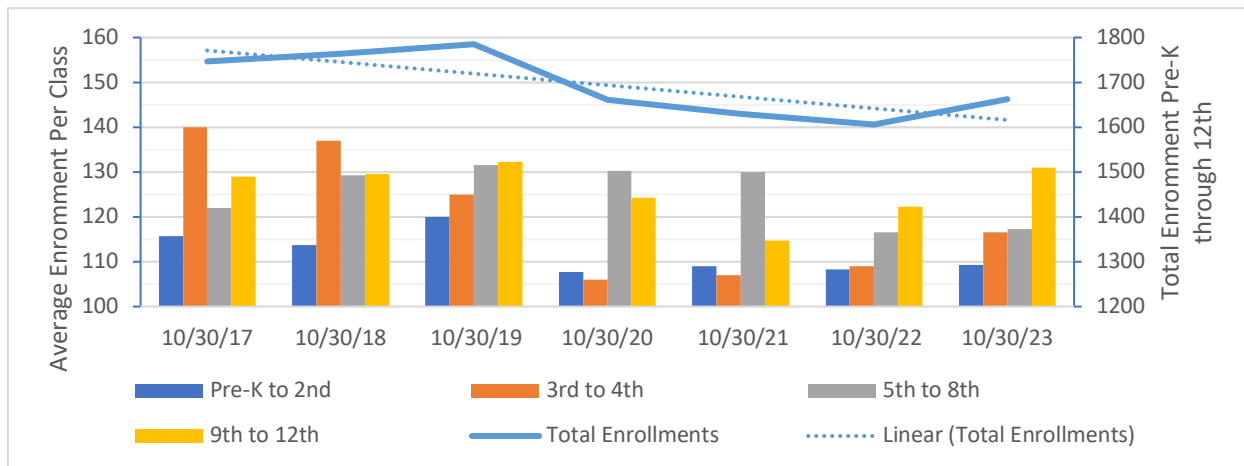
Assessment of Grinnell's School Buildings

Table 2 provides an overview of Grinnell's five school buildings, and Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the origin, major improvements, and expected lifespan of each building. According to the 2021 Facilities Assessment Report for Grinnell Newburg Community School District, many of the schools are dated and in need of repairs or replacement. The typical lifespan of educational facilities is 65 years, with significant expenditures for building system updates expected every 20 years. As Table 2 and Figure 2 show, most of Grinnell's schools have undergone significant additions and are nearing or past their average "lifespans".

Table 2: Grinnell-Newburg Schools[8]

	Fairview	Bailey Park	Davis	Middle School	High School
Grades	PreK – 2nd	K – 2nd	3rd – 4th	5th – 8th	9th – 12th
Square Footage	33,000	31,500	37,000	92,000	176,000
Total size of grounds	6 acres	3 acres	4 acres	27 Acres	47 Acres
Original Construction	1960	1960	1917	1979	1960
Major Additions	1979 & 1998	1997	1960 & 1997	none	1985, 1998-2002, 2006

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[7] Calculations based on data obtained in "Grinnell-Newburg School District State of the District Administration Presentation."

[8] "Facilities Assessment Report for Grinnell Newburg Community School District," CMBA Architects, Boyd Jones, Bluestone Engineering, 2021.

Figure 2: Grinnell-Newburg Schools' Establishment, Additions, and Anticipated Lifespans[9]
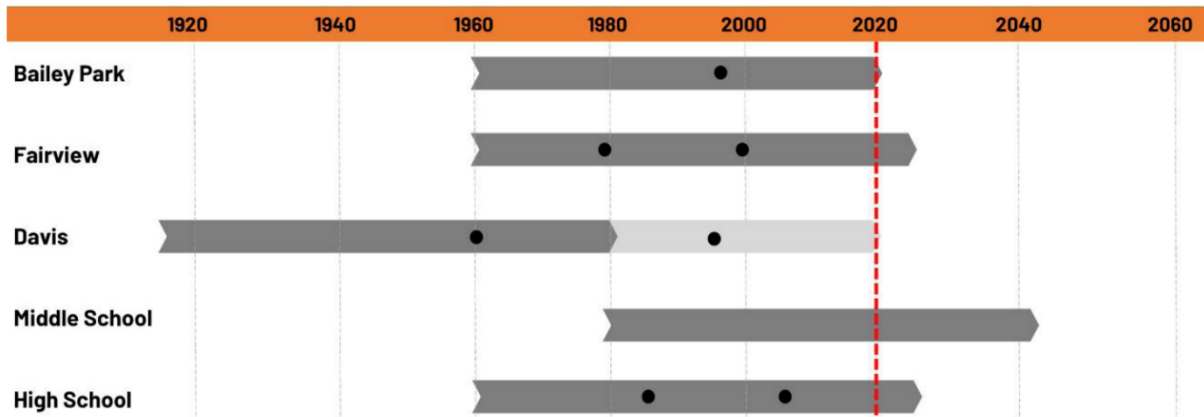
The Assessment Report evaluated each school on the basis of exterior conditions, interior conditions, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, technology, and site conditions. In determining needs, student safety was a top priority. The evaluation team also used 14 central Iowa districts for comparisons, including Newton, Pella, and Fairfield.

The report provides an evaluation for each building based on condition, curriculum, and capacity. Condition is based on a review of the facility with local maintenance staff, architects, engineers, and construction managers. It evaluates on exterior conditions, interior conditions, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, technology, and site conditions.[10] Curriculum refers to the degree to which classrooms and other learning spaces meet the needs of modern education.[11] Capacity considers the size and enrollment of the schools compared to fourteen other districts of similar size near to Grinnell. It also considers the degree to which the square footage of teaching spaces meets that "required for a 21st century educational environment." Benchmarks used include the following:

- PreK-1st grade classrooms (1200 sf)
- 2nd-12th grade classrooms (900 sf)
- 5th-12th grade science rooms (1200 sf)
- Art rooms (2400 sf)
- Band (25 sf/student)
- Choir/Music (1250 sf)[12]

The evaluations provided in the report are summarized below in Table 3. We have color coded each box to reflect the summary graphics provided in the report, which indicated where a school fell for each assessed area on a shaded slide scale between a very negative assessment and a very positive one (see table 3 key).

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[9] "Facilities Assessment Report…"
[10] "Facilities Assessment Report…," p.3.
[11] "Facilities Assessment Report…," pp.4-6.
[12] "Facilities Assessment Report…," pp.7.

Table 3: Summary of Facilities' Evaluation[13]

Condition	Requires significant maintenance and upkeep	🟥	🟧	🟨	⬜	🟩	🟩	Requires little main upkeep
Curriculum	Not meeting student & teacher needs	🟥	🟧	🟨	⬜	🟩	🟩	Meeting student & teacher needs
Capacity	Extremely cramped	🟥	🟧	🟨	⬜	🟩	🟩	Abundance of space

	Condition	Curriculum	Capacity
Fairview (p.21)	"The facility's HVAC system which serves classrooms and support spaces is in need of replacement, and exterior windows and storefront are at the end of their lifespan."	"Educational metrics are slightly below what expectations would be with a new school, and students could benefit from a greater variety of spaces."	"There is an average amount of total space at this facility, but first grade classrooms, as well as the art/ music room, are significantly undersized."
Bailey Park (P.31)	"The building's mechanical systems are outdated, and should be replaced. Significant maintenance is required on the exterior, and this would include replacing all windows and tuckpointing some exterior masonry."	"Educational metrics are below the standards for 21st century learning, and students could benefit from a greater variety of spaces."	"The school contains some undersized classrooms, but most remain suitable for their expected function. 1st graders seem to be in most need of additional space, and all students could benefit from additional outdoor spaces."
Davis (p.41)	"Davis Elementary is the oldest facility in the district. It is maintained well, but significant maintenance can still be expected in the future due to its age. Among others, it requires significant mechanical system upgrades as well as window replacements."	"Educational metrics are below the standards for 21st century learning, and students could benefit from a greater variety of spaces. The 1917 original building actually has dedicated spaces to small group learning and collaboration. This is commendable and definitely unique for schools of this age, yet these activities are still limited by the fact that this was never their intended purpose."	"This is the only elementary school with both a cafeteria and gymnasium, which allows for scheduling flexibility, as well as additional learning opportunities. Most classrooms are 5-10% undersized, but still functionable for their expected purpose."

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[13] All quoted material is from the "Facilities Assessment Report…".

	Condition	Curriculum	Capacity
Middle School (p.51)	"The Middle School is the newest educational facility in the district, but still has significant issues to be addressed. Replacing the failing insulation and waterproofing system in this facility is perhaps the most urgent issue at this site."	"The middle school is heavy in direct instruction spaces, and lacking in areas for small groups, collaboration, and exploration. Adding these spaces would create a more inclusive learning environment as well as maximize the potential of students and teachers who may have different preferred learning methods."	"Overall square footages are on track with your neighbors, but some individual educational spaces are undersized for their functions. This can most likely be attributed to the large media center, mini theatre, and spacious gym and cardio areas, which drive up square feet per student, but do not provide traditional educational spaces."
High School (p.62)	"The high school is the largest building in the district. While it may not be in the worst condition overall, the large area equates to the longest list of maintenance concerns. Among others, consolidating HVAC systems in the classroom and support spaces would alleviate many of the burdens comprised from the current systems."	"The high school is heavy in direct instruction spaces, and lacking in areas for small groups, collaboration, and exploration. Adding these spaces would create a more inclusive learning environment as well as maximize the potential of students and teachers who may have different preferred learning method"	"The extracurricular spaces at the high school are commendable for districts of your size, and they provide many opportunities to students. The educational spaces are undersized, despite the fact that some classrooms remain vacant. There is enough space, but it could be reconfigured to be more efficient."
Summary across all schools (p.64)	"Perhaps a primary concern for the district as a whole is safety and security, as none of your facilities have secure entries for visitors. If students are expected to continue using these facilities, a plan should be put in place to increase security measures at each location."	"The district has invested in creating spaces for twenty first century learning, but these spaces are implanted into areas in which it was never their intended function. Because of this, these spaces have some limitations and inefficiencies. Nevertheless, continued investment in 21st century spaces will place students in the best possible position to succeed in the ever-changing world they will enter after schooling."	"None of the district facilities are severely undersized when compared to similar districts, yet all contain some undersized educational spaces. This can be attributed to inefficiencies. For instance, between the three of your elementary schools, the district maintains three different gymnasiums, one lunch room, and four classrooms dedicated to art and music. Yet the majority of students have access to just one gymnasium which must also function as a lunch room, and one space

	Condition	Curriculum	Capacity
			which must fit both music and art. If these inefficiencies were to be optimized, students and teachers could have access to a greater variety of adequately sized spaces, while the district simultaneously has less square footage to maintain."

Estimated Repair Costs for Condition Concerns[14]

The 2021 Facilities Assessment Report also provides details of repairs and upgrades needed in each of the buildings, assessing each on a level of priority:

- A. Should be addressed within 1-2 years
- B. Should be addressed within 3-4 years
- C. Should be addressed within 5-7 years
- D Should be addressed within 8-10 years

These suggestions address only concerns with the condition of the facilities. This includes construction issues (e.g., ceilings, masonry, windows), code related issues (e.g., fire sprinklers, ADA compliance), mechanical issues (e.g., plumbing, HVAC), and electrical issues (power, lighting, systems, technology). The full list of suggested repairs by building is provided in Appendix 1. The costs of suggested repairs and upgrades for each building are shown in Table 4. (Note that these are based on 2021 estimates.) These are not costs for new buildings, nor for addressing shortcomings in schools' abilities to meet modern curricular needs, nor for addressing capacity concerns, but only for repairing core problems with the condition of existing facilities.

Table 4: Summary of Costs for Condition Repairs to Grinnell-Newburg Facilities[15]

School	Cost for all suggested repairs (in millions)	Cost only for repairs of priority level A and B (in millions)
Bailey Park	$4.4 - $5.1	$4.275 - $4.965
Fairview	$4.25 - $5	$3.73 - $4.365
Davis	$4.2 - $5	$3.49 - $4.185
Middle School	$10.7 - $12.7	$9.065 - $10.89
High School	$14.6 - $16.9	$11.85 - $13.805
Total Project Estimate	$38.2 - $44.7	$32.4 - $38.2

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[14] Note that these are only for those concerns that fall under "condition," and do not include assessed issues related to space needs for a modern curriculum or capacity concerns.

[15] "Facilities Assessment Report…," pp.15-16.

District Efforts to Raise Funds for Building Improvements

The Grinnell-Newburg School District last passed a bond levy in 2005, when it raised $9 million between the bond and community donations to expand Grinnell High School, adding classrooms, an auditorium and athletic facilities.[16] Since that time, it has failed to pass three bond votes as well as a vote to increase the Physical Plant & Equipment Levy (PPEL).

In 2015, the school district proposed replacing Bailey Park, Fairview, and Davis with a new preschool-G5, as well as replacing the middle school with a G6-8 on a former Iowa telecom building site purchased by the school. The total proposed budget was $42 million, with 67% ($28 million) to be paid from the bond, and $14 million from Iowa's SAVE (Secure an Advanced Vision for Education) sales tax funds. The bond measure would have increased property taxes by of $0.49 per $1000 in net taxable property value. The voter turnout was 35% and the measure gained only 41.5% of the vote, while a 60% supermajority was required to pass.[17]

In 2018, the district again proposed consolidating the three elementary schools (Bailey Park, Fairview, and Davis) into a single school at a new site, as well as refurbishing and doing maintenance on the high school and middle school buildings. The superintendent at the time highlighted the benefits of consolidating the elementary schools, as well as noting that none of the school buildings had sufficient storm shelters or could safely account for and track visitors. Additionally, expensive updates were needed to a range of systems, including replacement of the HVAC systems in the middle school and high school.[18]

There was also a strong campaign against the bond. The proposed site for the consolidated elementary school was formerly operated by a plastics manufacturing business with a history of improperly disposing of wastes. It had undergone 25 years of remediation and been tested in preparation for the proposal.[19] Key organizers raised concerns that testing may have been insufficient. They also questioned whether new buildings were necessary giving declining enrollments and the possibility of updates to existing buildings, suggested that the total costs would exceed those stated, noted that the proposal would mean the loss of historical buildings and neighborhood schools, and were concerned about the impact of tax and rent increases.[20]

The bond levy was held in February and proposed $60 million over 24 years, which would have resulted in a tax increase of $2.60 per 1,000 of assessed taxable residential value. The voter turnout was 39% and

[16] Iowa Capital Dispatch. May 2024. Spindler-Krage, Zach. "Inside a rural Iowa school district's fight to save public education" https://iowacapitaldispatch.com/2024/05/04/inside-a-rural-iowa-school-districts-fight-to-save-public-education/

[17] Newton News. October 2015. W, Jason. "NCSD bond proponents, opponents might look to Grinnell as example: vote in $28 million bond in April ended in defeat" https://www.newtondailynews.com/2015/10/20/ncsd-bond-proponents-opponents-might-look-to-grinnell-as-example/atkzzks/

[18] The Scarlet and Black. August 2018. Wray, Chloe. "School Bond Vote Sparks Controversy" https://thesandb.com/28586/article/school-bond-vote-sparks-controversy/

[19] ATC Group Services. 2018 "Limited Site Investigation: former RC industries – prepared for Grinnell Newburg Community School District"

[20] A Dozen Reasons to Vote No on the School Bond Referendum. https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=951435595028546&set=a.378328772339234&locale=pl_PL

52% voted in favor, falling short of the 60% threshold.[21] In September, a special election was held to try to pass the bond levy again but failed with only 43% in favor.[22]

In March of 2023, a special election included a PPEL Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (Public Measure A). The proposal was to redistribute the revenue of property taxes ($0.67/ $1000 of assessed property value over a period of 3 years) resulting in no extra cost to taxpayers. Levy funds would be used for school infrastructure improvements and repairs. While PPEL votes regularly pass, this was rejected by six votes. Some felt that this was due to unclear language in the proposition, leaving some unclear on the nature of the vote.[23] In November, the district passed a tax levy renewal (public measure SF) to support Grinnell-Newburg Community School District building repairs and acquisitions.[24]

Recent Changes of Note in the District
In 2023 the superintendent resigned, and in February of 2024, the school system was unsuccessful in a search to hire a permanent replacement.[25] In April of 2024, the school board announced budget cuts of nearly $1 million for the 2024-25 school year. Similar or greater budget cuts are anticipated for the succeeding year.[26]

How do Grinnell-Newburg Schools' Compare to Its Peers?
The Facilities Evaluation Report, which is summarized above includes comparisons to many of Grinnell's neighboring school districts, of reasonably comparable sizes, in its assessment. Tables showing how Grinnell schools compare to the peers selected for the Build a Better Grinnell project (Decorah, Fairfield, Pella and Waverly) in is provided in Appendix 2.

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[21] The Scarlet and Black. August 2018. Wray, Chloe. "School Bond Vote Sparks Controversy" https://thesandb.com/28586/article/school-bond-vote-sparks-controversy/
[22] https://poweshiekcounty.iowa.gov/elections/info/special_grinnellnewburg_school_bond_2018_09_11/
[23] Scarlet and Black. April 2023. Baek, Ashley. "Voters deny PPEL proposition due to unclear language" https://thesandb.com/42561/article/voters-deny-ppel-proposition-due-to-unclear-language/
[24] https://poweshiekcounty.iowa.gov/elections/past/2021/
[25] Scarlet & Black. March 2024. Baker, Nina. "Nearly $1 Million in budget cuts planned for Grinnell-Newburg Schools" https://thesandb.com/46292/article/nearly-1-million-in-budget-cuts-planned-for-grinnell-newburg-schools/
[26] Iowa Capital Dispatch. May 2024. Spindler-Krage, Zach. "Inside a rural Iowa school district's fight to save public education" https://iowacapitaldispatch.com/2024/05/04/inside-a-rural-iowa-school-districts-fight-to-save-public-education/

Community Input: Perspectives on Buildings & Infrastructure

This section of the report details the input collected from members of the community through community sessions (listening sessions, focus groups, community hosted discussions), the open-ended visioning survey, the prioritization survey, interviews, and archival data. The information shared here does not represent the views of the researchers or the Build a Better Grinnell Project steering committee. Nor are we trying to be arbiters of what belongs or doesn't or what is true or not. We are presenting experiences and views held by participants in this study.

The core of this section comes from the community sessions, where we specifically asked participants to talk in detail about their concerns with the school district's buildings and infrastructure, how they are impacted by their concerns, who they feel is most affected, why they think these problems exist, the obstacles they anticipate in addressing them, their ideas for addressing the situation, who should be involved, and what they see as the community's strengths and assets. We also include all relevant information from the initial visioning survey, but that data is mostly limited to the nature of the problem and is often vague (e.g., fix the schools), so it does not consistently appear throughout sections below. Given the amount public comment related to the school bond elections, archival data was very useful, particularly to represent perspectives of those opposing the proposals underlying the school bonds, as those views were not well represented in the community sessions. Input available from interviews is also included.

The Concern for School Buildings and Infrastructure

In our initial open-ended Visions of Grinnell survey, 106 surveys (about 17%) identified improving school buildings and infrastructure as a key need. Most of these referred to a need for new buildings (69) or passing the school bond (23). Another 59 surveys identified a need for more investment in the schools but were not clear if this related to educational programming, staff, the buildings and infrastructure, or some other concern, so those responses were categorized under miscellaneous. Both *improve K-12 educational* programming and *improve K-12 buildings and infrastructure* moved through as options in the prioritization survey.

Improve K-12 buildings and infrastructure was ranked as the third priority for the community. *Improve K-12 education programming* was ranked ninth of 46 options. In community sessions, many saw these issues as difficult to separate, noting that the ability to provide 21st century programming relied on improvements to the buildings and infrastructure.

A concern for Grinnell's school buildings and infrastructure was raised in seven key stakeholder interviews, only two of which were representatives of the school system.

What Is the Nature of the Problem?

In our Visions of Grinnell survey and interviews, we used several questions to help identify what things people would like to see changed in Grinnell (e.g., what things have frustrated you, and what changes would you like to see). In community sessions and interviews specifically focused on the issue, we asked participants to discuss what they see as the "nature of the problem" (e.g., why do you feel that school buildings and infrastructure should be a priority issue, and what are your specific concerns). Below are the general areas of concern that were shared.

1) The buildings are outdated and have a broad range of problems.
A concern for age and condition of schools was raised in 7 interviews and all 7 sessions. This was also one of the top issues raised in the first community survey. Out of approximately 600 surveys, 34 identified the state of the schools or the failure of the school bond as something that frustrates them. In the question asking what one would do with unlimited funding, 69 surveys (over 10% of surveys) identified either new schools or school infrastructure improvements.
   a) Specific concerns identified with the schools included the following.
      i) Schools are falling apart.
      ii) Schools are not designed for current educational best practices. This applies to both classrooms and general use areas.
      iii) Pick-up and drop-off areas were not designed to manage the number of students/families that currently use them and have become a safety concern.
      iv) School entry design does not effectively control entry to the building or support current best practices for safe schools. This was particularly noted for the middle school, where the entrance is not visible from the office.
      v) Lack of spaces for kids who need to be removed from class to defuse and work through emotions.
      vi) Driveway and parking lots in poor condition.
      vii) Poor energy efficiency.
      viii) Concerns specific to Davis.
         (1) Some classrooms have only one outlet.
         (2) Some classrooms where windows don't open.
         (3) There are extension cords everywhere to keep everything powered.
         (4) The HVAC system at Davis is old and many parts are no longer available to fix it.
         (5) Drinking fountains, toilets, and sinks that don't work or leak.
      ix) There are multiple concerns at the Middle school.
         (1) Poor lighting and lack of windows in classrooms ("feels like a bunker").
         (2) Roof, parking, cafeteria.
         (3) HVAC doesn't work well. One room is freezing, one room is too hot.
         (4) To enter some classrooms, you have to walk through another active classrooms, disrupting the class and embarrassing students that have to enter or leave.
         (5) Poor cell phone coverage, Wi-Fi, and difficulty using radios during the police active shooter role play, possibly due to metal walls. One participant related how kids were unable to complete planed MAP testing one day due to Wi-Fi problems.
         (6) Insufficient gym space

   b) The most urgent needs were identified as the middle school and the elementary schools.
      i) In 5 sessions, there was consensus that the biggest issues were with the Middle School.
      ii) Five sessions also focused on the elementary schools as an urgent need, particularly Davis. Former Superintendent Stutz also noted that Davis was "not going to make it much longer".
      iii) These were also the two most commonly identified concerns in surveys. Under "frustrations," only the middle school and elementary schools were specifically mentioned (2 responses each). For the "unlimited funding" question, 14 respondents specifically mentioned the elementary schools, and 14 the middle school. Only 2 mentioned the high school building, while 2 mentioned high school athletic facilities.

c) Some participants made specific comparisons to other towns. In 4 sessions, participants pointed out that other school districts have been able to get this done and how much nicer facilities are in other districts that they visit. Most had traveled as part school events (e.g., sports, band) and noted that their own children had commented on how nice facilities were there. Nine surveys also made note that other communities have nicer facilities. Specific other locations identified (any source) included the following.
   i) Tama is building a brand-new middle school.
   ii) Belle Plaine.
   iii) Newton (multiple sessions and surveys)
   iv) Knoxville
   v) Oskaloosa's new a K-5 elementary school.
   vi) Norwalk
   vii) DCG
   viii) Pella
   ix) Clear Creek Amana (*a beautiful school system*)
   x) Decorah.
   xi) BGM

2) There are Too Many Schools.
Participants noted that there are too many schools (6/7 sessions). For most, the concern was on having three elementary schools (5/7 sessions). Less detail is clear from surveys, but of the 14 responses specifically noting elementary schools for the "unlimited funds" question, 10 suggested consolidating.

What are the Impacts or Consequences?
We asked participants in community sessions how they or their families are impacted by these concerns and what they see as the impacts on the broader community. Some responses to surveys and interviews also provided related input.

Consequences were addressed primarily in relation to the two core issues raised: 1) schools being outdated, and 2) having too many schools. Impacts were not typically addressed in surveys, but where these were noted, they are included below. Part of the point of community sessions was to gain a better understanding of the basic issues identified in surveys.

1) Budget Inefficiencies.
Participants noted that the costs of maintaining so many schools, many of which are quite old, is expensive (5/7 sessions).
   a) Many noted that multiple schools require multiple sets of administration, support staff, and materials related to a range of education needs.
   b) Bussing is also more time consuming and costly. Most addressed this in relation to the three elementary schools.
   c) Many also noted that the costs to continue to update are high. The middle school (because of the nature of its construction) and Davis (because of its age) were particularly identified as difficult and costly to keep updating. Energy costs are high as existing energy systems can only be updated so much and buildings were not constructed with energy efficiency in mind.

d) Repairs are often more complicated and time consuming (another cost).
   i) In several sessions, participants noted that parts for repairs for some equipment at Davis are no longer available.
   ii) An individual familiar with technology at the middle school noted that nature of the building (e.g., metal walls, drop ceilings) has made Wi-Fi and other updates very difficult.
e) Participants in 2 sessions and 1 survey worried that whatever large project happens is only going to get more expensive the longer the district waits.
f) One survey was concerned about the wasted expense of an architect before community consensus was reached.

2) Safety.
Participants stressed safety concerns for children in current buildings (5/7 sessions, 1 survey). These related to the following issues.
   a) The difficulty of communication (e.g., cell-phone service, wi-fi, walkie-talkies) in the middle school which can make responding to an emergency more difficult.
   b) The lack of a clear control area for entering most buildings (but particularly in the middle school).
   c) The lack of enough rooms for children with behavioral issues who are acting out.
   d) Traffic through drop-off areas.

3) Impacts on Education.
Many also discussed the impacts on education (considerable discussion in 4/7 sessions, 2 surveys).
   a) Many noted that students learn differently than they used to, and the kinds of spaces to support that learning are different as well. This generally applied to all of the buildings, though the elementary and middle school were the higher concerns.
   b) Physical spaces that support students with disabilities was also identified as a concern.
   c) Some noted (including a staff member) that staff having to move around between three elementary schools can lead to lost learning opportunities for children and inequities between schools (e.g., different levels of collaboration, different resources available). Having three elementary schools also inhibits collaboration between teachers that can support student learning.
   d) At the middle school:
      i) Wi-Fi difficulties can inhibit learning,
      ii) children having to enter and leave classes through other classrooms can be distracting,
      iii) lack of natural lighting in some classrooms can make it a place kids just don't want to be.

4) Hurts Community Development.
Participants noted that the failure to update the schools is bad for the community as a whole (6/7 sessions).
   a) It might send a message that the community doesn't value education.
   b) Most noted that it negatively affects attracting people to Grinnell, which affects the workforce and community development. This was also highlighted in surveys. Twelve respondents identified the state of the school buildings or the failure to pass a bond as a reason that they have considered leaving the town. Six respondents who currently commute, identified improved school infrastructure as something that would make them consider moving to town. Two HR managers also noted this as a key issue. One participant commented that asking about the schools is often one of the first questions posed to real estate agents.
   c) Several session participants also noted that the future of the community depends on having students well prepared to be future workers and leaders in the town, which benefits from a strong school system.

5)   Staff (and some students) Having to Move Between Buildings.
Participants noted that having multiple schools (particularly three elementary schools) mean that some staff have to travel daily between the schools (e.g., literacy support, TAG teachers, behavioral interventionist), which inhibits their ability to connect regularly with teachers of the students they are supporting and to participate in some meetings at the schools. Some children also travel between schools to receive support or attend distinct classes (4/7 sessions).

6)   Teacher Retention.
Participants were concerned that Grinnell's outdated buildings would hurt its ability to recruit and retain teachers (3/7 sessions, 2 surveys). Some pointed out recent difficulties hiring for specific positions, or positions that remained open.

7)   Too Many Transitions for Kids.
Participants who commented on having too many schools noted that a primary concern is that kids have to transition too frequently, which can be emotionally challenging and affect learning retention (3/7 sessions). One pointed out that this impact could be seen on test scores of the incoming class at a new building that were examined by one of the task forces.

8)   Not Enough Room for Programs and Enrichment.
Some participants noted that at the middle school and elementary schools, there is not enough room to support some enrichment and other programs. More space could also serve all sorts of programs in the broader community (2/7 sessions).

Who is Most Affected?
As noted above, research participants saw this issue primarily impacting children's education and safety. Implicit in many responses were the impacts on parents. Secondarily, it is seen as affecting the community as a whole as well as teachers and staff.

Overall, the issue was ranked as #3 in the prioritization survey. As Table 5 shows, there was a broad range of demographic groups ranking the issue high, with individuals under 19 (excluding Grinnell College students) ranking it as their #1 concern. Only lower-income respondents, racial and ethnic minorities, and Grinnell College students ranked the issue outside of the top 10.

The priority rankings and a review of survey responses also suggest that the concern for K-12 buildings and infrastructure cuts across other key divisions in community such as the rural/urban divide (rural respondents ranked the issue #3) and the town/gown divide. In surveys, there were individuals calling for new school buildings who praised the role of the college as well as individuals who criticized it.

Table 5: Ranking of *Improve K-12 Buildings and Infrastructure* by Demographic Group

Priority Ranking	Demographic Group
#1	Under 19 Years of Age, excluding Grinnell College (GC) students (N=43)
#2	Aged 26-45 (N=301)
#2	Women aged 19-45, excluding GC students (N=222)
#3	Under age 25, excluding GC students (N=76)
#3	Men aged 19-55, excluding GC Students (N=156)
#3	All respondents identifying as rural. N=121
#5	Aged 66 and over (N=153)
#6	Commuters, excluding those living in Grinnell's rural outskirts (N=72)
#11	Lower income[27] excluding GC students (N=102)
#27	Racial & ethnic minorities[28], excluding GC students (N=61)
#36	Grinnell College students (N=388)[29]

Is the Problem Getting Better or Worse?

Many praised custodians and building crews for keeping the buildings running. Improvements to the high school were seen as a strength. But in all sessions, the general sense was that these issues were only becoming more complicated, more expensive, and exacerbating related problems.

One aspect that was seen as potentially getting better and was discussed in multiple sessions was the possibility to bring the community together to solve the problem. This is due to a new school board with a greater diversity of representation of community views, as well as with a new (anticipated) superintendent who was not involved with past issues that had created distrust among the community.

Causes: Why Do these Problems Exist? What Obstacles do You See to Addressing Them?

In every community session, as well as interviews focused on the core issue, we asked questions to get at perceptions of underlying causes. These included asking why the issue exists for the community, why it has not been resolved, what difficulties individuals have in resolving the issue or alleviating its impacts for themselves or their family, and what they view as the likely obstacles in addressing the concerns. Focusing on underlying causes can be one strategy to resolve a problem.

Participants are experts in their own experiences and likely have a good understanding of the obstacles that exist for them personally to alleviating or resolving a problem. Most are not necessarily experts on the issue as a whole and may not be aware of broader underlying causes (though some experts did participate in some community sessions, and some of the interviews focused on experts in the relevant field). As a result, many participants may be speculating on broader causes. At the same time, non-experts may have valuable insights on the obstacles that exist to addressing a problem in the community, and there is often a "wisdom of the crowd" or shared cultural knowledge on how things work. Even when causes and obstacles perceived by

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[27] Household income under $25,000, or $25,000-$50,000 in households of 2+, or $50,000-$75,000 in households of 6+.

[28] Identifying with one or more race/ethnic categories other than White, as well as those identifying as being of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin

[29] While 388 Grinnell college students participated in the prioritization survey, each vote counted as one-third of a vote (explained in methods) in determining the ranking by all respondents including the college students.

community members reflect misunderstandings or misinformation, these can be valuable for decision makers as they may reflect opportunities for education. Those misunderstandings may also present obstacles themselves to the feasibility of various options. For example, if community members don't think that solutions are getting at the right problem or causes, they may be less likely to be supportive and the solution may be less likely to succeed.

In addressing the causes, some addressed issues discussed under nature of the problem and consequences. For example, buildings are a problem because they are old and best practices have changed as well as technology, energy efficiency, etc. Mostly, however, participants focused on why nothing has been done, and particularly why the bond measures have failed.

It should be noted that in the listening sessions, many of the perspectives were from individuals who had been in favor of the bonds. Still, a number of key areas of disagreements were also apparent among participants. In order to better represent individuals who had opposed the bond measures, we have also used archival materials, particularly from the Vote No Grinnell Facebook site, created in December 2017 to oppose the two 2018 bond referendums.

1) Distrust.
   a) In community sessions, many pointed out that there has been distrust by a large part of the community of the previous two school district administrations and some of the main proponents of the bond proposals.
      i) The purchase of a lot by the first administration with an old Iowa Telecom building on it, only to be subsequently sold at a serious discount after the first bond failure, was perceived by some as a "bait and switch."
      ii) The second administration did not "gel" with a large part of the community, and the bond issue became largely politicized.
      iii) Some also believe that the proposals may have been perceived as "too influenced" by Grinnell College, adding an element of the town/gown divide into the distrust.
   b) These issues are clearly reflected on the Vote No Grinnell Facebook page as well.[30]
      i) Multiple posts explicitly addressed that the two superintendents and the school board had lost the trust with purchases of lands and buildings without first gaining community support.
      ii) Posters also felt that the administration was not listening in good faith to their concerns.
      iii) Additional concerns/beliefs raised included the following.
         (1) The previous superintendent failed to invest in buildings in order for them to degrade enough to make the case for new buildings.
         (2) The superintendent was not being honest on costs.
         (3) The superintendent was actively recruiting Grinnell College students to vote.
         (4) The college was neglecting to share perspectives of the opposition.

2) Politicization.
While some of the concerns addressed under distrust largely represent a politicization of the issue, some believe that, beyond this, broader political debates over schools as well as local political differences in the community have gotten mixed in with the debate over the building of new schools in Grinnell, exacerbating distrust.

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[30] "Vote No Grinnell," Facebook, Accessed May 24, 2024, https://www.facebook.com/Votenogrinnell/?locale=pl_PL.

3) Communication.

In most sessions, participants noted that in the past bond proposals, there was a failure to effectively connect with enough people, and in every session, suggestions included ways to communicate more effectively and build support (discussed below under solutions).

    a) Several individuals involved with organizing the previous bond issues noted that they felt like they had done just about everything that they could to involve and inform people. Yet, many in the sessions – particularly after listening to individuals involved with the schools share their concerns – felt that the failure to address the situation *must* reflect a failure to make the situation and all its impacts sufficiently understood.

    b) Some felt that if those in opposition had just spent a couple days in some of the schools to experience the concerns firsthand, a bond would have passed.

    c) Some noted that a big part of the problem is just getting people's attention or getting them to show up to information sessions so that you can share the information, noting that for multiple information sessions only a few people attended.

    d) Some noted that when people did show up, they often admitted to learning things they were unaware of.

    e) One participant noted having spoken to several who attended sessions but did not feel that they were being heard and were turned off by the messaging (e.g., suggesting that a No vote meant they didn't care about kids) and the minimization of concerns (e.g., suggesting that no one should be concerned about the small tax increase even though people are struggling to pay their utilities).

4) People Don't Want to Lose the Current Facilities.

Another main obstacle perceived by participants is that many are content with key aspects of the status quo that would have been disrupted by the bond measures.

    a) Some point to Grinnell's strong educational programs and state ranking and see this as evidence, or believe that it is taken as evidence, that the schools are sufficiently supporting education, or at least that the concerns do not require the level of change proposed by the bonds.

    b) Others like the idea of local community schools as represented by three elementary schools. These schools are part of the history and connect to the identity of the town, and some don't want this to change. The importance of neighborhood schools and historic buildings was highlighted in the Vote No campaign.

    c) Participants also thought that some may have attended the schools and feel nostalgic or feel that they served their purpose well at that time and will serve Grinnell's children now.

5) Disagreements over the Plans.

    a) Some of those who voted no highlighted that they are not opposed to improving the schools but believed that the plan put forward was unnecessary to address concerns with the schools. Some further believed that the level of concerns had been manufactured by a failure to invest regularly over time.[31]

    b) There are disagreements over whether or how much consolidation should be done both by those who opposed and those who supported the bonds.

       i) In the community sessions, while there seemed to be consensus in favor of *some* kind of major new school project, not everyone agreed on what this might look like.

       ii) Most were in favor of pulling all of the elementary schools together.

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[31] "Vote No Grinnell…."

iii) A smaller group would support moving to two or even a single building.

iv) Some were concerned with having 5th graders in with 8th graders.

c) Even if some level of agreement can be reached on how many buildings and what grade levels they will contain, another significant obstacle identified to passing a bond (or any future project) concerns where a new school or schools would go.

i) In a previous bond, there were concerns over the placement of a consolidated school at an old industrial location (noted in sessions and on Vote no Grinnell Facebook page).

ii) In the listening sessions, even among those who agreed with new schools, or a consolidated school of some kind, there was no consensus on a location, and most recognized this could be contentious. Some felt this would need to be decided before trying to pass another bond.

6) Concern for Declining Enrollments.

a) Another issue raised in several sessions and the Vote No campaign was that some people are concerned about investing a lot of money into the school systems while enrollments are declining.

b) Others noted Grinnell needs to grow the community, but at the same time, it is hard to do that without attractive schools.

c) There was also a concern that failure to invest in schools could lead to more families seeking vouchers, which would further impact enrollments.

7) Don't see the Benefit.

In a couple sessions, participants suggested that part of the problem is that people don't sufficiently see how the issues with the school affect them, particularly if they don't have children in the system.

8) Concern for Increase in Taxes.

a) In several sessions, participants felt that any effort to raise taxes was going to meet resistance from a portion of the community, particularly if they did not have children at the school, if they feel content with the current school system, or if they feel disconnected from the system.

b) The tax increase was raised as a concern in the Vote No campaign, along with a concern that this would increase rental prices. Some felt that this concern is exacerbated by their perception that the college does not pay taxes and yet is a core supporter of the proposal.

c) One participant noted that some people she had spoken with who opposed the last bond measure were put off that the proponents would not take their concerns for paying more taxes while struggling to pay bills seriously.

9) Other Concerns or Obstacles.

a) Davis can't just continue to be patched.

b) Davis is a historic building that some don't want to see lost.

c) Some will be concerned about job losses to come with consolidation.

d) Passing anything by supermajority is difficult.

e) The overall cost was larger than many expected. These are only likely to get larger.

Solutions: What Could be Done to Resolve the Problem or Alleviate Their Impacts
The following are suggestions that were provided in community sessions, interviews, or the first visioning survey. We also include an appendix on strategies and solutions tried elsewhere that may be useful in considering strategies. The solutions presented in this document do not reflect the views of the research team or the Build a Better Grinnell steering committee.

As we addressed in the background and scope section, we caution those reviewing the document not to assume that the most suggested solutions are necessarily the "best" or most likely to succeed. This is not intended as a comprehensive list. These are the range of ideas that came up in our community-wide "brainstorming sessions." Those making use of this document may have additional ideas.

There appears to be a high degree of support in the community (including constituents from the Vote No campaign) that schools need some degree of improvements. Whether that involves repairs or new buildings, the levels of consolidation that might happen if any, and where new buildings, if any, might go are all more contentious.

As noted above, in our community sessions, the key issues identified were that there are too many schools, particularly the elementary schools, that Davis is old and cannot continue to simply be fixed, and the middle school has major issues that inhibit education and are difficult to fix.

1) New Schools. Or Improvements to Schools.
    a) In the community sessions, there was consensus that new buildings and infrastructure were necessary, but less agreement on how many. The most common suggestion was to consolidate the elementary schools and build a new middle school (basically the proposal of the last bond vote). There were also proponents of moving to two schools, or even one.
    b) In the surveys, under the question of what improvements would you make if funds were unlimited, 10 of 14 responses that had specifically identified a need for improvements to the elementary schools suggested consolidation, most suggesting a single K-5 building. Yet two also specifically suggested updates to the *existing* buildings, and as some noted on this question, funds are not actually unlimited, so cost is a factor. For the same question, of 13 responses that specifically mentioned a concern with the middle school, 8 suggested a new middle school, while five suggested remodeling or updating.
    c) On the Vote No Grinnell Facebook page generated to oppose the 2018 bond proposal, the site's moderator rejected that the opposition was against school improvements, noting *"The community will readily support a plan to improve schools, if it is reasonable."*
    d) In a couple sessions, participants noted that if consolidation was the goal, planners should look for ideas to repurpose Davis so that the historic building could be maintained in the community.

2) Communication and Trust Building.
    a) Distrust and communication failures were identified as key issues in the failure of the last three failed bond votes. Many of those who supported the bonds believe that the opposition simply does not understand the issue. Many of those who opposed the bonds feel that proponents were not listening in good faith to their concerns.
    b) Participants in every session had suggestions for what and how to communicate more effectively in a way that builds trust in the community. Most felt that if more people could be brought to understand the issues with the schools and how it affects them, there would be more support for a solution.

    c) Suggestions for <u>what</u> needs to be communicated included the following.
- i) Educate the public on the range of building needs and consequences noted above. Share the information broadly through multiple media.
- ii) Educate the public on the nature of school budgets and funding so that they will understand the need for a bond.
- iii) Talk with voters who are specifically not parents to build understanding of how school improvements could benefit or affect them and the community.
- iv) Educate the public on the connection between the school facilities and community welfare and development, including the ability to attract workers & businesses, and the value of school facilities to having space for community functions.

    d) <u>How</u> to structure communication.
- i) Build a marketing campaign to get the word out.
- ii) Use community events, church meetings, clubs, etc. to get the word out.
- iii) Promote or facilitate peer-to-peer sharing so people are learning from those they know and trust.
- iv) Use existing organizations and social networks to get the word out.
- v) Figure out what people's concerns are and build the "story" to address these.
- vi) Hear from kids and teachers. Collect testimonials to share. Share personal stories.
- vii) Have the messaging be positive, avoid divisiveness.
- viii) Recruit long-term residents and local "influencers" to share information.

    e) Most suggestions were built around providing key information and communicating effectively with those who may have opposed the previous bonds in order to be sure that information was presented accurately and persuasively. In some sessions, participants also noted the importance of having previous opponents feel ownership of any new plan and recognized that this comes when their input is reflected in the plan itself.

3) <u>Think about the Issue Politically.</u>

One participant who had been involved in the bond proposal that led to the creation of the middle school in the late 1970s noted that the key to success is not just about educating the "opposition" on what some have decided needs to be done, but about working across interests to come up with politically feasible solutions. The issue needs to be thought about politically.

4) <u>Other Suggestions</u>.
    a) Lobby to change voting rules to a simple majority.
    b) Fundraise in the community to significantly diminish the necessary bond amount.
    c) Host more events at the high school, which would help people see the value of schools to the local economy.
    d) Involve the broader community more in school events to build community pride and support for schools.

Who Should Be Involved?
In every session, participants were asked who should be at the table or involved in decision making.

1) As reflected by the suggestions above regarding communication, there was broad recognition that the entire community needs to be involved, particularly given the history of distrust and the need to achieve 60% of the vote to pass a bond measure.

2) More specific suggestions included the following.
   a) The school board collectively, particularly since it now represents a more diverse set of interests than during past efforts (e.g., show a united front, build a consensus).
   b) Community businesses, who need to make it clear that this is important to them.
   c) The Chamber of Commerce, which has an interest in community development.
   d) School staff (teachers, maintenance crew), who have experience in the buildings and are often highly regarded in the community.
   e) Students, who are largely supported in the community.
   f) Local influencers across the social/political spectrum.
   g) Community organizations like Rotary.

What are Grinnell's Strengths Concerning School Buildings and Infrastructure?
In community sessions and interviews focused on the topic, we asked participants what they believe are the strengths or assets related to the issue. In the initial visioning survey and in community interviews we also asked community members more generally what they feel are strengths and things that improve their quality of life in the community.

1) <u>Good Schools</u>.
In both listening sessions and our initial open-ended survey, many identified the quality of education and the school system as a community strength.
   a) In the Visions of Grinnell Survey for the question what makes you glad to live in Grinnell, 40 responses, or 6.5% of the surveys identified the schools/public education in some way.
   b) For the question of what has the greatest positive impact on your quality of life, 54 responses (8.4% of surveys) identified some aspect of the Grinnell-Newburg school system. Six of these specifically referred to the high school (none specifically mentioned other schools).

2) <u>Maintenance staff.</u>
In listening sessions, a handful of participants credited maintenance staff as a strength for their ability to adapt and keep things running for the benefit of students despite the age and various problems with buildings.

3) <u>Teachers.</u>
Multiple listening sessions identified teachers as a strength in terms of education quality, and as an asset in terms of being able to share their experiences with the schools and help the public to understand needs.

4) <u>The value of education.</u>
In the Visions of Grinnell survey, 34 surveys (approx. 5.5%) identified valuing education as a core value of the community.

5) <u>The High School</u>.
In listening sessions and some surveys, the High School was highlighted as a strength.
   a) Participants noted that there are several new additions at the high school, and that the field facilities are new.
   b) Relative to the middle and elementary schools, it was noted as the best of the lot.
   c) Some felt that it could still use a major overhaul, while others felt that any internal fixes could be relatively minor.

6) <u>The School Board.</u>
While some noted that the recent school board elections were quite contentious, the new composition of the board was also viewed as a potential strength. By more broadly representing the community, some feel like this puts the school in a better position to build trust and support for infrastructure projects.

7) <u>Local Foundation and Business Support.</u>
In some sessions and multiple interviews, participants noted that Grinnell's foundations and businesses are an asset to the schools. Funding support is provided from Grinnell College, Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance, and the Ahrens Park Foundation, among others. The Grinnell-Newburg School Foundation also collaborates to support the school.

8) <u>Other Strengths or Assets Noted</u>.
   a) The Community Education Cooperative, a group of community organizations focused on continuing education that meets monthly.
   b) The police, fire, emergency management, and hospital all collaborate with the schools.
   c) LINK, providing after school and summer programming.
   d) Newer high school furniture more conducive to modern teaching styles.
   e) Grinnell Mutual Building as a potential site.
   f) New video equipment and audio amplification in middle school.

Summary & Discussion

The Grinnell-Newburg public school system is clearly an asset to the community. Its education system is highly ranked in the state and many community members appreciate and take pride in the education that it provides.

However, most of the schools are nearing or past the average lifespan for a school. Administration and staff have done well to prolong the life of the buildings and teachers have made the most out of dated spaces, but there are significant issues in most buildings. According to the 2021 professional facilities assessment, the three elementary schools and the middle school all have significant concerns in relation to condition, curriculum, or capacity, and none are assessed to be generally positive in these areas. To address only recommended condition upgrades necessary within a four-year time period would cost $32.4-$38.2 million across all buildings.

The administration has attempted and failed to pass two bonds over three votes since 2015. The most recent would have cost $60 million to consolidate the three elementary schools into a new building and undergo renovations on the middle and high schools.

The main concern shared by members of the community is that the buildings are old or outdated. Participants are concerned that this reflects badly on the community as many of Grinnell's peers and neighbors seem able to update their schools. The middle school and elementary schools were identified as most problematic. The schools were not designed for modern teaching methods, which inhibits best practices in education. They do not meet current safety standards, particularly in terms of controlling entry. They are expensive and ever more difficult to maintain, which should be an increasing concern given recent budget cutbacks for the district. They make attracting teachers and the broader workforce to Grinnell more difficult, which has a negative impact on the schools and community development.

A second key concern is that there are too many schools. While there was not a consensus on how many there should be, many session participants felt that three elementary schools are too many. It leads to cost inefficiencies, which again is increasingly important given budget cutbacks. It requires some staff to travel daily between buildings and inhibits teachers' abilities to coordinate, which can lead to learning inequities across schools. It also creates at least three distinct transitions for students, each of which can be difficult and negatively affect learning.

It is unclear how popular elementary school consolidation is in the broader community. The previous bond votes demonstrated that there is support in the community for neighborhood schools, as reflected by the distinct elementaries, as well as strong connections to some of the buildings. Any effort to consolidate will require addressing the concerns of those who voted against the previous bonds.

The support for improving K-12 buildings and infrastructure is broad and strong. It was ranked as the #3 issue overall despite being ranked #36 by Grinnell College students, who made up about 116 weight adjusted votes. The highest ranking (#1) was provided by individuals under the age of 19 (excluding GC students), likely reflecting a connection to the schools as students or recent graduates, and also persons who would have daily experienced some of the issues of concern. The issue also appears to cut across various typical social divisions in the community.

In discussions sessions, the causes of the problem were discussed primarily in terms of why the community has not been able to undertake necessary upgrades or pass a bond measure. Key reasons include that there are disagreements over whether or how much consolidation should be done, whether new buildings are necessary, and if so where they would go. People also feel connected to the current schools and see that students are getting a good education. The cost was also significant, particularly for those on a limited budget. Most importantly, however, was the distrust and failure of effective communication between interest groups.

Most in the community likely agree that something should be done to address the primary issues with the condition, curriculum, and capacity at the schools. Figuring out what can be done that addresses enough concerns to build a supermajority is going to require communication and trust building. Communication in this context includes active listening and discussion, not just trying to educate or inform. This will be difficult because of the degree to which the issue was politicized and persons on both sides feel resentment. The entire community will need to be involved. As one participant suggested, getting a vote to pass doesn't mean pushing through what any one group views as the "best" solution. It is a political process and will require identifying a good solution that enough people are content with.

On the positive side, there is an ability to "start fresh" with the school board's broader representation of the community and a new superintendent. Additionally, the community seems to care about education and the schools. These are good strengths to build on.

Appendix 1. Suggested Updates and Repairs to Address Facility Condition Concerns From the 2021 Facilities Assessment Report for Grinnell Newburg Community School District[32]

Davis School
- Fix area of water infiltration at north end of gym.
- Tuckpoint necessary masonry walls.
- Add a grease interceptor for the kitchen.
- Add a master mixing valve to the domestic hot water system.
- Piping upgrade to replace the galvanized domestic water pipe.
- Upgrade restrooms / plumbing fixtures to meet ADA requirements.
- Add sprinklers to the remaining areas of the building (1961 classrooms).
- Replace all fan coil units in classrooms and support spaces. The fan coils would consist of a combination of ceiling cassettes, concealed units or floor mounted cabinet units.
- Replace ventilation units on the 3-story portion of the building with energy recovery units (DX / gas heat/ energy recovery wheel).
- Add an energy recovery unit (DX / gas heat/ energy recovery wheel) to serve the 1961 addition classroom spaces.
- Gym HVAC equipment replacement with rooftop units (DX / gas heat).
- Replace air cooled chiller and pumps. Replace 3-way valves to allow for variable speed pumping.
- Add a makeup air unit for the kitchen (DX / gas heat).
- Add a gas solenoid valve for the kitchen equipment.
- Replace all exhaust fans.
- Fire alarm system replacement.
- Emergency lighting replacement.
- Fluorescent lamp fixtures should be replaced/upgraded to LED.
- Replace existing electrical service panelboard.
- Provide access control devices for a secured entrance into the main office. Additional access control devices on the perimeter doors.
- Replace paging/clock/bell-scheduling system at the school.
- Grounding system for the network equipment.
- New data systems for the school.
- Additional cameras on the interior door entrances and the exterior.

Bailey Park School
- Further investigate structural implications of crack in interior CMU wall.
- Tuckpoint masonry façade.
- Replace aluminum clad wood windows.
- Add a backflow preventer to the water service.
- Add a booster pump to address low water pressure issues.
- Replace all galvanized piping.
- Replace the water heater and add a whole building mixing valve and new hot water circ pump.
- Add a grease interceptor for the kitchen.
- Upgrade plumbing fixtures to meet ADA requirements.
- Upgrade the classroom HVAC system to a 4-pipe fan coil system with a hot water boiler and an air-cooled chiller. The fan coils would consist of a combination of ceiling cassettes, concealed units or floor mounted cabinet units. Ventilation would be provided by multiple energy recovery units consisting of DX cooling / gas heat / energy recovery wheels.
- Replace library RTU (DX / gas heat) and back feed the existing ductwork.
- Add an RTU for the gym (DX / gas heat).

- Add a makeup air unit for the kitchen (DX / gas heat).
- Replace all exhaust fans.
- Electric cabinet unit heaters in vestibules.
- Add a gas solenoid valve for the kitchen equipment.
- Add a Johnson Controls system to serve the entire building.
- Replace fire alarm system.
- Replace emergency lighting.
- Replace old branch panelboards.
- Replace lighting with LED fixtures.
- Provide access control devices for a secured entrance into the main office. Additional access control devices on the perimeter doors.
- Replace paging/clock/bell-scheduling system at the school.
- Grounding system for the network equipment.
- New data systems for the school.
- Additional cameras on the interior door entrances and the exterior.

Fairview School
- Replace Aluminum Clad Wood Windows.
- Replace Main Entrance Store Front Plumbing.
- Add a backflow preventer for the domestic water service.
- Add a master mixing valve for the hot water system.
- Piping upgrade to replace the galvanized domestic water pipe.
- Upgrade fixtures to meet ADA requirements.
- Add a grease interceptor for the kitchen.
- Classrooms served by a 4-pipe fan coil system using the existing hot water boilers and a new air-cooled chiller. The fan coils would consist of a combination of ceiling cassettes, concealed units or floor mounted cabinet units.
- Classroom ventilation handled with multiple energy recovery units (DX / gas heat / energy recovery wheel).
- Add an RTU to back feed the overhead ductwork system in the Media Center.
- Add an RTU to serve the gym.
- Add a makeup air unit for the kitchen (DX / gas heat).
- Replace all exhaust fans.
- Add a gas solenoid valve for the kitchen.
- Replace all pneumatic controls and extend the Johnson Controls DDC system.
- Replace Fire Alarm system.
- Replace/upgrade emergency lighting.
- Replace antiquated electrical panels.
- Upgrade lighting to LED Technology.
- Provide access control devices for a secured entrance into the main office. Additional access control devices on the perimeter doors.
- Replace paging/clock/bell-scheduling system at the school.
- Grounding system for the network equipment.
- New data systems for the school.
- Additional cameras on the interior door entrances and the exterior.

Grinnell Middle School
- Windows need replacement.
- Remove and replace failing insulation and waterproofing system around the perimeter of the building.
- Repair concrete infill in music room.
- Add a backflow preventer for the domestic water service.
- Revise the exterior grease sanitary piping and grease interceptor to resolve drainage issues.
- Add a grease interceptor to serve the FCS classroom.
- Upgrade fixtures to meet ADA requirements.
- Classrooms / support space to be served by a new 4-pipe fan coil unit system. The fan coils would consist of a combination of ceiling cassettes, concealed units or floor mounted cabinet units. Ventilation for this system would be provided by energy recovery units (DX / gas heat/energy recovery wheel).
- The 4-pipe fan coil system would be served by the existing hot water boilers and new air-cooled chillers. The existing heat pump piping loop would be reused for the chilled water side of the system. A new heating water piping loop would be added. Both hydronic systems would be a primary / secondary configuration with VFD's on the secondary loop.
- Replace the existing gym (2) RTU's (DX / gas heat).
- Replace the locker rooms RTU with an energy recovery unit to provide heating / cooling / exhaust and ventilation (DX / gas heat/energy recovery wheel).
- Add a new RTU to serve the Auditorium space to replace the existing heat pumps in this area (DX / gas heat).
- Add a makeup air unit for the kitchen (DX / gas heat).
- Add an exhaust and makeup air system for the FCS classrooms to meet code requirements.
- Add a gas solenoid valve for the main kitchen.
- All new equipment to be on the Johnson Controls Building Automation System.
- Complete fire alarm system replacement
- Replace downlights at building entries.
- Replace cord end for kitchen equipment.
- Add receptacles/floor boxes in cafeteria for serving line and point of sale equipment
- Provide access control devices for a secured entrance into the main office. Additional access control devices on the perimeter doors.
- Provide emergency response two-way radio system for the school.
- Replace paging/clock/bell-scheduling system at the school.
- Grounding system for the network equipment.
- New data systems for the school.
- Provide cellular repeater system for better cell coverage.

Grinnell High School
- Fix and replace windows along east wall of Cafeteria.
- Replace front vestibule glazing.
- Clean and paint areas of efflorescence at gym and auditorium walls.
- Upgrade restrooms / fixtures to meet ADA requirements.
- Add a grease interceptor to serve the kitchen.
- Add a grease interceptor to serve the FCS classroom.
- Replace the galvanized piping in the building.

- Replace the water heater with a higher efficiency system and add a master mixing valve.
- Extend the fire protection system to serve the remainder of the building.
- Add chilled water and heating water systems for the original building. This would include new air-cooled chillers and heating water boilers. New piping would be added and would be installed in the tunnel and overhead. Both hydronic systems would be primary / secondary with VFD's on the secondary loop. Provisions would be made to connect these to the existing systems serving the 2006 addition to allow for system redundancy.
- A 4-pipe fan coil system with dedicated outdoor air systems (DOAS) would be used to serve the classroom, Administration, Cafeteria and support spaces. The fan coils would consist of a combination of ceiling cassettes, concealed units or floor mounted cabinet units. The DOAS systems would reuse the distribution ductwork mains from the existing rooftop units. The DOAS units would include energy recovery wheels, DX cooling and gas heat.
- A new RTU with chilled water heat and heating water would serve the gym in the original building.
- The kitchen would have a makeup air unit (DX / gas heat) added.
- Add an exhaust and makeup air system for the FCS classrooms to meet code requirements.
- All controls would be converted to the DDC system.
- Update fire alarm system for voice coverage throughout.
- Replace remaining dated electrical distribution and branch panelboards.
- Provide access control devices for a secured entrance into the main office. Additional access control devices on the perimeter doors.
- Provide emergency response two-way radio system for the school.
- Replace paging/clock/bell-scheduling system at the school.
- Grounding system for the network equipment.
- New data systems for the school.

	Grinnell	Decorah	Fairfield	Pella	Waverly
Population[32]	9,473	7,578	9,300	10,820	10,561
District	Grinnell-Newburg	Decorah Community	Fairfield Community	Pella Community	Waverly-Shell Rock Community
District Enrollment[33]	1,663	1,655[34]	1,575[35]	2,463[36]	2,335[37]
Student-Teacher Ratio[38]	14:1	14:1	14:1	16:1	14:1
Expenses per Student[39]	$11,939	$12,466	$12,542	$10,427	$11,425
Revenue Sources[40]	4.0% federal, 53.4% state, 42.6% local	3.6% federal, 44.8% state, 51.5% local	5.7% federal, 46.5% state, 47.8% local	3.5% federal, 46.8% state, 49.7% local	4.0% federal, 52.5% state, 43.5% local

[32] "Quick Facts Grinnell city, Iowa; Fairfield city, Iowa; Decorah city, Iowa; Pella city, Iowa; Waverly city, Iowa," United States Census Bureau, Accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/grinnellcityiowa,fairfieldcityiowa,decorahcityiowa,pellacityiowa,waverlycityiowa/PST045223.

[33] "Grinnell-Newburg School District State of the District Administration Presentation."

[34] "Decorah Community School District," US News & World Report, Accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/iowa/districts/decorah-community-school-district-107863.

[35] "Fairfield Community School District," US News & World Report, Accessed July 19, 2024. https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/iowa/districts/fairfield-comm-school-district-101449.

[36] "Pella Community School District," US News & World Report, Accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/iowa/districts/pella-comm-school-district-109954.

[37] "Wavery-Shell Rock Community School District," US News & World Report, Accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/iowa/districts/waverly-shell-rock-comm-school-district-105027.

[38] "K-12 School Districts," US News & World Reports, Accessed July 21, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/districts.

[39] "K-12 School Districts," US News…. Accessed July 21, 2024.

[40] "K-12 School Districts," US News…. Accessed, July 21, 2024.

	Grinnell	Decorah	Fairfield	Pella	Waverly
FY24 Levy Rates (amount paid per $1000 property tax value)[41]	Instr: $0.96 Mgt: $3.26 PPEL: $0.33 VPPEL: $0.51 Debt: $0.00 Total: $14.24	Instr: $0.03 Mgt: $1.42 PPEL: $0.33 VPPEL: $1.34 Debt: $0.64 Total: $12.36	Instr: $0.90 Mgt: $0.45 PPEL: $0.33 VPPEL: $0.67 Debt: $0.00 Total: $10.59	Instr: $0.31 Mgt: $0.57 PPEL: $0.33 VPPEL: $0.67 Debt: $3.60 Total: $14.61	Instr: $0.08 Mgt: $0.63 PPEL: $0.33 VPPEL: $0.0 Debt: $2.70 Total: $12.57
Number of Schools	3 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high school	3 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high school	2 elementary, 1 middle, 1 high school	2 elementary, 1 intermediate, 1 middle, 1 high school	4 elementary, 1 middle, 1 alternative, 1 high school

[41] Instr. refers to instructional support (goes to the school's general fund generally to support educational programming). Mgt refers to a management levy (goes to unemployment benefits, liability insurance and agreements, costs of judgements, certain early retirement benefits). PPEL is the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy, typically set at $.33 (for construction, repairs, transportation equipment). The voted PPEL (VPPEL) is a maximum of $1.34 and lasts for 10 years. Debt refers to Debt Service Levy, approved by voters for up to 20 years to pay for bonds. Other parts of the levy reflected in the totals for this group include: uniform (set at $5.40), additional, and cash reserve. All data in table from "School District Property Tax Rates," Iowans for Tax Relief, Oct 3, 2023, https://itrlocal.org/index.php/2023/10/03/school-district-property-tax-rates/. Descriptions of funds from Iowa Department of Education, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/operation-support/business-finance/levies-funds#physical-plant-amp-equipment-levy

	Grinnell	Decorah	Fairfield	Pella	Waverly
Elementary & Intermediate School Enrollments[42] and 2022 Iowa School Performance Profiles[43]	Fairview Elementary PreK-2nd - 242 students - 58.07 Commendable Bailey Park Elementary K-2nd - 138 students - 58.07 Commendable Davis Elementary 3rd-4th - 229 students - 58.07 Commendable	West Side Elementary - Early Childhood Center PreK-K - 26 students - NA Carrie Lee Elementary 3rd-4th - 194 students - 59.44 Commendable John Cline Elementary K-2nd - 313 students - 59.44 Commendable	Washington Elementary PreK-1st - 298 students - 53.54 Acceptable Pence Elementary 2nd-4th - 316 students - 53.54 Acceptable	Madison Elementary PreK-3rd - 449 students - 62.44 High Performing Lincoln Elementary PreK-3rd - 356 students - 62.44 High Performing Jefferson Intermediate 4th-6th - 521 students - 62.44 High Performing	Shell Rock Elementary PreK-4th - 169 students - 62.32 High Performing West Cedar Elementary K-4th - 227 students - 62.20 High Performing Margaretta Carey Elementary K-4th - 248 students - 61.61 High Performing Southeast Elementary K-4th - 159 students - 54.86 Acceptable
Middle School Enrollments[44] and 2022 Iowa School Performance Profiles[45]	Grinnell Community Middle School 5th-8th - 445 students - 53.55 Acceptable	Decorah Middle School 5th-8th - 478 students - 64.03 High Performing	Fairfield Middle 5th-8th - 460 students - 60.80 High Performing	Pella Middle School 7th-8th - 399 students - 67.25 Exceptional	Waverly-Shell Rock Middle School 5th-8th - 710 students - 59.77 Commendable

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[42] "Grinnell-Newburg School District State of the District Administration Presentation."; "Decorah Community School District," US News….; "Fairfield Community School District," US News….; "Pella Community School District," US News….; "Wavery-Shell Rock Community School District," US News.

[43] "Iowa School Performance Profiles," Iowa Department of Education, Accessed May 27, 2024, https://www.iaschoolperformance.gov/ECP/Home/Index.

[44] "Grinnell-Newburg School District State of the District Administration Presentation."; "Decorah Community School District," US News….; "Fairfield Community School District," US News….; "Pella Community School District," US News….; "Wavery-Shell Rock Community School District," US News.

[45] "Iowa School Performance Profiles," Iowa Department of Education.

	Grinnell	Decorah	Fairfield	Pella	Waverly
High Schools Enrollments[46] and 2022 Iowa School Performance Profiles[47]	Grinnell Community Senior High 9th-12th - 489 students - 55.47 Commendable	Decorah High 9th-12th - 576 students - 63.50 High Performing	Fairfield High 9th-12th - 476 students - 50.71 Acceptable	Pella High School 9th-12th - 764 students - 63.92 High Performing	Greenview Alternative School 9th-12th - 31 students - 62.52 High Performing Waverly-Shell Rock Senior High 9th-12th - 771 students - 62.52 High Performing

[46] "Grinnell-Newburg School District State of the District Administration Presentation."; "Decorah Community School District," US News….; "Fairfield Community School District," US News….; "Pella Community School District," US News….; "Wavery-Shell Rock Community School District," US News.

[47] "Iowa School Performance Profiles," Iowa Department of Education.

	Grinnell	Decorah	Fairfield	Pella	Waverly
Last School Bond/Levy	$60M bond *rejected* September 2018. PPEL proposition redistributing property tax revenue toward school improvements *rejected* in April 2023[48] Continuation of existing PPEL *passed*, Nov. 2023.	$10.5m bond *passed* in 2010 for renovations and PPEL extended for 10 years to raise another $4.4 million[49]	$34 million bond to build new middle school/upgrade high school *rejected* in September 2021[50] March 2024, vote to increase PPEL from $.67 to $1.34 per $1000 taxable valuation for 10 years to take effect 2026.[51]	$40 million bond *passed* November 2021, used to build early childhood center, add middle school classrooms, replace high school HVAC, and renovate sports fields[52]	$31 million bond *passed* March 2021 to fund two new elementary schools[53]

[48] Ashley Baek, "Voters deny PPEL proposition due to unclear language," The Scarlet & Black, April 10, 2023, https://thesandb.com/42561/article/voters-deny-ppel-proposition-due-to-unclear-language/.

[49] "Decorah School District Voters Approve Bond Referendum and PPEL Renewal," Decorah News, Sept. 13, 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20121021041940/http://decorahnews.com/archived-stories/2010/09/7786.html

[50] James Jennings, "Fairfield school district voters reject middle school bond," Sep. 14, 2021, https://www.southeastiowaunion.com/news/fairfield-school-district-voters-reject-middle-school-bond/.

[51] Andy Hallman, "Fairfield voters approve PPEL increase," Southeast Iowa Union, March 6, 2024, https://www.southeastiowaunion.com/news/fairfield-voters-approve-ppel-increase/.

[52] "Facility Planning & Bond Issue," Pella Community School District, Accessed May 27, 2024, https://facilityimprovements.pellaschools.org/faq/; "Official Ballot City/School Election, Mario County, Iowa, https://mintchiplab.marioncountyiowa.gov/assets/marion_county/sample_ballots/20211102_pella_city_ward_2_pella_2pella_community_school_district_15112.pdf.

[53] Michael Howell, "$31 million bond measure approved for Waverly-Shell Rock schools," March 2, 2021, https://cbs2iowa.com/news/local/31-million-bond-measure-approved-for-waverly-shell-rock-schools.

Appendix 3: Policy Options and Strategies from Other Communities and Best Practices

While a number of ideas were provided by local experts and community members, it is also useful to look for inspiration from what other communities with similar needs have done. Below are some policies and case studies with links provided in the footnotes. This is not intended as a comprehensive list, nor does it try to address every facet the concerns raised.

Strategies for Schools to Enhance Communication and Build Consensus

1) "How to Build Consensus for Change in Your School or District"[54]

To build consensus is getting everyone to a point of sufficient agreement so that important decisions can be made and implemented. The value of consensus building is that the solutions reached meet the needs of stakeholders more fully than decisions that simply come down from the top. Consensus building can also bring about unity and solidarity, with members of the community becoming more familiar with each other's wants, needs and perspectives. You will know you have reached a consensus when everyone feels like their opinion matters. Strategies involve identifying stakeholders, being clear n what needs to be decided, using polling to see where participants stand, allowing open discussion, final polling before decisions are made.

2) Expanding Communication through Marketing (Blog, Social Media, Newspapers, Website)

School districts can expand their communication channels to make them more accessible to community members by utilizing various methods such as in-person meetings, social media platforms, and updated websites. Key stakeholders in such a solution are the Board of Education, parents and school employees, and the media (journalists, reporters, and media outlets that cover news and events related to the school district). Examples:

    a) Portland Public Schools recognizes the importance of effective communication to keep stakeholders informed about district goals, initiatives, and events. The district aims to establish multiple communication channels, both in-person and online, including school meetings, social media platforms, and an updated website. Portland Public Schools Communication Plan is available online.[55]

    b) Park Hill School District (Kansas City, M earns NSPRA's Gold Medallion for their effective communication incorporating best practices and serving over 11,000 students. Their plan aligns with district priorities, utilizes various channels, and aims to engage stakeholders while fostering transparency and gathering feedback.[56]

Strategies for Schools to Enhance Community Participation and Support

Getting community members, including those who do not have children enrolled, actively involved with schools can build support and positive community identity that can also help build consensus. A range of strategies serve to meet this goal.

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[54] "How to Build Consensus for Change in your School or District," LINQ, Sept. 29, 2020, https://www.linq.com/blog/how-to-build-consensus-for-change-in-your-school-or-district/.

[55] "Portland Public Schools Communication Plan," June 2023, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PQShkVVVuNHi365Ybz20xWSyCdHJ5ODaWC_hYVtYLBc/edit.

[56] "Communication Services," Park Hill School District, January 12, 2023, https://boepublic.parkhill.k12.mo.us/attachments/20710821-051a-427d-bd46-403b48f5c5c0.pdf.

1) "Community School" Approach.

Built on trusting relationships, collaboration and inclusive decision-making. Allows schools to leverage and coordinate resources and voices of the entire community.[57] Community can be engaged as an educational resource (for projects, field trips, etc.) or by bringing the community to the classroom (lectures from businessowners, librarians, leaders).[58]

2) Community Participation in Decision-making.

Involve the community in direct participation in the decision-making process of K-12 schools or the related school district. For example, in 2006, the Akron, Colorado school district passed a policy that encourages citizens of the district to express their ideas, concerns and judgments about the schools through various means, noting that diverse perspectives result in better decisions, help build social capital, and help to ensure that policies and programs reflect the values, needs, and priorities of the communities they serve.[59]

3) Enhance Engagement Between the Community and the School through Activities.

Community engagement in school activities or student engagement in community services help build a rapport between the school and the community, benefiting both the students and the community. They can start with small acts of kindness, such as supporting a food bank or fundraiser for charity groups. For example, in Jefferson Intermediate School, Pella, IA, students bring over items to the food shelf in the community.[60]

4) Iowa's Parent and Family Engagement Policy.

Iowa's Parent and Family Engagement Policy requires that school districts adopt plans, policies, or strategies to engage parents and families in the educational process.[61] Dallas Center-Grimes provides its policy on its website.[62]

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[57] Reuben Jacobson, "Starting and sustaining community schools: 10 tips for district leaders," The Brookings Institution, Nov. 10, 2022. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/starting-and-sustaining-community-schools-10-tips-for-district-leaders/.

[58] Brendan O'Keefe, "5 Steps to Better School/Community Collaboration," Edutopia, Oct 19, 2011. https://www.edutopia.org/blog/school-community-collaboration-brendan-okeefe.

[59] "Community Involvement in Decision Making," Akron School District Board of Education, June 13, 2006, https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/116066/KCB_Community_Involvement_6-13-06.pdf.; "ESSA Guidance & Allocations," Iowa Department of Education, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/essa/guidance-allocations.

[60] "Kindergarten Community Helpers Social Studies Unit," Pella Schools, Oct. 25, 2018, https://www.pellaschools.org/news/madison-elementary/kindergarten-community-helpers-social-studies-unit/.; "Jefferson Students CARE About Their Community," Pella Schools, Nov. 20, 2017, https://www.pellaschools.org/news/jefferson-intermediate/jefferson-students-care-community/.

[61] "Family Engagement Plans," National Association of State Boards of Education State Policy Database, Iowa, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://statepolicies.nasbe.org/health/categories/family-engagement/family-engagement-plans/iowa.

[62] "Title I Resources," DCG Schools, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://dcgschools.com/title-i/.

Consolidation of Schools in Iowa

1) <u>Background on Consolidation in Iowa</u>

Consolidation can involve combining school districts (e.g., Grinnell and Newburg) or combining multiple schools in a community into fewer spaces.

In Iowa, consolidation gained momentum in the 1950s, influenced by a law that required all public-school districts to provide grade-level education from kindergarten through high school (i.e., no one-room schoolhouses).[63] In addition, new laws mandated that non-high school districts join high school units by 1962 and aimed for minimum district sizes of 300 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The peak of consolidation occurred in the late 1950s, with 829 districts merging into 102 new school units in a single school year.[64]

Consolidation can have pros and cons. It can help to address population loss and reduced enrollments in rural areas, tight budgets, and difficulty finding teachers. School mergers can also support additional programming, and the state may offer districts incentives if they share resources. At the same time, losing a school can amount to losing identity, communal gathering areas, and businesses for some towns.[65]

2) <u>Building Support for School Consolidation: Repurposing Old Schools</u>

Consolidating schools within a district can mean abandoning buildings that are important to a community's identity. Finding ways to repurpose these can take a potential obstacle to consolidation and turn it into a positive energy for a project. The following is a list of ways that school buildings have been repurposed in small cities.

   a) Briscoe High School → Beverly Village for Living and the Arts (Beverly, MA).[66]
   b) B.F. Brown School → Fitchburg Art Community (affordable living for artists) (Fitchburg, MA).[67]
   c) Brooks House repurposed to house a community college branch, apartments, retail spaces (Brattleboro, VT).[68]

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[63] "Consolidation Brings the End to Iowa's One-room Schoolhouses," Iowa PBS, Accessed May 27, 2024, https://www.iowapbs.org/iowapathways/artifact/1474/consolidation-brings-end-iowas-one-room-schoolhouses.

[64] "School Consolidation," Encyclopedia Dubuque, Last modified Feb. 17, 2019, https://www.encyclopediadubuque.org/index.php?title=SCHOOL_CONSOLIDATION.

[65] John McGlothlen, "How we got here: School consolidation leads to 11 percent drop in number of districts," Last updated Dec. 30, 2021, https://www.thegazette.com/iowa-ideas/how-we-got-here-school-consolidation-leads-to-11-percent-drop-in-number-of-districts/.

[66] Sarah Shemkus, "Beverly Village Plan Transforms Historic School into Affordable Housing and Artists' Studios," Northshore Magazine, Sept. 13, 2023, https://www.nshoremag.com/faces-places/beverly-village-plan-transforms-historic-school-into-affordable-housing-and-artists-studios/.

[67] Paula Owen, "Topping-off brings out B.F. Brown memories," Telegram & Gazette, Nov. 27, 2018, https://www.telegram.com/story/news/local/north/2018/11/28/topping-off-ceremony-at-bf-brown-brings-out-school-memories/8180432007/.

[68] Howard Weiss-Tisman, "Did it Work?: Redeveloping Brattleboro's Fire-damaged Brooks House," Vermont Public, Sept. 13, 2019, https://www.vermontpublic.org/vpr-news/2019-09-13/did-it-work-redeveloping-brattleboros-fire-damaged-brooks-house.

d) Schools in Iowa have been converted to apartment developments, housing for elderly (Campustown elementary school, Ames → The Crawford), and housing for rent and events space (Philips building, Fort Dodge).[69]

e) Clendenin School → Riverview at Clendenin School, an extended residential health clinic for seniors (Clendenin, WV).[70]

f) Avesta Housing in Portland, Maine is a nonprofit that adapts schools into affordable housing for seniors.[71]

g) Lutheran Theological Seminary → Seminary Ridge Museum (Gettysburg, PA).[72]

h) Old Gregg School → Old Gregg School Community and Recreation Centre (community orgs., recreational businesses, community clubs, offices) (Spring Mills, PA).[73]

Best Practices in School Design

The following provides a summary of five common design principles for K-12 school design based on conversations with some of the leading architects in the country as reported in "The Architecture of Ideal Learning Environments."[74]

1) Technology Integration.

Wiring the entire school—including the outdoors—is necessary, architects agree, and projectors, screens, and sound systems are migrating out of classrooms and into hallways, common spaces, cafeterias, and even stairwells. Students can access the network anywhere on campus, and view and share work on digital displays throughout the building. The effects can be subversive in all the right ways, reducing students' dependence on the teacher, promoting peer-to-peer collaboration, and widening the sphere of learning from the confines of the classroom to the whole school grounds.[75]

2) Security.

Having a single point of entry to the school is standard protocol to limit unwanted access, but many schools are starting to install double-locked entries—with two locked doors to get through—and often require sign-in and use video surveillance systems to screen visitors before they enter campus.

Large open spaces can provide protection during a lockdown. The architects of Fanning Howey describe several levels of security within an academic wing designed to prevent the unthinkable at a midwestern public school. The two sets of entry doors bracketing the academic wing are made of bulletproof glass and can be locked remotely from the main office, transforming the shared learning space into a safe haven. If an intruder

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[69] Austin Cannon, "Want to live in your old classroom? Former Iowa schools are finding new life as apartments," The Des Moines Register, Sept. 14, 2018, https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2018/09/14/developers-turning-old-iowa-school-buildings-into-small-scale-apartments/1215000002/.

[70] Donna Kimura, "School Conversions Breath Life into Affordable Housing," Multifamily Executive, July 12, 2012, https://www.multifamilyexecutive.com/design-development/school-conversions-breathe-life-into-affordable-housing_o,

[71] Kimura, "School Conversions…."

[72] Alan Jaffe, "Pennsylvania cities find creative new uses for old school buildings," WHYY, PBS, NPR, Feb. 13, 2017, https://whyy.org/articles/pennsylvania-cities-find-creative-new-uses-for-old-school-buildings/.

[73] Jaffe, "Pennsylvania cities…."

[74] Emelina Minero, "The Architecture of Ideal Learning Environments," Edutopia, March 2018, https://www.edutopia.org/article/architecture-ideal-learning-environments.

[75] Minero, "The Architecture of Ideal Learning…."

gains access to the academic wing, four corner classrooms serve as shelters—each is outfitted with bulletproof glass and can be accessed from common areas and adjacent classrooms, and then sealed off from any further entry.[76]

3) Transparency.
Architectural transparency seeks to give a sense of visual interconnectedness through increasing use of open layouts and glass partitions.

Fanning Howey constructed the British International School of Houston in Katy, Texas, a pre-K to 12th grade private school, with the intention of making learning visible. The entire building is wrapped around a common area called the Agora—Greek for "gathering place"—which is modeled on the public courtyards at the heart of city life in ancient Greece. All the classroom walls that surround the Agora are framed in floor-to-ceiling glass. From this central gathering place, students of all ages can see and be seen, peering into others' classrooms to view what they're doing while being observed at their own work.

Floor-to-ceiling glass isn't the only way to achieve transparency, though. Perkins + Will used a cheaper alternative—strategically placed glass windows—at Campus International School, a kindergarten to sixth grade public magnet school in Cleveland, to create a continuous line of sight throughout the space. While the effect is less dramatic, the design is more cost-effective and the learning impact is similar, promoting a sense of collaboration and enabling students to gain inspiration from the work of others.[77]

4) Multipurpose Space.
School architects are tossing out industrial-era blueprints that emphasized enclosed, single-use spaces connected by long hallways designed to move students rapidly between bell periods. Today, every inch of the school is scoured for its ability to contribute to learning: Corridors are being widened to become extensions of the classroom, stairs are turning into seating space, and walls throughout the building are doubling as writing surfaces or displaying Wi-Fi-enabled TV screens. Typical, single-use rooms like cafeteria and libraries, meanwhile, are being designed to function as hybrid theaters, makerspaces, and media centers.

Truly flexible spaces should also meet the day-to-day needs of educators to create instructional variety— direct instruction, group work, independent work—by quickly altering their environments. Lightweight chairs, beanbags, area rugs, tables of different heights, and even movable or foldable walls can transform alcoves into quiet reading spaces, which can in turn be modified to suit project-based learning or direct instruction.[78]

5) Outdoor Learning.
According to leading education architects, some outdoor learning environments are simply spaces that facilitate learning—a group of benches, an amphitheater, or a partially covered workspace with amenities like Wi-Fi and supplies. Like classrooms, these outdoor spaces are designated for instruction, presentations, or independent and group work, but they provide a fresh perspective for students who spend most of the school days indoors.

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[76] Minero, "The Architecture of Ideal Learning…."
[77] Minero, "The Architecture of Ideal Learning…."
[78] Minero, "The Architecture of Ideal Learning…."

At Lady Bird Johnson Middle School in Irving, Texas, the biggest net-zero public school in the country—it generates more energy than it consumes—the building itself is a laboratory for learning. Corgan designed the building's green energy capacities to integrate with the school's grade 6–8 science curriculum. For example, in sixth grade, students collect data and do hands-on learning related to energy transformation, comparing the efficiency of fossil fuel to solar, wind, and geothermal power—all sources of energy that the school taps into.[79]

Funding Sources for School Facilities

The Iowa Department of education provides guidance on a range of resources available for funding schools through the document "Financing Public Education in Iowa."[80] Additional resources for superintendents and businesses managers regarding finance and budgets are available on the Iowa Department of Education website.[81] Below is a sample of some common funding sources. (Pella has a nice one-page graphic showing government funds available, where the revenue comes from, and what each can be used to pay for.)[82]

1) General Fund.

Receives revenue from the School Finance Formula under GAAP (generally accepted accounting principles) and accounts for the revenues and expenditures for the educational program and most school district operations. Expenditures include employee salaries and benefits (except nutrition and community education), textbooks, tuition, open enrollment, supplies, contracted services, travel, etc.[83]

2) Physical Plant & Equipment Levy (PPEL).

An annual property tax levy that can be used to maintain school buildings, complete site improvements and purchase school equipment. Voted PPEL (VPPEL): Voters can approve a temporary increase in property taxes to generate funds for specific school projects. Used for playgrounds and community education/programs.[84]

3) General Obligation bonds.

A general obligation bond (GO) is one method a school district may use to borrow money for construction projects as provided in Iowa Code Chapter 75. General obligation bonds are issued and backed by the credit of the school district and its taxing authority. School district voters must approve before General Obligation bonds can be used. State and Federal laws tightly control this debt issuance process.[85]

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[79] Minero, "The Architecture of Ideal Learning…."

[80] "Financing Public Education in Iowa," Iowa Department of Education, January 2017, https://educate.iowa.gov/media/2819/download?inline.

[81] "School Finance Resources," Iowa Department of Education, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/operation-support/business-finance/financial-management/school-finance-resources.

[82] "Pella Community School District Fund Summary," Pella Community Schools, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://www.pellaschools.org/district/fund-summary/.

[83] "District Funding Buckets," Marshalltown Community School District, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://www.marshalltown.k12.ia.us/page/district-funding-buckets.

[84] "Funding and Bonds," Iowa Department of Education, Accessed July 22, 2024, https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/operation-support/school-facilities/funding.

[85] "Financing Public Education…," p.25.

4) Qualified Zone Academy Bond.
Low or no-interest bonds provided by the federal government to help schools renovate buildings and purchase equipment. Schools must establish a partnership with a business and have at least 35% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch.[86]

5) Public Education & Recreation Levy (PERL)
With voter approval, districts can levy up to 13.5 cents per $1,000 taxable valuation to establish and maintain recreation places and playgrounds in public school buildings and grounds of the district. The funds may also be used to provide for community education programs.[87]

6) Miscellaneous Income.
All districts generate miscellaneous income. The primary sources are various state and federal categorical aid programs, tuition and transportation payments, allowable school fees, and donations.[88]

7) Secure an Advanced Vision for Education (SAVE).
A local option sales tax for school infrastructure. Can include the construction, reconstruction, repair, demolition work, purchasing, or remodeling of schoolhouses, stadiums, gyms, field houses, and bus garages and the procurement of schoolhouse construction sites and making of site improvements allowable under Iowa Code.[89]

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[86] "Funding and Bonds…."
[87] "Financing Public Education…," p.24.
[88] "Financing Public Education…," p.26.
[89] "Funding and Bonds…."

Appendix 4: Questionnaire Guide for Community Discussion Hosts

The following is the discussion guide that was provided to hired community discussion hosts. A similar set of questions was asked in listening sessions and focus groups.

Improve K-12 Buildings and Infrastructure

Part 1: The nature of the problem
- What is the problem here? What is wrong with the current k-12 buildings and infrastructure?
- How bad is this problem?
- What are some specific examples of this problem?
- Are some parts of this problem more severe than others? (e.g., some of the schools, certain buildings, or some of the infrastructure)
- How long has this been an issue? Is it getting better, worse?

Part 2: The impacts or consequences.
- How does this issue affect you or your family?
- Can you give some specific examples of when and how you have been affected?
- Has this problem caused you or your family to have to do anything that you otherwise would not have had to do? Please explain?
- If you were able, would this problem cause you to adjust how your family is doing things?
- How does this issue affect the community?
- Are some people more affected than others?
- What happens if nothing is done?

Part 3: The Causes
- Why does this problem exist?
- Why haven't we been able to solve this issue?
- What will be the obstacles to getting this need met for the community?

Part 4: Solutions
- What ideas for solutions do you have for individuals, families, or the community as a whole?
- What efforts have been made to address this issue in the past? What happened?
- Are you aware of any current efforts? Please share?
- What do you see as the community's strengths in regard to this issue? (What is working well? What might we build on?)
- Are there groups or individuals in the community that would be helpful or central in addressing this?
- Are there funding resources available to help address this?

Part 5: Other
- What else do you want us to know or be thinking about in relation to this issue?