

St. Joseph School District MASTER FACILITIES PLAN

Survey #1 Results Overview | June 2019



ST. JOSEPH
SCHOOL DISTRICT

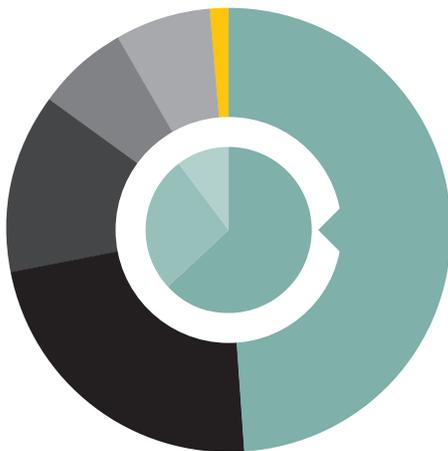


During Summer 2019, St. Joseph School District is developing a vision to improve our school facilities and better prepare our kids for success in school, the workplace, and life. We kicked off the process with a brief online survey, the first of several, to gather the community's input to help us identify priority areas for our facilities plan.

Thank you for your strong support and response to our first survey! Please continue to engage with us as we continue to ask questions and post information about the future of our schools.

Who We Heard From:

1,928 community members from across the St. Joseph community. Respondents self-identified as:



- Parents **79%**
 - Current **50%**
 - Former **21%**
 - Future **8%**
- Teachers or School Staff **37%**
- Alumni **21%**
- Community Members/Taxpayers **11%**
- Grandparents **11%**
- Students **2%**

Respondents were affiliated with all schools in the district. For those who were not affiliated with a school, they noted connections to Lake Conrary, Humboldt, and Keatley Center, among others.

What We Heard - By the Numbers:



Nearly **60%** of respondents believe **current facilities will not support the FUTURE educational needs** of our students and nearly **70%** believe **facilities are not sufficiently updated or modernized**.



Nearly **90%** of respondents believe that **learning needs are different today** than they were when most facilities were built. **90%** also understand that **technology and innovation will impact future resource and facilities needs**.



Top priorities indicated by respondents include providing **equitable high-quality learning environments** that promote **collaboration and innovation** and prepare students for success in a changing world.

What We Heard - In Your Words:

We also asked several open-ended questions to get an understanding of what our community sees as our greatest strengths, opportunities, and challenges. We collected more than 4,000 comments! Many comments provide insight into the pride people feel for our community, and a willingness to explore change to upgrade facilities and meet the evolving needs of students.

Key themes and takeaways from your comments are explored in further detail on the subsequent pages.



What's On Your Mind?

The image to the right reflects the words respondents used to describe what is top of mind for them related to our schools and community. Bigger words were mentioned most often.



move things future right school past public forward poverty resources believe city system administration students educational building trust time children back teaching show ability change families buildings past kids other want members needs know need class high feel community tax money cost people better keep go make big technology improve work now history help diversity environment support learning provide good staff quality prove think great enough together parents come learn more student care levy town district education teachers all funding small citizens size schools new opportunity lack growth discipline

Key Themes and Takeaways

Facilities Perceptions. The majority of survey respondents did not feel as though SJSD's current facilities are sufficiently updated or modernized, nor do they meet the students' current or future educational needs. A number of people also voiced concerns about student safety (structural and environmental issues) and security (against incidences of violence) in the existing facilities. Additionally, there were several respondents who noted that some facilities are not fully accessible to those with disabilities.

21st Century Learning. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that students needs are different today than when the facilities were built. Most also felt that technological and innovative resources are needed in the classroom. Respondents also prioritized providing students with collaborative and innovative learning environments. A desire to introduce new curricula was also expressed and many people noted that they would like to see an increased focus on technical educational opportunities and workforce development.

Other Priorities. In addition to priorities around school facilities and 21st Century Learning, respondents expressed a number of other changes that they would like to see SJSD make. These priorities include:

- Providing equitable, high quality education for all students
- Decreased class sizes
- Increasing teacher salaries
- Teacher retention
- Increased security
- Elimination of bullying and improved disciplinary practices around bullying
- Increased support for children with disabilities

Many St. Joseph Residents Are Proud of its History. St. Joseph has a rich history and many respondents expressed a deep sense of pride in it. A number of people noted that this history is expressed through the city's architecture, and especially through the schools' architecture. One of the key themes that emerged in the survey is a desire to preserve historical structures such as the schools. Several respondents indicated a preference to renovate/modernize existing schools, and especially the high schools, rather than building new facilities.



Trust and Transparency. Trust and transparency were major themes across the survey, and respondents noted that these issues present both opportunities and challenges. It was noted time and again that due to actions taken by previous administrations and the relatively new tenure of the new administration that trust has not yet been completely reestablished with the community. Additionally, respondents indicated that while there are new administrators and School Board in place, they didn't believe that leadership changes resulted in increased transparency. Other responses indicated that these changes present opportunities for rebuilding trust and for the district to become more transparent. The importance of capitalizing on these opportunities were noted by several respondents.

Unity. Many respondents noted that one of the community's greatest strengths is its ability to come together, especially during emergencies and other times of need. Several respondents also indicated that there are opportunities for the St. Joseph community to become even more unified, and specifically mentioned that consolidating the high schools from three to one is a way to achieve that.

Fiscal Responsibility. Fiscal responsibility on the part of SJSD was mentioned time and again, in a variety of contexts. Some respondents noted that they do not trust the district to expend money wisely due to ways in which the budget has been handled in the past such as missteps by previous administrators. Yet other responses indicated that they feel that these mistakes are being repeated and cited recent expenditures such as purchasing laptops for students and the closure of Lake Contrary Elementary School as examples. Other respondents offered a perspective that the passing of the levy provides an opportunity for SJSD to instill trust by proving that it will be a good steward of these tax dollars.

Budget. There were numerous thoughts and opinions voiced regarding the budget capacity to fund upgrades/improvements to existing facilities or building new facilities. It was noted that getting the community's support for raising the needed funds could be a challenge. Additionally, several responses mentioned challenges in regard to the tax base in St. Joseph, such as a resistance to raising taxes and a constrained tax base.

Strengths. Our community celebrates many great strengths. St. Joseph is strong because of our:

- Heritage as a "big small town"
- History
- Collaboration
- People and community
- Potential
- Business community and diverse job opportunities
- Diversity
- Teachers
- Children/Youth
- Low cost of living
- Location
- And so much more!

Opportunities. Respondents indicated a number of opportunities that SJSD can seize upon, to improve the school district and the St. Joseph community. Key themes include:

- Increasing transparency
- Proving fiscal responsibility
- Rebuilding trust
- Providing students with increased educational opportunities
- Increasing teacher pay/salaries
- Upgrading/improving facilities
- Leveraging technology in the classroom
- Relying less on technology in the classroom
- Leveraging the change in administration and leadership
- Increasing technical education and workforce development
- Building on the momentum gained by the passing of the April 2019 operational levy
- Introducing innovative teaching models
- Improving school safety and security
- Decreasing class sizes
- Attracting talented staff and improving teacher retention rates



Other Challenges. We also sought feedback on the challenges currently facing the district and city. Responses were varied. Several key themes emerged, some of which overlapped with ideas around our greatest opportunities:

- Increasing transparency
- Proving fiscal responsibility
- Rebuilding trust
- Reducing poverty rates
- Finding the budget for school improvements or to build new schools
- Making our schools safer and reducing bullying and other threats
- Reducing inequity among the schools
- Engaging students
- Retaining high-quality staff and teachers
- Gaining community buy-in for needed changes
- Overcoming apathy
- Reducing class sizes
- Overcoming resistance to moving on from past issues
- Improving the state of school facilities

What's Next?

The Master Facilities Planning process will continue through the summer. We need your input to help shape a new vision for our schools, and your help in getting your neighbors and friends to engage.

We will launch our second survey during the first week of July, which will run for two weeks. We will also begin recruitment very soon for several targeted focus group discussions to dig into "big ideas" that will inform the recommendations that lead to our final plan.

We will continue to share the feedback we collect and provide updates on the process.

Learn More!

Visit www.SJSDfacilities.org. We also invite you to join the conversation on Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn by using [#SJSDFacilities](https://twitter.com/SJSDFacilities).



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