



## **Renovation Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why do we want to renovate the high school?**

Pottsgrove High School was built in 1958 with a major addition and minor renovations to the original structure performed in 1993. The systems that make up the building's infrastructure are wearing out, and the building space could be better used to fit modern instructional needs if it were reconfigured.

### **Why not just repair or replace those systems?**

The costs associated with that work was estimated at more than 7 million dollars. That would still leave us with a building designed in the 1950's for a program of instruction that doesn't match that used by modern high schools locally or nationwide. In addition, cabinetry, floors, and other finishes are wearing out, as well. The school building, as it currently exists, doesn't best serve the needs of our students and will not allow us to develop and/or continue to grow competitive and meaningful instructional programs in the areas of science and technology, special education, and the arts. Its current design also poses safety and security risks that were never envisioned by its designers in the 1950's. These risks will also be mitigated through this renovation.

### **Why do we need a new gym?**

Our current gym is very small and in need of a new floor, new bleachers, air conditioning and other upgrades. Renovating this space would require that it be compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. This would reduce the amount of seating available to the point that it could not accommodate our own student body. The gym is not compliant with Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association regulations and therefore can never be a site for regional tournaments. Community members who attended our school board meetings said these issues were concerning. The addition of a new gym worked into our plan very well as it allowed for innovative use of our current gym. The old gym will be converted into two engineering lab spaces for more modern instruction and a smaller auxiliary gym.

### **Why do we need a new cafeteria?**

Our current cafeteria is undersized, placed in an area that cuts off a major hallway, and is difficult to supervise, as it is segmented into two spaces. By building out, we can reconnect the hallway, recover some of the space from the original cafeteria as new large group instructional spaces, improve visibility for supervision, and provide "scatter serve" space so students can more efficiently purchase their lunch. Much of

the current kitchen would be retained, reducing the overall cost. In addition, in a modern high school, all spaces are learning spaces. The high school cafeteria will serve as a cyber cafeteria, as well. Students will be able to meet and work collaboratively in an attractive surrounding. Some of the new instructional spaces created out of the old cafeteria will be available as community learning and meeting spaces in the evening.

**What other improvements will we see from this renovation?**

The renovation will provide for additional science labs, more space for our growing music and arts programs, improved accommodations for special needs students, an updated library and instructional spaces, a new guidance office suite, and more efficient use of existing classroom spaces.

**Why did the cost go up from the original estimate?**

We will not know the actual cost until the bid process is complete in late April. The original cost estimates were made after a feasibility study was complete. During the design and development phase, architects meet with various stakeholders for very specific input about different parts of the building. In addition, the township also weighs in with requirements related to building code, zoning, etc. Some of the unforeseen additions during this process included the need for an additional science lab, new theatrical lighting in the auditorium, network wiring, and upgrades to meet more stringent building codes.

We expect the actual cost to be approximately \$2,000,000 higher than estimated in the feasibility study. Of this amount approximately half relates to refined cost estimates based on detailed evaluation of the plans, an estimate of inflation and additional items required by third parties. The remainder is the result of additional items identified as important for the education of our students through the design development process. Research indicates that this increase in budget is reasonable for a school construction project of this scope.

**What about the district office? Why does that need renovation?**

The district office is physically connected to the high school and suffers from the same infrastructure challenges. Additionally, its façade is wearing out, carpets and wall coverings are old and torn in some places. Again, this portion of the building was designed in a different era and poses issues related to security for personnel and visitors and its open space design poses challenges related to privacy for parents registering students or personnel discussing sensitive issues. Finally, this building houses the districts' phone and computer network core in a space that is not conducive to operation of this equipment. This concern will also be addressed in the renovation. The total estimated cost for this portion of the overall renovation is \$450,000, just 1.5 percent of an estimated \$30 million dollar project.

**What about the turf field? Why do we need it?**

The turf field is not part of the core renovation project. It is an option the school board can consider. The idea for a turf field is to create a versatile, all-purpose

playing space that can be used by many sports teams and can be ready quickly after rain events. It is not to be confused with our football field that is, and will remain, a grass surface. Pottsgrove has a very small campus relative to other high schools and limited field options, especially after rain storms. The turf field would eliminate some of our current drainage issues and thus some of our scheduling issues for sporting events.

**Can we afford this renovation?**

The administration and school board agree that a renovation can't be put off indefinitely. The current economic climate makes this an ideal time to finance this project. Every school system in the nation must at some point undergo renovations and even rebuilds. Interest rates are still at near historic lows, Pottsgrove's bond rating is very strong, and our debt burden is modest relative to many of our neighboring districts. The District has historically attempted to repay its debt as rapidly as possible. As a result, we expect to see significant reductions in our debt payments over the next several years. We'll be able to schedule the payments for the financing of the High School project to occur when other debt is satisfied resulting in no increase in tax rates.