

# **Recommendations for Addressing the Needs of Elder Grove School**

**September 26, 2017  
Elder Grove School Planning Committee  
K-12 Consultants - A&E Architects**

## **The Problem:**

Elder Grove School has served the community well for over 100 years, the facilities are generally in good condition, and with the exception of the historic school house, are not in need of any significant repairs. The old school house is doing well for its age but is in need of general repair and renovation if it is to continue as a long-term component of the Elder Grove School campus.

The most significant issue facing Elder Grove School is the lack of space in both the buildings and the site. The school is transitioning from a small rural school to a large suburban educational complex. The school district includes a large portion of the land available for residential and commercial development in West Billings and as a result, will experience a very significant increase in students until this land area is fully developed. As presented in the 2016 Elder Grove School Demographic Study and illustrated most dramatically by the increasing rate of residential construction within the school district area, the number of students coming to Elder Grove is rapidly increasing; possibly even at a greater rate than forecast by the analysis, calculations and conclusions in the Demographic Study.

## **Enrollment Growth**

- Ongoing growth in students is anticipated with an estimated increase of approximately 400 additional students within the next 10 years for a total of 1,000 students in grades K-8.
  - A 61% increase from the current enrollment.
  - As seen by enrollment growth at the start of school this year, projections may be low and the 1,000 students may materialize within 7 years or less.

## **Building Capacity**

- The existing school buildings are over capacity and there are over 60 new students this school year. The Functional Capacity of Elder Grove is approximately 476 students based on 18 students in Kindergarten classrooms and 20 students in grades 1-8 classrooms.
  - The functional capacity of the elementary school is 321 students. Current K-5 elementary enrollment is 417 students (+17 from last year and 96 students over capacity).
  - The functional capacity of the middle school is 162 students. Current 6-8 middle school enrollment is 205 (+41 from last year and 43 students over capacity).
  
- The State Office of Public Instruction Accreditation Standards permits up to 678 students; 438 in grades K-5 and 240 in grades 6-8. OPI Accreditation Standards permit 20 students in grades K-2 classrooms, 28 students in grades 3-4 classrooms, and 30 students in grades 5-8 classrooms.

## **School District Funding**

The District Bonding Capacity is \$14,793,850 as of July 1, 2017, however, because of debt payments that will be made by the district in 2018, the bonding amount technically available for this project is over \$15,000,000. In consultation with attorney Dan Semmens, the District's bond counsel and Bridget Ekstrom with D.A. Davidson, It has been determined that the bonding amount to be used with a school bond is \$14,950,000.

## **The Recommendations:**

What should be done to adequately accommodate existing and future students and make it feasible for Elder Grove to continue providing the feel of a small school with small class sizes, a true middle school experience and a safe, high quality learning environment? A Master Plan for Elder Grove School is nearing completion. This document will include details of the planning process, solution options considered and a full description of the final recommendations for addressing school needs. The following is an overview of recommendations that have been developed through a comprehensive school planning process facilitated by K-12 Consultants and A&E Architects, and a series of six meetings with the school planning committee and two highly attended community forums.

## **Goals**

Recommendations were based upon achieving the goals established by the school planning committee.

- Fewer lunch periods
- A true middle school experience with expanded middle school programs, electives, sports and other activities
- Classrooms and support spaces to accommodate 10-year enrollment projections.
- Enough classrooms to permit small class sizes (18 in Kindergarten and 20 in grades 1-8)
- Accommodate student growth while maintaining our small school feel. (independent nature, unique identity and nurturing learning environment)
- Adequate green spaces and age-appropriate play grounds and activity areas for all grade levels.
- A new gym, sports field and track with any new facilities.
- Determine the best long-term use for the historic school house.
- Any recommended solution must be affordable and within district bonding capacity.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Utilize all Existing School Facilities and Construct a New Middle School**

**A Summary of Recommended School Improvements**

<p><b>Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquire an appropriate 15-acre site well located for a new middle school.</li> <li>• Construct a new middle school and gymnasium for approximately 300 students in grades 6-8.</li> <li>• Construct a grass multi-use PE/sports/activity field at the new middle school.</li> <li>• House approximately 500 elementary students in grades K-5 in existing buildings (This fills the existing school to its functional capacity, no new classrooms are to be constructed.)</li> <li>• Build a new Commons as an addition to the current middle school to serve Upper Elementary students.</li> <li>• Develop additional age-appropriate play grounds, green spaces, PE areas and general activity areas at the existing school campus.</li> <li>• If funding is available, improve the old school house by completing high priority repairs as identified in the Facility Assessment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 6-8 facility is developed that is a true middle school.</li> <li>• Existing buildings are utilized to their functional capacity, maintaining small class sizes and the feel of a small school.</li> <li>• The functional capacity of the existing buildings is 476 K-5 students and the OPI Accreditation Capacity is 678 students. This range allows some flexibility for how future student growth can be accommodated.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Difficulties</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When K-5 enrollment exceeds functional capacity or OPI Accreditation Capacity, either a new elementary school or a classroom addition to the existing buildings would be needed.</li> <li>• As the elementary school grows, additional administrative and support spaces will be required most feasibly by a remodeling of the old school house. Funding for these repairs and/or remodeling could be available if the cost for other construction comes in under budget.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Construct</b></p>	<p><b>New Middle School for 300 Students Grades 6-8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct 57,000 SF new school to include: 12 classrooms, breakout areas, teacher planning &amp; work rooms, 2 special education/Title 1 rooms, band and general music rooms, art room, 2 science rooms, library, computer lab, 7-8 vocational/technology education room, FCS/life skills room, serving kitchen, commons, regulation size gym (large enough for school and community use), 2 locker/shower rooms, concessions area, school offices, conference room, counselor's office, nurse's room</li> <li>• Acquire &amp; improve 15-acre site for building area, parking, landscaping, multi-use PE/ sports/activity field.</li> </ul> <p><b>Upper Elementary Commons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commons addition to existing the middle school building.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cost Estimate</b></p>	<p><b>New Middle School</b>  \$ 10,345,000 New Middle School, Multi-Use Field  \$ 1,090,000 Site Improvements, Well, Drain Field, Landscape  \$ 300,000 15-Acre Site</p> <p><b>Upper Elementary Commons</b>  \$ 647,500 Addition for Classrooms, Commons  \$ 168,750 Parking, Landscape</p> <p><b>Soft Costs, Contingency</b>  \$ 1,780,034 Soft Costs (FFE, fees, testing, plan reviews, permits)  \$ 612,563 Contingency (5%)  <b>\$14,943,847 Total Cost (round to \$14,950,000)</b></p>

Cost estimates have been prepared by A&E using 2017 dollars. Cost estimates are preliminary and based on early planning and space programming calculations. Soft costs include, professional fees, bond costs, FFE.

## Taxpayer Impact

These are the estimated increase to individual property taxes associated with the recommended school improvements.

### Recommendation \$14,950,000 (20-year term)

<b>Assessed Value</b>	<b>Yearly Increase</b>	<b>Monthly Cost</b>
\$100,000	\$194.71	\$16.23
\$200,000	\$389.42	\$32.45
\$300,000	\$584.13	\$48.68
\$400,000	\$778.84	\$64.90

Note: Based on Class 4 residential property 2017-18 tax year assessed value  
Prepared by Bridget Ekstrom, D.A. Davidson, Bozeman, Montana, September 2017