



## Community Update on the West Pool

Feb. 24, 2022

Oak Park and River Forest High School has two 95-year-old pools that it uses for physical education, athletic teams, synchronized swimming, and activities sponsored by community partners. Over the weekend of Feb. 11, 2022, we informed our staff and outside organizations that we needed to close the West Pool while we determined the scope of some necessary repairs.

The West Pool closure was based on preliminary information received from McCluskey Engineering, a consultant hired to do an inspection of our two swimming pools. McCluskey has now issued its [final report](#).<sup>\*</sup> The most significant finding was that the west deck of the West Pool is in need of urgent structural repair, and/or shoring, to avoid structural failure. The west wall of the pool relies upon the west pool deck for some of its structural integrity. A structural failure of the deck could cause structural failure of the pool wall as well.

Maintaining the best possible curricular and extracurricular experiences for our students has required making significant adjustments to our pool scheduling during this closure. The six-week PE swimming units for all freshmen and sophomores have been cut to three weeks, while kayaking and other water experiences likely will be eliminated from the Adventure Ed elective. All pool usage and rentals by outside organizations have been canceled in order to accommodate student athletic teams and activities solely in the East Pool, where we are now running a later schedule of practices that go until 9:30 p.m.

The West Pool will remain closed while the district determines next steps. Like a vintage home, repairs to the pools, which were built in 1928, are complicated. The existing pool systems, pool decks, observation areas, and locker rooms do not meet the current safety code. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), which oversees pool permitting, requires that any pool equipment needing replacement *must* be replaced with the



*Spalling (i.e., breakdown) of concrete at deck drain penetration in West Pool.*

exact same model number. Otherwise, the facility needs to go through the current IDPH permitting process and be brought up to code.

It's relatively simple to replace something like piping under these rules. But much of the existing pool equipment is more than 40 years old, and finding exact model numbers to replace it is impossible. A decade ago, for instance, when a contractor removed the diving board from the East Pool, the district was unable to replace it without bringing the pool's too-shallow diving well up to code. As a result, the diving team has been traveling to the pool at Riverside Brookfield High School for practice ever since and is unable to host home diving meets.



*Extensive delamination (i.e., concrete fracturing into layers) in West Pool.*

With the approaching completion of Project 1 from Imagine OPRF, the district's long-term, five-phase capital investment plan, discussions about Project 2 are underway. Project 2 focuses on rebuilding the physical education and athletics facilities in the southeast corner of the building. It would include replacing the East Pool with a 25-yard x 40-yard stretch pool. A subsequent phase calls for eliminating the West Pool and repurposing that space with much-needed performing arts classrooms.



*Exposed reinforcing in West Pool.*

The district remains fully committed to its curricular and extracurricular aquatics programming. Each year, roughly 2,100 students participate in swim units during physical education, and about 200 students participate in swimming, diving, water polo, and synchronized swimming. The single pool in Project 2 would accommodate all the school's needs for physical education and extracurricular activities.

Should the district try to fix the current, inadequate pools or wait to invest in a new one? This is one of the issues that the district must grapple with as it works with its construction consultant to determine the scope and cost of the most urgently needed repairs, which also involve three of the West Pool walls and one of the East Pool walls. The Board has scheduled an in-depth discussion of Project 2 and the pools at its March 10, 2022, Committee of the Whole meeting. The district will continue to keep the community informed as the decision-making process moves forward.



Corroded reinforcements in West Pool.

*\*NOTE: The McCluskey report is a follow-up to an inspection of the pools that the district commissioned earlier this school year from Larson Engineering. ([Click here](#) for that report.) Larson did **not** indicate that either the East Pool or the West Pool needed to be closed. It did recommend installing significant structural bracing around the walls of both pools. Because this would require draining the pools for several weeks, significantly disrupting our PE and athletic swim programs, the district sought a second, more thorough inspection from McCluskey.*