Frequently Asked Questions: Mariemont High School Facilities Project

**Why are we revisiting the 2009 Master Facilities Plan?**
In 2009 the community participated in the development of a comprehensive Master Facilities Plan. That plan resulted in the construction of nearly all new – and much needed – schools for our district. Left unaddressed in the 2009 plan, however, was what to do about the high school building. Now, with the high school approaching 50 years old, it is time to begin looking at the need and options.

**What is a master facility plan?**
A master facility plan is an evolving document that provides a valuable fact-based, community-driven tool for future facility-related decision making that is consistent with and supportive of the school district’s mission and instructional vision. The plan sets the course for planning capital improvements and facility management in the near future. And our goal is to have the master facility plan for the high school finished in spring 2018.

**What is the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission?**
The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) is responsible for guiding capital projects for state agencies, state-supported universities and community colleges, including Ohio’s comprehensive public K-12 school construction and renovation program, and managing the grants process for cultural facilities and school security programs. According to the OFCC, it would cost nearly $20,000,000 to bring Mariemont High School to today’s code and standard. For more information about the OFCC, visit [http://ofcc.ohio.gov](http://ofcc.ohio.gov).

**How can I be involved?**
The entire process will be open and transparent with multiple opportunities to be involved. After all, it is up to all of us to be involved in analyzing and assessing the future options for the high school. From in-home chats, virtual chats, design team workshops and surveys, there have been and will continue to be plenty of opportunities for you to offer your input. Please check our website often, read the ConnectME blog, watch the Now in 90 videos and listen to the ConnectME podcast on a regular basis to stay informed of the many opportunities to provide input.

**But the high school doesn’t seem that old. Why look at it now?**
Part of it is because we take such great care of the school building – but the high school will soon be 50 years old. At some point, the age and design of a building begins to interfere with the education, technology and safety needs of today. We are to that point. Planning now will help to minimize costs into the future.

**Why don’t we just do nothing and save money?**
There is no zero-cost option. Even the cost to continue providing maintenance and upkeep comes with a cost that is not currently built into the district budget. That cost must be among the options
that are developed.

**Is this conversation happening sooner than expected?**
In 2009, when the district last completed a master facility plan, it was communicated that the needs of the high school would likely have to be addressed by 2020. The conversations we are having with the community now are designed to plan ahead for how we want to deal with these growing needs. Remember there is no zero cost option associated with the high school, so planning ahead is the responsible thing to do in this case. What is sooner than expected is how quickly the systems of the high school are failing. Most of the major infrastructure systems in the high school facility are all in need of repair and upgrades.

**So are we looking at building a new high school?**
Not necessarily. There are no preconceived notions for what to do about the high school. All options must be on the table and considered through a very transparent process. What we do know, however, is that it is up to the community to be involved in assessing the needs and options.

**We just renovated/added on to the building, didn’t we?**
Nearly 20 years ago, we completed minor updates in the high school when we added walls to classrooms, and we have done some updates to our athletic facilities. These were minor and mostly cosmetic updates to the building. We know that more extensive updates are needed now since the mechanical and major structural systems are all nearly 50 years old. We also know that quite a bit has changed during the last 50 years with technology, safety and education. So it may be time to consider a different level of update to the facility.

**Didn’t we try the “open” concept before?**
We are not advocating for the return of the “open” concept that was used in the original 1970 design of the high school building. Rather, through the assessment process, both the community facility task force and the futures team identified the need for spaces that allow for more flexible uses like small and large group instruction, collaboration, ensemble rehearsal spaces, larger classrooms, collaboration areas, laboratories and work spaces.

**Have any decisions been made about the future of our high school athletic facilities?**
No decisions have been made. Planning for the future of our high school athletic facilities is part of the steering committee’s work. Our athletic director, Tom Nerl, is a member of the steering committee to offer insight and guidance and help us with our planning. We are proud of our athletic facilities — in particular our swimming pool, considering we are one of few high schools in the area to have a pool available for student and community use. There is no plan or intention to reduce or eliminate any athletic facility or program.

**What is the timeline for the High School Master Planning assessment?**
The goal of the Board of Education is to have a completed master plan in spring 2018. For a more detailed timeline about the process, please visit the district website.

At what point do the professional construction and design experts weigh in?
Mariemont City Schools believes in using professional expertise as needed to ensure the best options possible for our students and our community. So we have engaged some design and construction professionals to help ensure we create quality options that will not only enhance the education of students, but also create efficient and lasting solutions for our community. However, as always, the final decision is ultimately up to the school board and community.

Why did the school district find it necessary to travel to schools around the country for the MHS Facility Project?
Conducting research and site visits is a critical component of the massive undertaking that is a master facility project. It would be irresponsible for us to move forward with what could potentially be a multi-million-dollar project without doing our due diligence, which includes visiting newly constructed school buildings, seeking the expertise of a design architect, conducting a demographic/enrollment study, facilitating site analyses and hosting design workshops.

Through site visits, both locally and nationally, spanning a total of nine days, members of the futures team visited 22 schools. The facilities selected for the site visits were chosen based on recommendations of architects and other school districts that recently completed a master facility planning process. The facilities visited were constructed in the past couple of years and demonstrated current educational trends and safety requirements.

As we prepare to make important decisions about our high school – remember, there is no zero-cost solution – it is important that we do our homework, learn from others’ mistakes and successes and reach informed conclusions.

How has spending for repairs at the high school been compared to the other district schools?
In the past five years, the district has spent more than $500,000 on repairs and updates at the high school just to keep it functioning. These expenditures have been for essential repairs and updates only. There are many systems that are in need of replacement but the district is waiting for the development of the master facility plan before moving forward with any of this needed work. In comparison, the district has spent less than $100,000 at the other three schools combined for repairs and updates in the last five years.

I have a freshman and sophomore at Mariemont High School, will they be in temporary modular buildings? Are there any other options during the construction period?
At Mariemont City Schools we care about our students and understand that handling the temporary placement of students in a manner that is least disruptive to their education is a priority for the
district. However, it’s just too early in the process to know what options or the possible solutions to these challenges might be. We have heard and recognize the sensitivity to relocating students during any type of renovation and/or construction process.

How does the size of the high school classrooms compare to our other schools?
The high school’s average classroom size is 672 square feet. The average size of learning spaces in the district’s other three schools is 950 square feet. The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission recommends an average classroom size of 930 square feet.

What if I have a question about or suggestion for the Mariemont High School facility project but am not able to attend any of the workshops, chats or other activities?
We would still love to hear from you! You can email us any time at questions@mariemontschools.org.