

“Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum” – “No Steps Backward”

The Auburn School Department is at what many deem to be a critical juncture in regards to the delivery of educational programs to the many varied learners and taxpayer interests of the Auburn community.

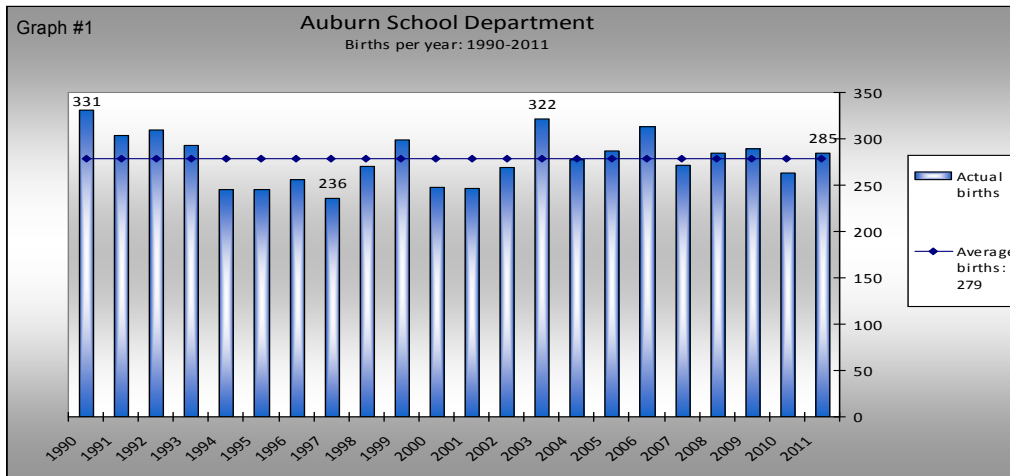
Some historical perspective:

Resident population: The City of Auburn, settled in 1736, has benefited from steady growth since its incorporation in 1842. Since 1850, when the US Census Bureau performed its first national census, the resident population of Auburn has experienced double digit growth in each of the census ten year periods for the ensuing 100 years until the 1970 report when it saw its first decline. The population has remained statistically stable since 1960 and is currently at 23,055 residents according to the 2010 census.

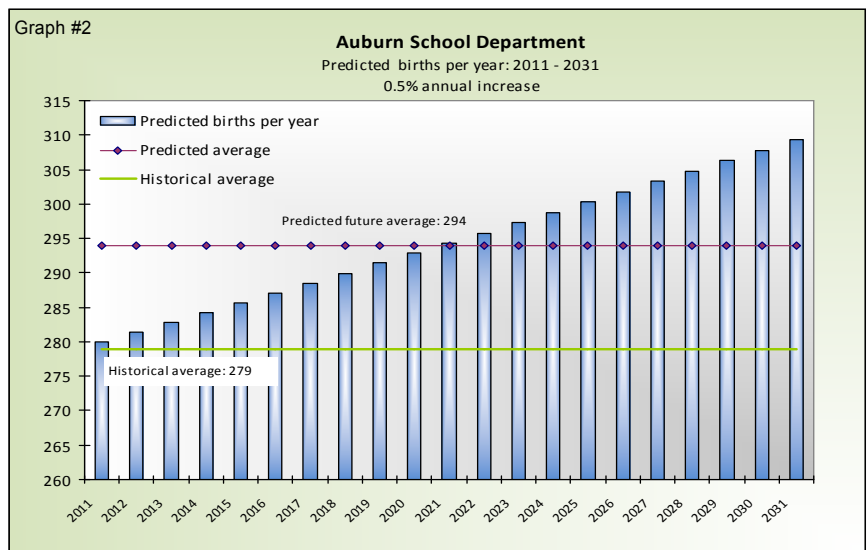
In the opinion of McCormick Consultants, there appears to be sustained economic activity in the greater Lewiston-Auburn area. Currently, some have indicated that a “renaissance” is occurring. Without question, the two cities are experiencing growth as measured by differing barometers that is greater than the rest of the state and the national average, even during the latest economic downturn. It is predicted that this growth will continue and just as likely that this growth will, at the very least, lead to constant educational space needs over the next 20 years.

Births: Resident birth history is a succinct method to determine future school enrollments. Auburn resident births have been reasonably steady over the last three decades ranging from a high of 331 in 1990 and reaching a low of 236 in 1997. [Graph #1]

Since 1990, the average of resident births is 279. Over the last five years, resident births have increased slightly to an average of 285. There is a perception that births have increased recently, which is confirmed. However, when reviewing birth data over the last 30 years, we observed repeating 3-5 year cycles where the births reach a high for a certain period and then retreat slightly some 3-5 years later. Auburn has experienced six such cycles since 1990. When compared to the 30 year average, the latest five year trend is six births per year above the 30 year average, thus confirming the perception of increased birth rates. It will be interesting to see if the cycle repeats itself as the latest spurt is now in its third year.



In the opinion of McCormick Consultants, today's base of 280 annual births plus a minimum 0.5% (one half of one percent) annual increase should be anticipated and used for school facility planning purposes for the next 10 & 20 years. This annual increase would add 14 new students per grade at year 10, and 29 new students per grade at year 20. Total school district enrollment would increase by 188 at year 10, and 385 at year 20. [Graph #2]



At this projected rate of growth, and using a 20-1 student to teacher ratio, 10 additional classroom spaces would be required 10 years from now and 10 more classrooms 20 years from now. A total of 20 additional properly sized and configured classrooms will be needed than exist today.

Student population: The attending student population, overtime, has similarly mirrored the resident population and birth history in that it has been statistically stable. Since 1990, total student population ranged from a high of 4,258 in 1992 to a low of 3,454 in 2005. The average over this time period is 3,820. In 2011, the enrollment is only 4% below the 21 year average. [Graph #3]

According to available records dating back to 1983, the largest district student population was in 1983 when 4,311 students were enrolled. Enrollments began to drop after 1983. Even though the general population has statistically remained steady, the student population has increased back to 3,668 students this year, showing slight increases in each of the last five years.

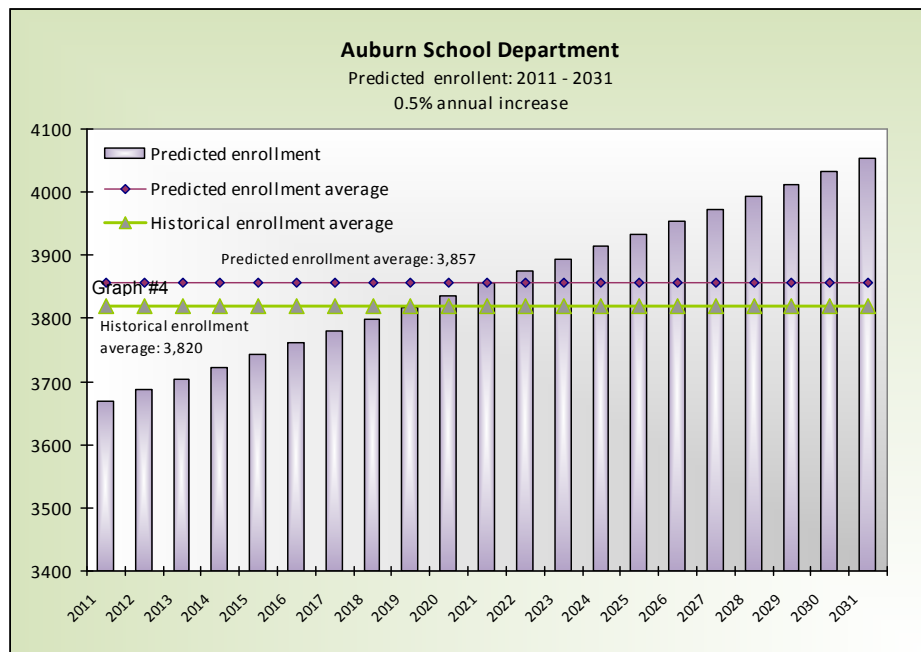
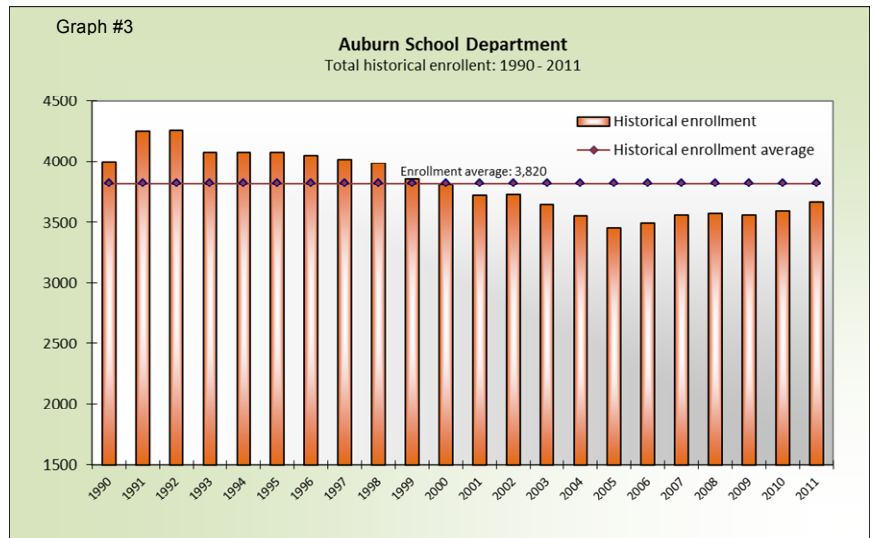
It is important to note that during the years of greatest enrollments, the district had 6 more school buildings than it does today.

Analysis of the enrollment data is somewhat complicated by the fact that until 2000, the communities of Mechanics Falls, Minot, and Poland attended Edward Little for grades 10-12 and 9th grade at Walton School. Approximately 400 students left over the ensuing years when the Poland Community High School was constructed. Of interest, however, is that the latest 21-year enrollment

average is the same as the last year these communities attended Edward Little.

Some of the student enrollment growth is due to the addition of new school offerings (pre-kindergarten), an “in migration” of students from closed private schools, “in migration” of formerly home schooled students, and slight birth increases. It should be noted that currently, only 150 of the potential 280 pre-kindergarten students attend the public schools due to space limitations and school policy.

In the opinion of McCormick Consultants, the Auburn School Department will, at a minimum, maintain the current student enrollment with at least a 0.5% (one half of one percent) annual increase over the next 20 years. Should the School Department decide to enroll all eligible PK students, and/or increase offerings to other “non-traditional” learners such as worker retraining, adult education, or post-secondary degree programs, a 5-8% increase could be experienced over the same 20 year period. [Graph #4]



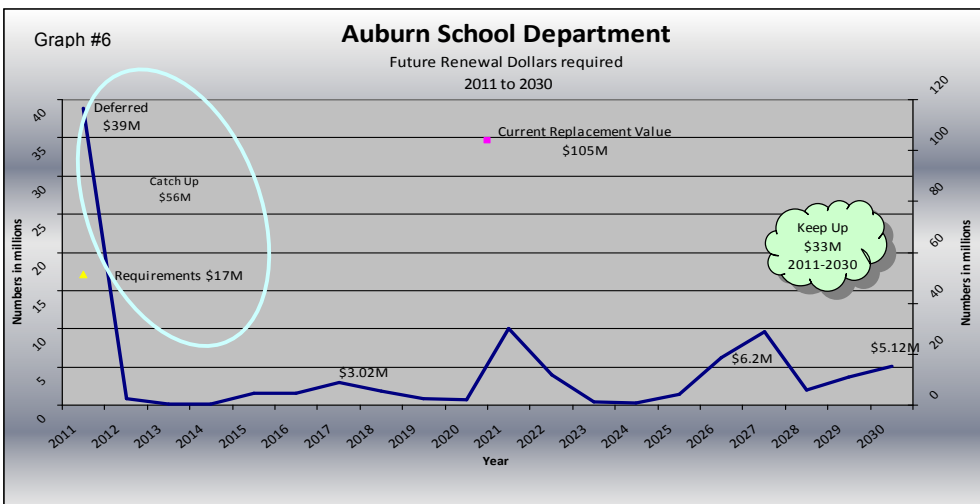
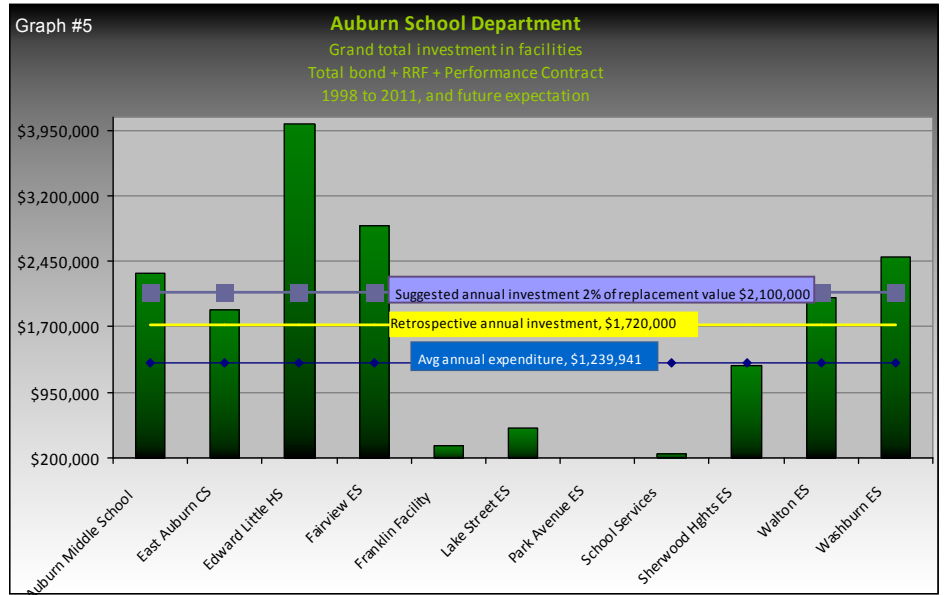
History has shown that Auburn has grown and prospered over time. Though there have indeed been some “tough” times, all studied indicators show that Auburn will continue to grow.

Consultant’s Conclusion: The current Auburn School Department facilities are not capable of providing sufficient appropriate learning spaces now and into the future. The community of Auburn should plan ways to expand educational spaces to best provide learning for all of its residents. It can afford

to, and must do so, if it wants to continue to survive and thrive.

Capital Renewal Investment: Capital re-investment to keep buildings in good operating order is essential. Without it, buildings will inevitably fall into disrepair or unacceptable conditions in terms of safety, comfort, and a good place for learning to take place. Capital renewal often takes last place in a school budget. Understanding capital renewal may not be obvious to some because it tends to get deferred until something catastrophic occurs like a roof leaking or a boiler no longer operational.

Beginning in 1998, Auburn has been able to fund capital renewal annually at a greater amount than in previous years and has upheld it since then. The annual amount expended has averaged \$1,239,941. Even though this amount seems like a large number, and it is, it has not been enough to keep the buildings from falling further behind. Based on replacement value of the buildings, Auburn should have been spending \$1,720,000 over the same time period. This indicates that there was a large deficit prior to the new expenditures. Based on today's current replacement value of the districts building inventory, the district should be spending \$2,100,000 [Graph #5].



Basically, this suggests that the district is falling behind at a rate of nearly \$1,000,000 per year. At this rate, the capital needs will never get caught up as there is \$56 million of deferred renewals now and \$33 million more looking forward 20 years. [Graph #6]

Edward Little:



There has been a high school in Auburn since 1834 when the Lewiston Falls Academy was constructed on the corner of Academy and High Streets. It became known as Edward Little in 1849 as a result of the support given to it by one of its incorporators, a fellow named Edward Little, for his forward vision and support for education. The school was expanded twice over the next 110 years to



accommodate population increases and newer educational teaching trends of the day. In 1874, ownership of the school was transferred from a chartered corporate entity to the City of Auburn. A condition of the transfer was that it forever be named Edward Little.





With the continued population growth in the area, and the baby boom that was beginning to develop in the 1950's, the Great Falls location was no longer able to provide adequate space and was outdated. The current Edward Little building on the Auburn Heights location was constructed and occupied in 1961. Once again, the overcrowding, facility condition, and changes in instructional techniques prompted the need for a new facility.

According to reports, the “proposed” originally designed Edward Little was never constructed. After three defeated referendums, a compromise in the size and cost was reached. It did not include enough classroom space or a gym, the cafeteria was too small, and other attributes normally found in schools were left out. The school was constructed for \$1.9 million. Four years after the main building was constructed, a gymnasium was added. In 1998, a classroom wing was added.



A long term facility master plan and vision perhaps could have aided the community to make decisions that would have avoided the later construction projects and perhaps diminished the impact of the current accreditation situation.

Accreditation: Edward Little High School has been placed on academic probation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), mostly due to the condition of the facilities. It has been in a “warning” status since 2006 and on actual probation since April 16th, 2009. NEASC is a commonly accepted accreditation institution that sets standards for school districts to align educational outcomes for graduates that are preparing for post-secondary attendance or for the job market.

Accreditation looks at the overall condition of the facility to determine how it enhances learning in terms of comfort, safety, and an appropriate educational learning and living environment. It also looks at the programs that are offered.

There are 41 major facility related deficiencies in the NEASC report (2009). Many of them are related to the facility's size. It simply is not large enough to properly serve the student population. Due to classrooms being overcrowded, classes and materials are offered in inappropriate places. Some programs simply cannot be offered due to lack of suitable space. Then there are identified infrastructure issues such as an outdated heating system, poor air quality, recurring mold issues, a severely undersized cafeteria, small locker rooms, and outdated library and media resources, to name a few.

Edward Little has made some progress in addressing accreditation but remains on probation today. Even if Edward Little were able to address the relatively minor curriculum related deficiencies, it cannot address the significant ones as they are building infrastructure related and requires the renovation of the entire facility and the addition of 66,000 new square feet, at a recently estimated cost of \$49 million. The same report estimated the cost of an entirely new high school to be \$61 million (not including site acquisition and development costs).

Of course Edward Little is not the only concern facing the School Committee.

- Some of the other buildings are old, and are in poor or declining condition.
- There is \$56 million of identified deferred capital renewal needs (“catch up”) in the district.

- The future cost of keeping the buildings over the next 20 years (“keep up”) is another \$33 million.
- Total capital cost to “catch up” and “keep up” for the next 20 years is \$89 million.
- Failure to provide appropriate capital renewal on an annual basis will surely cause the buildings condition to continue to decline.
- Energy and maintenance costs are higher than newer buildings.
- Educational dollars are harder and harder to come by. The District must find means to use available dollars more efficiently.
- The district applied for construction funding assistance from the MeDOE last year and was not successful.
- All of the schools are at size capacity for the number of students attending them. There are instances of student-teacher ratios greater than the desired ratio of 20-1. There simply is no room for enrollment growth without compromising the quality of teaching.
- Some of the school buildings are not organized acceptably to deliver education for today’s standards.
- There are inequities within the elementary buildings in terms of offerings due to space.
- Most of the buildings are not designed for learning in terms of the future, some of which we don’t even know yet, or techniques that cannot be employed due to configurations.
- The buildings do not support the Vision 2020 for the future of education for the Auburn community.

Process:

Community stakeholders and process: On August 17, 2011, the Auburn School Committee voted to employ McCormick Facilities Management to assist it in updating its long-term strategic facility plan. A voluntary committee representing community stakeholders with an interest in Auburn education was solicited to meet with representatives of the Auburn School Department and McCormick Facilities Management. This committee met six times in the subsequent months, completed reviews of much statistical data, conducted research, participated in two public hearings, placed documents on the school’s website, and utilized technology such as GoogleDocs and email for shared communications to carry out its mission.

The committee was asked to formulate their vision for education in the future. What would they like to offer in terms of education for learners that represents state of the art teaching and learning techniques and the infrastructure needed to support it? What vision can they perceive to provide quality education in the 21st century? They were asked to think out of the box as to what facilities should be like to provide 21st learning, devoid of emotion, politics, and special interests. How could costs be contained in light of diminishing funding?

It is important to note that the Auburn School Department has had an actionable long-term facilities plan since at least 1980. As with any long-term plan, it must be reviewed and adjusted periodically. Things change. Building conditions change, finances change, and more significantly, the need to educate learners continually changes. As such, long-term plans must change to keep pace.

It may appear that this nine week overall process has been too short for such a significant outcome. This effort would not have been possible without previous committee efforts and the significant amount of data that already exists. This process was only possible in this time frame because of the good work of previous stakeholder committees, School Board members, and volumes of data that exists.

However, there is a point of much more substantial importance that must be understood by all. This abbreviated process is only the beginning of a much longer one that needs to occur. This phase was to involve the community in early discussions to gauge the interests of the community to determine

how it would like to move forward in regards to caring for the school facilities AND with providing educational facilities for the future. This first step of the process was to assist the Board to determine what, if any, new ideas may come about as a result of the committee's deliberations in light of the failed funding assistance sought by the Board from MeDOE last year.

The work of this committee is now over with the delivery of this report. A new committee should be formed immediately to continue the planning and to determine a way to implement the recommendations of this committee.

Clearly, addressing accreditation and the needs of Edward Little is of the utmost importance to the community. A clear understanding of the accreditation needs must be achieved. It simply is not just the expenditure of a few dollars. According to the work of Harriman Associates for the major capital application last year, renovating and adding 66,000 square feet of new space is needed to satisfy NEASC. The cost was estimated to be \$49 million. If this scenario is chosen, it would still be an old renovated school with some new space and would not be particularly well arranged for future education delivery methods. Constructing an all new facility was estimated to cost \$61 million (not including site acquisition costs) and be located on a site to be determined.

Edward Little should be the springboard to lead future efforts for developing new facilities that best serve the educational needs of Auburn. What to do about Edward Little must first be decided before any other capital plans are implemented. If a single campus is desired over time, it must begin by addressing the needs of the high school. Whatever decision is reached for Edward Little will impact all other facility decisions for the following 30-40 years, at which point all other activities will likely necessarily be stopped.

Recommendations:

McCormick Facility Management Consultants is suggesting that a new community facility stakeholders committee be formed immediately; January 2012 at the latest.

The following is a possible timeline for the newly formed committee:

- The committee should represent a good cross section of community. It should include residents, city council members, and school committee members. It should include school administrators and staff as ex-officio members.*
- The committee should meet regularly: at least monthly.*
- Likely, the services of an outside consultant will be required to assist with the technical aspects and group facilitation, and should be employed.*
- Campus options should be developed and thoroughly explored.*
- At least three public hearings should be conducted to seek input and distribute its work to date to the public at large.*
- A non-binding straw poll vote should be held in November 2012.*
- Based on the public input and straw poll results, the committee could move forward to implement the strategic vision. If the support is not there, then they could continue to develop plans until community support is achieved.*

If this time frame were successful, the earliest students would be graduating from a new high school would likely be 2015. This is four more years of graduating students from a probationary accredited school!

Vision 2020 was a guiding document. Potential components of a facility vision were suggested. Community feedback was solicited. Data concerning folks, facilities, and finance were analyzed. At least a dozen possible solutions were considered, with five identified for in-depth review.

Based on the discussions, public hearings, and input from many, the following is the recommendation of this committee:

Create a “Comprehensive campus for community & life-long learning”. The concept is that over time, all Auburn public education would take place on a single campus. It would not be one large building housing the entire student population but likely would have several buildings serving different grade levels and educational needs.

The new campus could have a performing arts auditorium, ice arena, all athletic fields at one location, and many features that the school department and community currently do not have.

This recommendation would likely be performed in steps, or phases. The possible steps have been tentatively identified in the following. Each step is a go/no-go step. Work continues as each step is successfully accomplished. If not successful, the process stops.

Phase 1

Site/Concept Committee

1. Review and follow the steps as outlined in the State of Maine Board of Education-Chapter 61, Rules for Major School Construction Projects.
2. Begin discussions to determine where land can be acquired and at what cost, with sufficient acreage for a single campus concept.
3. Design the campus in concept only for community discussion and cost estimating.
4. Secure tentative funding commitments.
5. Secure any necessary permits and approvals.
6. Design and construct a new high school.
7. Include planning to expand the middle school to accommodate grade 6.

Phase 1
1-7 years

Additional Phases (after Phase 1)

Phase 2
7-12 years

8. Determine elementary needs.

Phase 3
12-20 years

9. Determine other district needs.

This time line represents a 20-year time frame to get to a single campus. If at any time during the 20-year time line, conditions change, the plan can change. If the student population reverses or economic conditions change, then the plan can be put on hold or adjusted. The remaining buildings will still be in the school departments’ inventory during this time and can be utilized until they are no longer needed.

This is truly a long term vision. It addresses so many current needs in the district. It creates much efficiency which will reduce operating costs as compared to not doing anything. It allows for flexibility and expandability. It can start and stop anytime to accommodate changing educational needs along the way.

Consultant’s conclusions:

The community of Auburn and its School Department are at a time and place where something must be done to some, if not most, of its school buildings. Edward Little High School is on probationary status by its accreditation services provider. All of the elementary buildings except Park Avenue do not provide all of the appropriate spaces for today’s desired curriculum. Some of the elementary buildings cannot teach certain programs such as creative or performing arts, physical education, or music for lack of suitable

instructional space. The elementary schools do not all offer the same programs, which is inequitable. The Middle School is not a true middle school as it consists only of grades 7-8 and not 6-8. There are no available rooms for any increase in student population. The District has a hefty deferred capital renewal for its aged buildings of nearly \$56 million dollars. Additionally, another \$33 million will need to be expended over the next 20 years to keep the buildings in acceptable condition. Most of the buildings are not energy or operationally efficient.

To be certain, there are many issues to be addressed.

The challenge is to figure out how to resolve the many issues and needs with finances seemingly more difficult to obtain.

The 120 year old model for education still being utilized today is no longer viable. The days of neighborhood schools are outdated. It matters little what size the school is but more what the school offers and how its programs are delivered. How the school building performs in terms of comfort, safety, air quality, lighting, and other factors are far more important than size. How teachers are prepared and the tools they have to work with are what matters most.

Tomorrow's schools need to be flexible and expandable. They must provide for changing technology with little effort. Appropriate spaces for each program must be available for each age group, ability, and curriculum of the day. Kids need room to do their projects and store them for the next day. Band needs a room where it can make all the noise it wants and not disturb the classrooms next door. Creative art needs room for paint and clay and kilns and storage of works in progress. Performing arts need a place to build props and store them as well as dressing rooms and play rehearsal space. All schools should have gymnasiums with high ceilings so students can shoot a basketball and play games and exercise. Modern laboratories are needed to conduct actual experiments in real time, not just read about them from a book. Libraries and media centers need to have computers and fast broadband for downloading research materials. Learners of all ages need a place to learn and better themselves as lifelong learners.

Lastly, the importance of technology cannot be stressed enough. Every part of our lives today is impacted by technology. Technology will be even more prevalent in the coming years, in learning as well as living.

The Auburn School Department cannot address all of its needs simultaneously in the wake of so many insufficiencies. Simply addressing the deferred capital needs alone is more than the district can afford. At its current rate of capital expenditures, it will never get caught up. And if only its current building needs are addressed, then modernization will not be able to occur. If the student population expands, the district will have to find space somewhere to accommodate them.

The creation of a single campus for learning is becoming very common across the nation and in our own state. Reducing redundancies and keeping schools nearby is good for kids, parents, staff, and the taxpayer. Young children will look forward to going to the same campus each year. They will take pride in it. All learners will have the same opportunity to broaden their horizons. Operational costs will be reduced and over time, less expensive, than caring for the current aged facilities, some nearly 100 years old.

The community has an opportunity now to create something unique and forward thinking in terms of providing education and training for all of its residents well into the future.

Auburn can afford it; it is a matter of priorities. And what matters more than providing an outstanding education for your children and all learners in the district?

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