

DECEMBER 16, 2008

MARIEMONT CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

# FACILITIES REPORT

ASSESSMENT PHASE

## PART 1



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*The assessment report details the findings of the first phase of the comprehensive facilities planning process conducted in the Mariemont City School District in the fall of 2008. This report focuses specifically on staff, parent, and community feedback regarding the educational program and its relationship to the school facilities.*

## Facilities Report

### Assessment Phase

December 16, 2008

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **PART I – FACILITIES REPORT SUMMARY** (Booklet 1)

- Introduction
- History
- Facilities Engagement process
- Next Steps
- **Educational Needs**  
*Facilities Assessment Summaries from Staff, Students and Community*
- Individual summaries available online at [www.mariemontschools.org](http://www.mariemontschools.org); Exhibits 1-8:
  - 1 – 2006 District Advisory Committee Facilities Report
  - 2 – 2008-2009 Facilities Planning Process Timeline
  - 3 - Assessment Summary – Staff, Students, Building Teams
  - 4 – Assessment Summary – Community Members
  - 5 – Community Dialogue Evaluation
  - 6 - Projected Technology Needs – Futures Team
  - 7 – Planning Process Overview – Facilities Advisory Panel
  - 8 – Frequently Asked Questions

### **PART II - BUILDING REPORTS** (Booklets 2a & 2b)

*Facilities Assessment Summaries from OSFC, SFA Architects and Turner Construction*

#### **A. OSFC Standards and CEFPI Appraisal** (Booklet 2a)

- Enrollment Projections
- Facts and Vocabulary
- OSFC Standards
- CEFPI Building Appraisal Summary

#### **B. Building Needs Summaries and Floor Plans** (Booklet 2b)

- 1 - Fairfax Elementary Building
- 2 - Mariemont Elementary
- 3 - Terrace Park Elementary
- 4 - Mariemont Junior High
- 5 - Mariemont High School

***Information contained in these Building Reports reflects an April 2008 assessment based on Ohio School Facilities Commission standards, and a subsequent review by SFA Architects and Turner Construction. This assessment will be used as one determining factor in the development of the Mariemont City Schools Facilities Master Plan.***

*For more information on the Mariemont City Schools Facilities Planning Process to date, visit our district website, [www.mariemontschools.org](http://www.mariemontschools.org), and click on the Facilities Planning Process link. All presentations, reports and upcoming news can be found there.*

## **Introduction**

During the fall of 2008, the Mariemont City School District began a comprehensive Facilities Engagement Process to study the current condition of the five school buildings and develop a facilities master plan that will guide the district facilities work for decades to come.

### **History**

The Mariemont City School District has a long history of taking excellent care of all school facilities. Preventative maintenance, accessibility issues, and environmental responsiveness are an integral part of this history. The current school buildings in the district range in age from 38 to 95 years old. The high school underwent an addition and renovation in 2004. In 2006, the Board of Education commissioned the District Advisory Committee to study all five school buildings and issue findings that are detailed in exhibit one of this report (all exhibits referenced in this report may be found on the district website – [www.mariemontschools.org/facilities](http://www.mariemontschools.org/facilities)). This report led to the Board of Education passing a resolution in December 2007 requesting a comprehensive review of the district facilities including a ten year enrollment projection by the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC). This OSFC report was submitted to the school district in the summer of 2008. The findings from the OSFC report are contained in parts 2A and 2B of this assessment summary, and the complete OSFC report may be obtained from the district office, 6743 Chestnut Street. The results of these studies show that there are significant infrastructure (building systems) issues in the district facilities that must be addressed within the next 10 years. As a result of these findings, the Board of Education directed the Superintendent's Facilities Committee (Denise Walter, Board Member, Marie Huenefeld, Board Vice President, Natalie Lucas, Treasurer and Lance Hollander, Facilities Director and Fairfax Principal) and the Superintendent of Schools to develop a Facilities Engagement Process that will result in the development of a comprehensive facilities master plan. This plan will guide the district facilities improvement plans for future years.

### **Facilities Engagement Process**

A three phase process was developed to guide the formation of a comprehensive facilities master plan and may be found in exhibit two of this report. The three phases are: assessment, solutions/options, and decisions. The assessment phase is now complete and this report will detail the educational findings that were gathered as a part of this process. A companion report has been prepared by professional facility consultants SFA Architects and Turner Construction. SFA and Turner are working with the school district to validate the OSFC report and determine the costs for any needed facility work that will be undertaken as a part of the comprehensive master plan. A Facilities Advisory Panel (FAP) has been formed to serve as advisory group throughout the entire process. The panel includes three members from each of the four communities within the school district (Columbia Township, Fairfax, Mariemont, and Terrace Park).

Phase two of the process will include the development of several options, complete with price tags, for the school facilities that reflect the information gathered during the assessment process. The review of these options will include the same groups that were used in phase one: staff, building teams (parents and staff), facility advisory panel, and a community dialogue.

Phase three will take the option selected in phase two and build an implementation framework for the selected option. This framework will include a timeline and a plan for financing the solution.

## **Assessment Phase Findings**

The assessment phase findings will be divided into four portions:

- staff/parent/student feedback,
- general community feedback,
- facilities advisory team feedback, and
- futures team feedback.

The staff and parent feedback was gathered through staff meetings and the formation of building teams. The staff feedback was gathered through staff meetings held at each of the five buildings. The five building teams were comprised of staff volunteers and parent volunteers. After these five teams met they were combined into two teams: a K-6 team and a 7-12 team. These combined teams met to

discuss a shared view of the facilities. The student feedback was gathered from the student council at Mariemont High School. The futures team met twice and prepared a white paper detailing items to consider as students are prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An open community dialogue was held on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and was attended by approximately 140 district residents. The community dialogue began with the presentation of general information about the five buildings and the Facilities Planning Process. The second portion of the evening presented an opportunity for community feedback based upon three general questions:

- Based on your knowledge of the district, what are the critical needs and priorities in regard to the facilities?
- What do we keep? What do we change?
- Do you have any advice or suggestions for this process?

The information gathered in these meetings is included in two exhibits. Exhibit three includes the information gathered from the staff, students, building teams and exhibit four includes the information gathered at the community dialogue and information submitted via the district website. Exhibit five outlines the evaluation results submitted by the participants in the community dialogue. Exhibit six is the information developed by the futures team. Exhibit seven is the information gathered from the Facilities Advisory Panel. Exhibit eight is a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

#### **Staff/Parent Feedback**

The information gathered from parents, staff, and students was comprehensive. There was a common feeling that four buildings (excluding the high school) were in need of significant repairs. There was a feeling that the current condition of the buildings is a distraction to the educational program. Teachers and parents related reports of rooms that experienced wide temperature swings in short periods of time. Students have difficulty concentrating on the lessons when the outdated heating and cooling systems become very loud. Low lighting levels are difficult for students when reading and writing. Bathrooms are not always operational due to failing plumbing systems and students may have to travel to other parts of the building to use a restroom. Parents reported a need to reexamine entrance procedures to reflect current safety practices. Students and parents who are disabled have difficulty navigating the buildings due to a lack of accessibility. These items are by no means an exhaustive listing of the items that are affecting the education of students, but the examples provide a glimpse into the realities that are found in the school facilities.

#### **Community Dialogue/Website Feedback**

The feedback from the community dialogue and information gathered via the district website was also comprehensive. There were a variety of questions and points of view on each of the three questions. Commonalities centered around a sense that the district facilities are in need of attention and a plan needs to be developed that includes clear pricing information. Feedback also indicated the importance of keeping the district focused on the academic program and student learning during this process. Many suggested that all facility decisions be viewed through the lens of student learning. There was also a clear sentiment that any solution be seen as conservative and not too “fancy.” There was a sizeable amount of feedback regarding the issue of community schools. There are strong feelings on the issue of community schools and no clear consensus on the topic. These multiple viewpoints will need to be fully explored during Phase Two of the process.

#### **Facilities Advisory Panel (FAP) Feedback**

The feedback from the FAP largely reflected the information gathered during the community dialogue meeting. The FAP has been instrumental in providing feedback on the process itself. Some of the items that have occurred as a direct result of the FAP include: inclusion of student feedback, more explanation of the 2006 DAC Study and its foundational relationship to the current process, and the offering of building tours. The FAP toured the renovated Kilgour School in Hyde Park to gain an understanding of the work that goes into renovating older structures. The feedback from the Kilgour tour was very positive in that the building maintained its original charm while providing the spaces for a 21<sup>st</sup> century education. It was also noted that the renovation was conservative and not “fancy.”

#### **Futures Team Feedback**

The Futures Team was tasked with developing a “white paper” outlining future trends that should be addressed during any facilities work. This team listed five trends:

1. Education will become more individualized;

2. Research is changing - the media center will change;
3. 24/7/365 global access to curriculum and resources;
4. Collaboration and critical thinking become all the more vital;
5. Platform (laptop, desktop, handheld, etc.) will be smaller more portable and must be flexible.

The futures team appropriately noted that all five of these trends have both facility and instructional implications as students are prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Educational Needs**

There were numerous educational needs identified throughout the assessment phase of the facilities process. All of the information gathered is included in the exhibits attached to this report. Key areas that are seen as having an impact on education include, but are not limited to:

- Support of the Learning Tools (technology, electricity)
- Appropriate learning environment (heating and cooling)
- Individualized instructional spaces
- Accessibility for those with special needs
- Efficiency
- Instructional configurations

The support of the learning tools includes technology and sufficient electrical capacity. Currently, teachers struggle when working with technology due to frequent electrical issues. The facilities do not have sufficient electrical systems to support technology that is essential when delivering education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Appropriate learning environments that are comfortable and free from distraction are of critical importance. During the last month there have been multiple examples of portions of buildings being without heat for significant portions of the day. The current heating and cooling systems can be very noisy and serve as a distraction for students and staff. Many of the classrooms and common spaces have inadequate lighting.

Current state and federal mandates require a more individualized educational program for all students. The individualization of instruction has significant issues in the area of school facilities. Small group areas are essential in order to provide the level of instruction that all students require.

Accessibility for those with special needs is an issue in several of the Mariemont facilities. Students, parents, grandparents, and community members experience difficulty when using school facilities. Some students have been transferred out of their "home" elementary schools because of accessibility issues.

Efficiency is an important issue in all of the school facilities. Energy efficiency is a concern but this category goes beyond that item. Safety and security procedures are difficult in the current facilities and do not always reflect the current thinking in these areas.

Instructional configurations need to reflect current teaching practices that will allow teachers to meet the individual student needs. Small and large group meeting spaces will provide this flexibility.

The Mariemont Schools are known for academic excellence and are viewed as an exemplar in the area, across the state, and even nationally. The current facilities have presented challenges that will need to be addressed during this master planning process.

## **Additional Questions/Comments**

Throughout the Assessment Phase a number of general questions and comments were presented in the various groups/teams. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive, but does include the most frequent items. The following comments come directly from those who have participated in the assessment phase.

- The educational program comes first – base all decisions on the needs of the educational program
- How do we look into green technology to help with energy costs in the future?

- How do we evaluate the value of the three elementary schools to each community?
- It is critical as we embark on this process to clearly delineate needs vs. wants.
- Students should all have the same educational opportunities
- Need to support all students into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Technology must keep up with the times
- Where is the money going to come from?
- Show costs for multiple plans – renovation/partial/new construction
- Concern about losing neighborhood schools
- Consolidation of schools would allow for more programs
- Utilization of buildings now results in some unequal educational programs
- Keep the historic look of the buildings
- Preserving the schools is very important

These issues will be addressed during phase two (Options/Solutions) of the Facilities Planning Process. Many of these issues are currently addressed in the FAQ (frequently asked questions) document that may be found on the district website under the facilities link ([www.mariemontschools.org/facilities](http://www.mariemontschools.org/facilities)) and is also listed as Exhibit eight in this document.

## **Summary of Findings**

The assessment phase of the facilities process was very detailed and included a large number of participants. It is clear that those participating in the assessment process see the needs in the school facilities. It is also clear that there is much discussion surrounding the issue of neighborhood schools. It will be critical to develop and present a variety of solutions/options in phase two of the process that allow all residents to discuss and explore these issues and provide feedback to the Board of Education regarding the proper course for the Mariemont Schools.

The current state of the school infrastructure demands action and developing a comprehensive facilities master plan is imperative to meeting the challenges of aging buildings. The district cannot afford to continually pour money into the repair of these facilities. It is also important to understand the fact that the buildings are safe. Safety will always remain a top priority.

It will be of critical importance to keep the school focus on maintaining and improving the excellent educational program while planning to address the identified facility issues. The focus can never waiver from the mission of this great school community – Preparing the Scholars of Today and Inspiring the Leaders of Tomorrow. Working together with community, students, parents, and staff this master plan will provide the facilities that will serve the Mariemont students for decades to come.