Facility Master Plan Guiding Principles

The following principles have been formulated by the Board of Trustees of the Austin Independent School District to shape the development of a Facility Master Plan for the District. Drafted in August and September 2013, and approved at the Board’s regular meeting on September 30, 2013, these guiding principles will be used in the development of a Facility Master Plan, which, according to a resolution approved by the Board on April 1, 2013, will be completed on or before June 30, 2014, and which "shall include specific plans and/or remedies to address under-enrollment within the District in order to optimize the use of District facilities as defined by a facility's permanent capacity by the opening of the 2016/17 school year."

All of the following guiding principles are deemed important by the Board, and they are not listed in any particular order in this document.

The Board welcomes community feedback on these guiding principles. Comments can be shared with individual trustees and/or submitted to the entire Board by email (trustees@austinisd.org) or through the District’s website (www.austinisd.org).

Guiding Principle - Health, Safety and Security

First and foremost, the health, safety and security of our students and staff is the number one priority. The Facility Master Plan will support safety and security measures at all District facilities through compliance with all safety codes and regulations. The District will incorporate safety and security best practices in the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the District’s facilities.

Expectations for the development of the Facility Master Plan:

- The District will consider current and planned utilization and enrollment when evaluating the safety of a facility.
- The District will establish benchmarks using school safety best practices and establish a regular cycle for review.
  - As an example of best practices, the Safe Schools: A Best Practices Guide, by the Council of Educational Facilities Planners International, lists infrastructure as one of its primary areas to address under safety. Some of these best practices are to provide:
    - a safe environment with the ability to lock students behind doors;
    - secured controlled entries; and,
    - secure keying systems and camera monitoring systems.
  - Examples of other best practices that will be considered include:
    - “Texas Unified School Safety and Security Standards” by the Texas State University Texas School Safety Center; and
- The District will ensure a healthy school environment (e.g. through attention to physical materials, supplies, air exchange, etc.) and how those items interact with students and staff.

Guiding Principle – Academics and Co-Curricular Supports

The Facility Master Plan is academically driven, recognizes that physical environment and facilities affect learning and student achievement, and supports the achievement of the academic and co-curricular (e.g., physical education, athletics, fine arts, and career and technical education, etc.) goals and strategies articulated in the District’s Strategic Plan and Board Priorities.
Expectations for the development of the Facility Master Plan:

- The Facility Master Plan will support the revision of Educational Specifications on a four-year cycle. Consideration will be given to legislative changes and Board priorities for updates to the Educational Specifications.

**Guiding Principle - Protection of Financial Investment**

The Facility Master Plan will include the protection of the taxpayers’ investment in the District’s facilities through a 10-year long-term plan with a two-year review cycle for maintenance, repairs and renovations to extend the useful life of existing facilities coupled with the development of parameters for building replacement.

Expectations for the development of the Facility Master Plan:

- The District will use current data about conditions of its facilities to inform the need for repair, renovations and new construction.
- The District spends M&O funds for facility maintenance and operations at a level consistent with national best practices and comparable to local and urban peer districts; additional M&O beyond the current level of expenditure should not be used to reduce larger systemic repair and capital needs. The District will prioritize maintenance that prevents larger, more costly systemic repairs within financial limitations while maintaining the District's financial integrity.
- The District will consider the rapid evolution of technology and attention will be given at the beginning of each phase to purchase the most current hardware and software to meet academic and administrative needs.
- The District will weigh the cost of improvements and renovations as they relate to return-on-investment (ROI) in relation to the long-term cost of new construction.

**Guiding Principle - Optimal Utilization**

The Facility Master Plan will identify specific plans and/or remedies to achieve a target range of 75% - 115% of permanent capacity when compared with projected student enrollment, beginning with the opening of the 2016-17 school year and every school year thereafter, and will contain a two-year cycle of review for enrollment projections for subsequent years.

Expectations for the development of the Facility Master Plan:

- The District will develop strategies to address both under-enrolled and overcrowded schools that may include boundary changes, grade level reassignment, modifications to transfer and space use policies and/or practices. Any strategies that address improving utilization should be vetted with the affected community for feedback before decisions are made.
  - Strategies for under-enrolled schools should begin with identifying the reasons for low enrollment. Attendance areas with declining neighborhood populations may benefit from boundary changes, grade level reassignments or consolidation. Schools with large numbers of students choosing to enroll at schools outside their neighborhood may benefit from the balanced and thoughtful addition of academic programs to retain and attract students or restricting out-migration via modifications to transfer policies or practices.
  - Strategies for overcrowded schools may include provisions for additional capacity.
  - The definition of optimal utilization may include available classrooms used to house district-wide staff or programs.
- The District will support the concept of designing and operating schools as centers of the community that support high quality educational outcomes and encourage a mix of community use, services and programs through collaboration with other public and private entities as defined by Board priorities or Board policy.
- The District will minimize disruption to the lives of students, families, and community.
- Projected student enrollment includes students outside of attendance zone population.
• Absent exigent circumstances, the District, in consultation and collaboration with the affected campuses, should be given at least three years to implement a plan to bring enrollment within the target utilization range.

Guiding Principle – Equity in Facilities
The Facility Master Plan addresses equity in facilities by providing each school and site, facilities based on current Educational Specifications, through community input based on needs and Board approved programs at the campus. These facilities will provide students, access to quality academic and specialized programming and technology through the construction and/or renovation of facilities through a strategic, phased modernization strategy.

Expectations for the development of the Facility Master Plan:
• Equity for facilities may require unequal investments among all facilities.
• The District will address facility needs through a process of long-range planning so that equity in facilities is achieved despite any perceived inequities of investment over short periods of time.
• Although complete compliance with current Educational Specifications is not always possible, meaningful improvements can often be developed to achieve the maximum equitable solution on a school-by-school basis.
• The District will ensure district-wide equity of facilities that supports the academic mission of the District within the context of the District’s financial limitations.

Guiding Principle – Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability
The Facility Master Plan will be developed to support and protect the environment and strengthen academics through the use of sustainable and conservation focused practices for its buildings, grounds and equipment. The plan will be informed by best practices in daily operations of facilities and equipment using green energy, energy efficiency, resource recovery, water conservation, waste minimization and sustainable building practices.

Expectations for the development of the Facility Master Plan:
• The cost of energy improvements and sustainable construction will be considered as it relates to Return-on-Investment (ROI) such as new construction vs. retrofit costs of improvements.

Guiding Principle – Communication and Community Engagement
The Facility Master Plan development process must, provide multiple opportunities for meaningful input and varied means of engagement tailored to community needs.

Expectations for the development of the Facility Master Plan:
• Stakeholders include, but are not limited to, parents, staff, campus and community based organizations, parent-teacher associations, the business community (e.g., chambers of commerce), neighborhood associations, historically under-represented communities, and other key community individuals or groups identified as key communicators.
• The District will strive to provide stakeholders an understanding of the content to educate and inform the public about the proposed Facility Master Plan, and provide opportunities for input as part of to the decision-making process, and inform and educate school communities of the institutional facility investments over time at specific school sites.
• The District will engage affected communities to be partners in developing solutions.
• The District will show respect for the community by preserving the history of the community and those things (e.g., buildings) that are important to the community.
• The District will take into consideration the desires and needs of the campus.