



EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES MASTER PLAN ROUNDTABLES

Prepared for Chicago Public Schools

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY



Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is currently in the process of evaluating its facilities. As a part of this process, in December 2023 and January 2024, the district solicited community input via roundtable discussions at 16 sites. The total number of participants were 1,130 (527 in-person and 603 virtual). CPS also administered a student survey in February 2024.

To support these efforts, Hanover analyzed the student survey findings along with notes from the roundtables and provided a set of key findings. The results of this analysis can support the district's strategic planning process by identifying constituents' key concerns and recommendations related to CPS facilities.

In this report, Hanover explores key themes and trends across the community roundtable sessions and student survey. In total, Hanover reviewed 84 note-taking documents and survey responses from 1689 students to provide an overarching analysis of CPS community priorities for improving the district's facilities and better serving students and families.



KEY FINDINGS: FACILITIES ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

SYNTHESIZED FINDINGS:

OUTDATED BUILDINGS

Many facilities are aging with outdated infrastructure and equipment. Participants note that many schools lack modern learning facilities, adequate bathrooms, and proper temperature regulation.

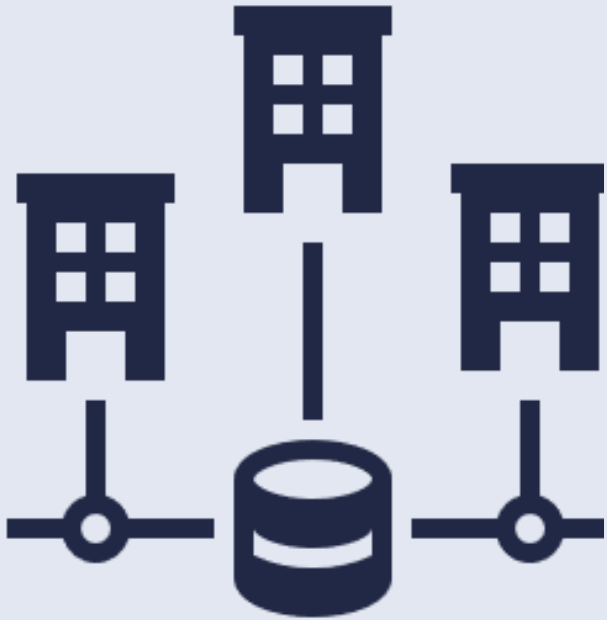
Participants call for the modernization of CPS facilities, including:

- ❖ Enhancing technology access;
- ❖ Expanding gathering spaces like auditoriums and gyms;
- ❖ Upgrading heating and cooling systems; and
- ❖ Improving traffic management around schools

Participants express concerns about accessibility at some buildings, such as those lacking an elevator, which limits student experience and decreases enrollment among wheelchair users and others with impaired mobility.



UNDERUTILIZATION OF SPACES



Many schools have underutilized spaces that could be used more effectively.

Suggested solutions include taking advantage of underutilized buildings to expand existing programs, community activities, adult learning, resource centers, and additional amenities.

Participants call for more creative use of underutilized spaces by allocating space for initiatives such as community centers, mental health clinics, affordable childcare, community-sponsored programs, and spaces for art and music rooms.

Participants advocate for CPS to expand partnerships with community organizations to host programs and activities in underutilized buildings. For example, partnerships with local trade unions could support the extension of career and technical education (CTE) to more buildings.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Roundtable participants raise several concerns related to building security. These include traffic dangers around school premises and safety for students entering and leaving schools.

Participants also cite the absence of locks on bathroom stall doors, as well as the need for more security cameras to eliminate ‘camera blind spots.’

Participants suggest additional teacher supervision in order to maintain adequate levels of safety for students.



OVERCROWDING



Created by AnneHartl Shultz
from the Noun Project

A limited number of CPS schools are experiencing overcrowding: roundtable participants report that overcrowding at school buildings is leading to difficulties finding spaces for students with diverse learning needs and affecting the quality of teaching and learning.

Participants suggest that this problem has also exacerbated classroom management challenges due to excessively large class sizes. They express concern about the ability to create motivating and engaging spaces for students when they are feeling ‘cramped and shoved around’ due to overcrowding.

Participants call for more space for programs, assessments, and meetings. They also seek the creation of spaces for medical and mental health clinics, childcare centers, and community programs.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS



Social emotional concerns were a prominent theme across roundtable sessions. Participants particularly raise concerns about students perceived as not following the code of conduct, staff burnout, and the lack of support for diverse learners.

Participants express a desire for schools to be more inviting and provide a joyful personal learning experience. They call for more social-emotional and mental health support for students as well as staff and families.

Participants highlight a need for more training for classroom management, understanding trauma, and social-emotional learning, including among support staff. They also advocate for greater investment in social services, restorative justice coordinators, and social-emotional coordinators at high-need schools.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS



Roundtable participants strongly advocate for more spaces and additional resources to be dedicated to college and career readiness. Participants highlight the unequal distribution of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and STEM programs in the district. They point out the loss of programs such as nursing, business, and agriculture at some high schools due to limited facilities and budget constraints as being areas of concern. Participants recommend that CPS reinstate CTE programs that were discontinued due to lack of space.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

Roundtable participants issue a resounding call for more community involvement, parent education, and transparency from the district.

Participants raise concerns about insufficient communication with parents and the community. They particularly advocate for more avenues facilitating parent involvement in schools and greater district accountability in equitable school funding and decision-making.

Participants suggest that expanding the community school model across schools would benefit CPS by fostering stronger partnerships between the district and families as well as surrounding communities.



RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION: CHARTER SCHOOLS



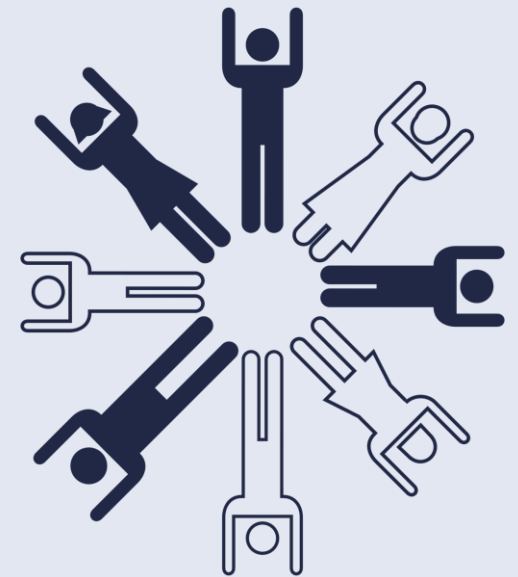
Multiple roundtable participants raise concerns about the funding of CPS charter schools within the district, which are perceived to divert resources from other schools. Some participants report that many parents choose to transfer their children to CPS charter schools due to concerns about safety and resource limitations. Participants advocate for improving conditions in neighborhood schools by prioritizing safety, security, and motivating curriculum, and establishing safety networks.

Several participants highlight the need for clarification on the district's plan to prioritize resourcing neighborhood schools. Others suggest that inequitable resource distribution favors selective enrollment schools and CPS charter schools at the expense of neighborhood schools.

MEETING DIVERSE NEEDS

Roundtable participants highlight the importance of equitably meeting the needs all learners, such as students with disabilities (SWD), English learners (ELs), and Multilingual Learners (ML). Participants note that whereas some schools have special education and BIL resources but lack sufficient physical space, others do not have programming resources but appear to have enough physical space.

Participants advocate for more programmatic funding to support the recent migrant influx, such as inclusion support for newcomers and more Spanish-speaking teachers and interpreters for EL students and families. They also seek greater consistency in Special Education teacher retention and more counselors to support SWD and ELs.



SESSION-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

BRONZEVILLE/ SOUTH LAKEFRONT PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Positive highlights include modern, clean, and safe physical spaces that include features like flexible classrooms, music rooms, and libraries. Several comments expressed appreciation for the presence of natural light, outdoor play areas, and facilities that celebrate culture and community. However, participants called for improvements in outdoor spaces, auditoriums, gyms, and the overall safety of the surrounding areas. For example, participants stressed the need for functional, clean bathrooms and better maintenance of locker rooms. Several comments proposed more security cameras to monitor unattended areas such as bathroom entrances. Additional comments noted a disparity in access to technology and modern learning tools between schools. Participants recommended that CPS prioritize infrastructure upgrades focusing on heating and cooling systems, improving outdoor spaces, expanding technology access, and ensuring that all facilities meet modern standards of safety and inclusivity.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for leveraging underutilized spaces include expanding arts and music programs, establishing mental health clinics, and integrating community services such as public libraries. Participants proposed collaborating with community organizations and reassessing building utilization to support more localized programming.

Student Experience: Participants across groups prioritized a holistic representation of student experiences within schools. Specifically, participants advocated for culturally sensitive instruction and support for diverse learning needs. Selective enrollment emerged as a critical topic, with several participants expressing concerns about the negative impact of phasing out selective enrollment campuses on curricular rigor and community engagement. Several comments emphasized the need for more resources, particularly for at-risk students, and the importance of maintaining rigorous academic standards. Additional comments called for increased accountability in funding allocation, enhanced safety measures, and equitable access to resources and opportunities. Participants expressed appreciation for the inclusion of student and parent voices in decision-making processes.

CENTRAL PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants lauded the neighborhood feel and modern facilities of certain schools. Yet, some participants pointed out issues such as falling ceilings, non-functioning showers, and outdated playgrounds. Participants recommend basic improvements such as repairing auditorium lighting as well as shifts in how spaces are used, such as providing seating for students to eat lunch outdoors. One comment highlighted a community room created at Ogden International School as a positive student resource. Providing facilities to promote social opportunities for students and community beautification is a priority. Participants suggest that parental involvement in providing upgrades to schools is crucial.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for creative ways to leverage underutilized spaces include converting buildings into community centers, reconfiguring academic centers to become neighborhood high schools, and designating unused spaces within buildings as laundry facilities. Participants also recommend demolishing some vacant buildings to ‘transfer the fabric’ of the landscape and provide athletic fields, gardens and parks for the community.

Student Experience: Participants across discussions advocate for students to receive a well-rounded education that emphasizes both academic and social development. Several comments mention the need for schools to implement differentiated learning and provide more instructional and social-emotional support for English learners, unhoused students, and students receiving special education services. Additional comments stressed the importance of having high quality schools in all neighborhoods to prevent students from having to travel long distances. Participants suggested prioritizing funds for neighborhood high schools—they expressed concern about lower academic scores at neighborhood high schools relative to selective enrollment schools and the lack of transportation for students offered seats at selective enrollment schools. Some comments emphasized the need for the Facilities Master Plan to reconfigure planning zones, including building a neighborhood high school in Chinatown and shifting Jones College Prep from a selective enrollment school to a neighborhood school.

FAR NORTHWEST SIDE PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants emphasized the need for comfortable, functional, and inviting spaces to enhance the student experience. Positive highlights include features such as large, inviting spaces, beautiful architecture, libraries, accessibility features such as ramps and elevators, and unique learning experiences such as community gardens and chicken coops. In this vein, participants expressed concerns about issues with maintenance and outdated facilities, such as clogged sewers, degraded athletic facilities, and inoperable swimming pools. Participants suggested prioritizing upgrades to heating and cooling systems, eliminating asbestos, ensuring that all schools have facilities such as music rooms and athletic fields, providing dedicated spaces for academic interventions, and creating more flexible and transitional spaces for unique learning environments. Additional comments focus on designating or upgrading spaces for parents and community members. Participants stressed the need for accountability in vendor projects, a more proactive approach to facilities maintenance, and more control at the principal level for quick response to facility issues.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Proposals for leveraging underutilized spaces included hosting community programs, partnering with park districts, converting spaces into areas for vocational education, small business use, senior services, after school and play centers, and spaces for migrants/newcomers. A widely cited priority is using spaces for after-hours community events such as theatrical performances, roller skating, or movie nights. Participants suggested strengthening relationships with local trade unions and using underutilized spaces for workshops and internships

Student Experience: Participants highlighted the importance of their school communities, the dedication of staff, and strong parent involvement. However, they also pointed out challenges such as issues with contractor work, the need for better administration of programs, and the impact of facilities on attracting and retaining students. Participants proposed that schools incorporate more STEM courses as well as more involvement in the arts and music to provide a well-rounded education.

FAR SOUTHWEST SIDE PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Positive highlights include praise for garden areas and new facilities that include libraries and sports fields. Site-specific examples include a nature space at Mount Vernon Elementary School. However, participants raised concerns about the adequacy of physical activity spaces, accessibility features, and the degraded state of basic amenities such as bathrooms and playgrounds. They also stressed the importance of ensuring that all CPS schools contained physical education and sports facilities such as soccer fields and gym spaces. Prioritization for improvements included making schools brighter and more inviting, ensuring operational elevators and lifts, and addressing safety concerns, especially in modular facilities. Additional comments focused on teacher comforts, such as updated lounges and refrigerators for food storage.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for the creative use of underutilized buildings include opening them up for community use, establishing sensory and workout rooms, providing laundry facilities, and offering educational enhancement opportunities for parents. Participants expressed a strong interest in partnering with city colleges for dual-enrollment programs and utilizing vacant spaces for career and technical education and mental health services. Participants particularly advocated for opening gymnasiums, weight rooms, and pools to community members and external organizations for after school use and partnering with the park district and police department to devise productive uses of open spaces.

Student Experience: The desire for schools to offer more than just basic education emerged as a theme across discussions. Participants called for enriched learning experiences through updated libraries, STEAM labs, and arts education spaces. They also identified support staff, such as full-time nurses and social workers, as being crucial for a comprehensive educational experience. Participants advocated for all school staff to receive trauma-informed professional development to better equip them to support students experiencing violence and social-emotional challenges. Additional comments stressed the importance of integrating parents and community members as educational partners and mentors for students.

GREATER CALUMET PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Positive highlights include well-maintained buildings, proximity to parks, and specific amenities such as playgrounds and courtyards at some CPS schools. Participants affiliated with Sadlowski and McNair Elementary Schools highlighted the positive impact of sensory rooms on student experiences. In contrast, participants identified a significant gap across schools, with some lacking adequate physical infrastructure and resources such as sensory rooms, arts and drama spaces, and modern athletic facilities. Prevalent concerns included prioritizing basic infrastructure repairs (e.g., roof repairs, functional bathrooms, heating, cooling, and water quality), addressing overcrowding, and ensuring safe, welcoming environments. Critical issues included the urgent need for new school buildings in areas where facilities are severely outdated or inadequate, the presence of environmental hazards (e.g., mold, asbestos), and the lack of essential resources like libraries and sports facilities. One comment mentioned that a school cafeteria ‘serves triple duty as storage, lunch area, and auditorium’. Another comment refers to noise transfer due to inadequately designed walls. Participants also emphasized the importance of community access to school facilities.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for creatively using underutilized spaces included establishing community and parent engagement centers, legal aid centers, tutoring spaces, meditation and reflection rooms, and dedicating spaces for expanding programmatic offerings such as arts and technical education.

Student Experience: Participants across discussions highlighted a strong resonance with the need for joyful, engaging learning experiences that cater to students’ diverse needs. The disparity in experiences between schools, particularly between the north and south sides, was a recurring concern, emphasizing the need for equitable resource distribution. Participants suggested that enhancing academic and extracurricular program offerings was crucial for improving student experiences. Additional priorities include the expansion of more comprehensive programs (e.g., STEAM, international baccalaureate, career and technical education), artistic activities and programs (e.g., glass making and mural creation), and the enhancement of social-emotional support through additional counselors and nurses. The potential for schools to serve as community hubs offering a wide range of services and activities was a recurring theme.

GREATER LINCOLN PARK PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants express appreciation for the historic nature of some schools, schools' proximity to the community, and features such as gardens and playgrounds that provide interactive experiences for students. Specific highlights include the historical architecture, freshman computer labs, the 'campus feeling' of Lincoln Park High School, the garden and chicken coop at Lake View High School, and the new play lot/turf field at Pulaski Elementary School. Concerns include inadequate athletic facilities, and issues with heating and cooling. Some participants noted that the experiences of high school students residing in elementary school buildings were inadequate due to insufficient adaptation and conversion of facilities.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for using underutilized spaces included social breakout spaces, preschools, extending buildings into open campus spaces, and better utilization of outdoor spaces for learning. Bring the Community into the School Spaces i.e. voting, events. Participants recommend that CPS partner with building developers and the Chicago Housing Authority to 'swap land' and better utilize space. Similarly, they propose opening school spaces to the wider community for activities such as voting and social events.

Student Experience: Participants resonated with the idea of schools being the center of the community and the importance of a warm, safe, and accessible learning environment. Several comments emphasized the need to communicate more effectively about their programs, particularly international baccalaureate and gifted student programming. Additional comments reinforced the need for school-community integration, ensuring capable and passionate staff, and more robust testing.

GREATER MIDWAY PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants report appreciation for the natural light and layout of many CPS school buildings along with artistic and cultural elements. They mentioned the need for better libraries, functional bathrooms, better gathering spaces, technology upgrades, and improved athletic facilities. Participants specifically noted several issues at one high school, including inadequate cooling and ventilation, damaged gym floors, missing stair banisters, parking lot potholes, and “mildew cracks” along with “what appears to be structural damage” in the auditorium. Participants recommended constructing annexes to alleviate overcrowding in some high school buildings—they suggest empowering community groups to take the lead in building and purchasing land for annexes. Participants also advocated for giving principals more budgetary control for building upgrades.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Participants recommended leveraging underutilized spaces by partnering with nonprofits to offer community-based programming, providing before and after school childcare and programming, and creating dedicated areas for students with learning disabilities. Additional suggestions include designating restorative justice spaces, creating business incubators, converting empty schools into athletic facilities, and providing housing for teachers. Specific spaces mentioned include adding a greenhouse, designating spaces for bus shelters, and improving the track at Hancock High School and converting the vacant land at S. Cicero Avenue & I-55 into a stadium.

Student Experience: Positive highlights include the strong sense of community at many CPS schools. Participants specifically mentioned a thriving Special Education Cluster Program at Hancock High School, which includes partnerships with local businesses, and strong dual credit and International Baccalaureate programs at Hubbard High School. However, participants express the view that overcrowding negatively impacts the quality of education and the overall student experience at some CPS schools. They suggested prioritizing access to technology, creating more space for students, and improving support for diverse learners such as English learners and students receiving Special Education services. Participants also seek improved communication between caseworkers, schools, and parents to enhance students’ educational experiences.

Greater Milwaukee Planning Area

Physical Spaces: Participants seek clean, well-maintained schools that have open, green spaces for outdoor activities, modern and well-equipped classrooms, and areas designated for relaxation and social interaction. They also emphasized the value of art and natural light for creating a welcoming and conducive learning environment. Participants expressed appreciation for their schools' physical spaces, such as murals, bright hallways, and the presence of gardens. These positive aspects were contrasted with concerns about safety, accessibility, and the adequacy of play areas and athletic facilities. Participants across tables highlighted a need for improved physical environments, including infrastructure (e.g., leaking roofs, inadequate ventilation), safety measures such as new cameras, gymnasium upgrades and better outdoor play areas. A notable gap identified was the need for additional quality outdoor spaces, which impacts daily learning experiences and the overall sense of community. Participants also noted the lack of adequate facilities for physical education and the disparity in resources between wealthier and less affluent schools.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for creatively leveraging underutilized spaces include opening up athletic spaces to community activities, leveraging outdoor areas for community and educational purposes, and addressing overcrowding by utilizing every available space effectively. Participants recommend transforming unused buildings into community centers, innovation labs, and/or spaces for after-school programs focusing on arts, technology, and environmental education. Participants also expressed strong interest in developing buildings into wellness centers that offer mental health support and recreational activities for students. They discussed the potential for spaces to be used for volunteer activities or revenue sources through rentals.

Student Experience: Participants agree on the importance of recognizing schools' efforts to adapt to a variety of learning needs and provide a safe environment. They generally agree that their schools offer a range of academic and extracurricular activities. They also emphasize the need for additional measures to address issues such as bullying, inadequate resources for students with disabilities, and a lack of effective communication between the schools and parents. Participants prioritize the improvement of inclusivity and the social-emotional aspects of learning to provide a fully inclusive and emotionally supportive environment. Specifically, they recommend greater investments in mental health resources, creating more inclusive spaces that reflect the diversity of the student body, and enhancing the physical environment to be more engaging and conducive to learning.

GREATER STOCKYARDS

Physical Spaces: Positive highlights include recent infrastructural upgrades at Chavez Elementary Multicultural Academic Center. Participants also noted that while some facilities function well, others need improvements. Specifically, participants expressed concerns about outdated facilities, inadequate playgrounds, and the need for modern amenities, including lighting improvements and heating and cooling system upgrades. Participants recommend that CPS invest in upgrading school facilities to ensure they are safe, accessible, and conducive to early childhood learning. Such investments include adding amenities such as art spaces, indoor gyms, teachers lounges, sensory rooms, and multipurpose rooms, leveraging the geographical and community significance of school locations, and creating spaces that support 21st-century learning environments that can adapt to future educational demands.

Creative Uses of Spaces: There is consensus among participants that the district could take advantage of underutilized buildings address space constraints. Suggestions include expanding schools at capacity and introducing new programs for students.

Student Experience: Participants resonated with the need for a holistic educational approach that includes rigorous curricula, high-quality instructional staff, and joyful learning experiences. Positive highlights include schools with bilingual classrooms and diverse linguistic programs, which participants consider to be crucial for maintaining the unique identity and inclusivity of school communities. Participants prioritize the development and expansion of dual language programs that extend from elementary through high school across the district, and they seek to ensure a continuum of learning experiences that affirm student identities and prepare them for a globalized world. Participants additionally call for parent workshops and groups, as well as expanded after school and enrichment programming such as STEM, arts, and athletics.

GREATER STONY ISLAND PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Positive highlights include the ‘beautiful architecture’, modern facilities, cleanliness, and welcoming environments of many CPS schools. Participants noted the importance of utilizing natural light and maintaining the architectural integrity of school buildings. Participants specifically recognized schools like Chicago Vocational Career Academy (CVCA) for their historical significance and potential as community pride beacons. Participants also expressed concerns about the physical condition of many schools and emphasized the need for modernization and better maintenance. Problematic issues ranged from outdated heating and cooling systems to inadequate sports facilities and inaccessible spaces. Participants also stressed the importance of not letting high turnover in leadership affect long-term facility maintenance and improvement plans.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Creative suggestions for underutilized spaces include partnering with neighborhood businesses for life skills training, community gardening, outdoor learning spaces, and adult education programs. Participants also proposed using underutilized spaces to revive trade programs and support community engagement and services.

Student Experience: Participants across discussions highlighted a significant gap in the current curriculum and resources available to students, particularly those of color, in various CPS schools. They advocated for ‘transformative learning’ and a holistic curriculum that encompasses financial literacy, mental health, and college awareness along with traditional academic subjects. Additional recommendations include targeted tutoring, academic interventions, and partnerships with local colleges and universities. Participants highlighted the contributions of trade programs and the potential for college credits through specific courses as valuable assets that need support and expansion. Participants seek a stronger focus on investments in community-specific programs. There were also strong calls for prioritizing equity in programming and resources, ensuring safety and security, and enhancing the learning environment with modern equipment and facilities.

NEAR WEST SIDE PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants have positive responses to the outdoor fields, gardens, and safe environments in many CPS schools. However, they highlight a critical need for additional maintenance and upgrades, particularly in modernizing outdated facilities like libraries and ensuring cleanliness and functionality in bathrooms. Participants widely noted the lack of an elevator at some schools as a significant barrier that reduces the inclusivity and accessibility of school spaces.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Participants across sessions recommended repurposing underutilized school buildings to serve broader community needs, such as housing for immigrants, mental health facilities, community hubs offering food pantries, and career development programs. In addition, some participants believe that Manley HS could be turned into a trade school and underutilized buildings could better used in the summertime and after school. As they explained, these approaches not only addresses immediate community challenges but also fosters a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive environment for students and families.

Student Experience: There is a consensus that current school experiences do not fully align with the expectations outlined in previous discussions. Key areas identified for prioritization include the need for an updated curriculum that encompasses all schools, the introduction of more comprehensive programs such as CTE and STEM, and addressing infrastructure issues that restrict accessibility. Participants seek the reintroduction of enrichment and career development programs such as nursing, business, agriculture, drama club, band, and choir programs at schools such as Marshall High School. Participants also expressed concern regarding a perceived lack of decision-making ability among parents and students, with a call for more empowerment and involvement in school decisions. The Local School Council (LSC) is perceived as not fully utilizing its power, indicating a need for more robust engagement and training for LSC members to better understand their roles and responsibilities.

NORTH LAKEFRONT PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Positive highlights include the preservation of original architectural aspects such as brick construction and natural lighting, outdoor gardens and play areas, murals, sensory rooms, and ‘gymnatoriums’ for activities and events. Nevertheless, participants across groups expressed a deep concern for the physical state of school facilities and how they impact student experiences. A common sentiment was the need for schools to provide not only basic amenities but also environments that foster joy, safety, and inclusivity. Participants particularly stressed the need for modern and safe equipment, accessible spaces for diverse learners, and the provision of safe, engaging, and inclusive playgrounds and outdoor spaces. Specifically, several comments referred to the need for ADA-compliant spaces and to replace asphalt surfaces with astroturf. There was a strong call for adequate heating, cooling, and ventilation, improving water quality, and ensuring that all schools have access to essential spaces like art rooms, music rooms, and cafeterias that meet realistic expectations for the student population. Participants seek more transparent communication regarding facility needs and improvements, as well as a more inclusive approach to decision-making that involves a wider range of community demographics. They advocated for schools to have more autonomy in managing their budgets for facility improvements to address specific needs more effectively.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for leveraging underutilized spaces included hosting community events, after-school programs, and allocating spaces for parent education. A recurring theme was to generate income and strengthen community connections by leasing spaces such as gymnasiums and parking lots.

Student Experience: A recurring theme was the need for increased engagement between schools, parents, and the broader community. This includes better communication from the district regarding budgets and plans and opportunities for community members to contribute to school enhancement efforts. Building trust through transparency and collaboration was seen as crucial to fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment.

NORTHWEST SIDE PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants reported positive experiences with green spaces, historical features, gardens, playgrounds, and specific facilities like nursing suites and secure campuses. Specific highlights include the plaza between Hibbard Elementary and Albany Park Multicultural Academy, the turf area and auditorium at Henry Elementary, and the garden, library, playground, and auditorium at Stone Scholastic Academy. The importance of maintaining such spaces and ensuring they contribute positively to the student experience was a common theme. Safety emerged as a top concern, including overcrowded spaces and crowd management, safe playgrounds, traffic safety, and more security cameras. Participants additionally raised concerns about infrastructure issues, including building maintenance and repairs, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility, and functional heating/cooling systems. Other recommendations focused on improved energy efficiency, more outdoor learning spaces, adequate lunchroom facilities, and technology upgrades.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for using underutilized spaces more creatively included hosting community programs, healthcare and mental health centers, and social emotional well-being rooms. Participants also proposed converting vacant spaces into food pantries, community gardens, and centers hosting adult learning classes and English learner support. The potential for schools to share spaces for extracurricular and after-school programs was also discussed, alongside ideas for art centers, sports centers, and tutoring services.

Student Experience: Multiple participants lauded the commitment to inclusivity, diversity and community outreach at several CPS schools. However, participants across the discussions communicated a range of concerns and areas for improvement. Key points included the need for technology programs and coordinators, equitable resources and attention to all schools (with a particular focus on balancing resources between selective enrollment vs. neighborhood schools), and the importance of creating spaces that foster collaboration and community. An additional concern was insufficient transportation to facilitate travel to selective enrollment and magnet schools. There was a consensus that teachers should not be burdened with additional responsibilities outside their teaching roles.

PILSEN/LITTLE VILLAGE PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants expressed a desire for spaces that reflect a holistic educational environment, including peaceful and calming areas. Positive highlights include modern playgrounds, murals, and the architectural beauty of many CPS school buildings. In terms of growth areas, there was a consensus on the need for improvements in physical spaces to better support student experiences, and the need for more inviting, safe, and functional spaces was a recurring theme. Priorities for spatial enhancement updated and inclusive bathroom facilities, functional water fountains, more engaging and creative learning spaces, and addressing basic infrastructure needs like roofing and plumbing. Proposed safety enhancements include more cameras as well as cones and signage to assist with drop off and dismissal. Participants also widely emphasized the importance of sensory rooms and spaces for social-emotional learning.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Suggestions for the creative use of underutilized spaces include transforming them into community centers, storage areas, spaces for asylum seekers, and areas for indoor recreational activities. Participants also proposed designating maker spaces for collaborative learning and spaces for student voice and choice (e.g., student clubs). Participants discussed the potential for partnerships with local organizations to enhance school facilities and programs.

Student Experience: Specific positive highlights include efforts to engage students and parents at Finkl Academy and Madero Middle School. However, participants across discussions highlighted a gap in addressing the holistic needs of students, particularly emphasizing the lack of student voices in decision-making processes. Key areas of concern include safety, social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, and the need for more inclusive support for diverse learners and the discrepancy between theoretical frameworks and practical implementations in schools. Participants expressed the view that traditional public educational models are not fully aligned with the contemporary needs of students, who seek safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. They also mentioned the need for better-equipped cafeterias with healthier food options and more effective use of spaces for community engagement and student activities.

SOUTH SIDE PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Positive highlights include modern and inviting aesthetics, such as new playgrounds, gymnasium improvements, murals, specialized seating, and upgraded classrooms and lighting. Participants particularly praised Langford Community Academy for its inviting auditorium, straight hallways (which facilitate safety monitoring), and separate lunchrooms for older and younger students. Participant concerns include outdated and under-maintained buildings, as well as inconsistent cleanliness and heating/cooling. Participants called for modernization to match the schools' educational rigor and create a welcoming environment for both students and the community.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Creative suggestions for repurposing underutilized spaces included community centers, tutoring programs, healthcare services, financial literacy spaces, and trade shops. The idea of transforming such spaces into areas that support broader community needs and interests was a common thread, with an emphasis on making schools more integral to their communities. Participants widely expressed a desire for schools to be seen as community hubs that support social and emotional development in addition to academics.

Student Experience: Whereas some parents noted satisfactory conditions and improvements, others pointed out deficiencies in areas such as rigorous programming and more comprehensive programs for students with diverse learning needs. Participants strongly emphasized the need for enhanced safety measures, discipline, and social-emotional support within schools. One comment focused on the positive impacts of the Champion program at Earle Elementary, which pairs students with staff ranging from janitors and lunch staff to teachers and administrators. Participants across discussions expressed the need for greater equity and quality in education, emphasizing disparities between different regions, particularly the contrast between Northside and Southside schools. Another recurring theme was the lack of representation and inclusion of community members as decision-makers, alongside a call for more parent support and engagement. Participants additionally emphasized the need for arts, drama, and culturally responsive curricula to foster a holistic educational experience.

WEST SIDE PLANNING AREA

Physical Spaces: Participants reported appreciation for modern facilities such as DePriest Elementary School, which also has open spaces and is beneficially located across from a well-maintained park. They also highlighted the combination of well-designed older elements and modernized spaces at Clark Elementary School and the ‘peace room’ at Cather Elementary School. Participants expressed concerns about facility maintenance and climate control, highlighting inconsistent temperatures at DePriest Elementary and the need for better accountability for cleanliness among vendors. Participants suggested that the district prioritize basic needs such as HVAC and roofing as well as clean facilities. They also recommended that schools allocate space for relaxation rooms and sensory rooms for students receiving Special Education services.

Creative Uses of Spaces: Participants proposed converting underutilized spaces into mental health clinics, childcare facilities, medical clinics, laundry facilities, and vocational programs. They recommended the development of community centers that offer services such as recreational activities, parent resource centers, and community literacy education. One comment mentioned the creation of ‘pop up shops’ that engage students and teach them about entrepreneurship. Participants also advocated for designating spaces for services to assist newcomers. An additional suggestion for leveraging currently unused spaces was to bring in revenue by renting them out to local organizations.

Student Experience: Participants shared that despite challenges to schools in their neighborhood, ‘good kids go to their schools and good programs will bring more kids’. They also highlighted safety concerns, expressing the view that many young students do not attend school due to a fear of dangers within and around CPS schools. Participants advocated for more resources and support in schools, particularly in technology, special education, English language learning and the visual and performing arts. They specifically mentioned a need for more Spanish teachers/interpreters, inclusion supports for newcomers, improved technology programs and classrooms, and more support for diverse learners. Several comments mentioned the lack of librarians at some schools and proposed dedicated library time at all schools. Participants additionally highlighted the need for Social-Emotional Coordinators and more Black teachers as positive role models for students.



KEY FINDINGS: STUDENT EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES SURVEY

OVERVIEW OF STUDENT SURVEY

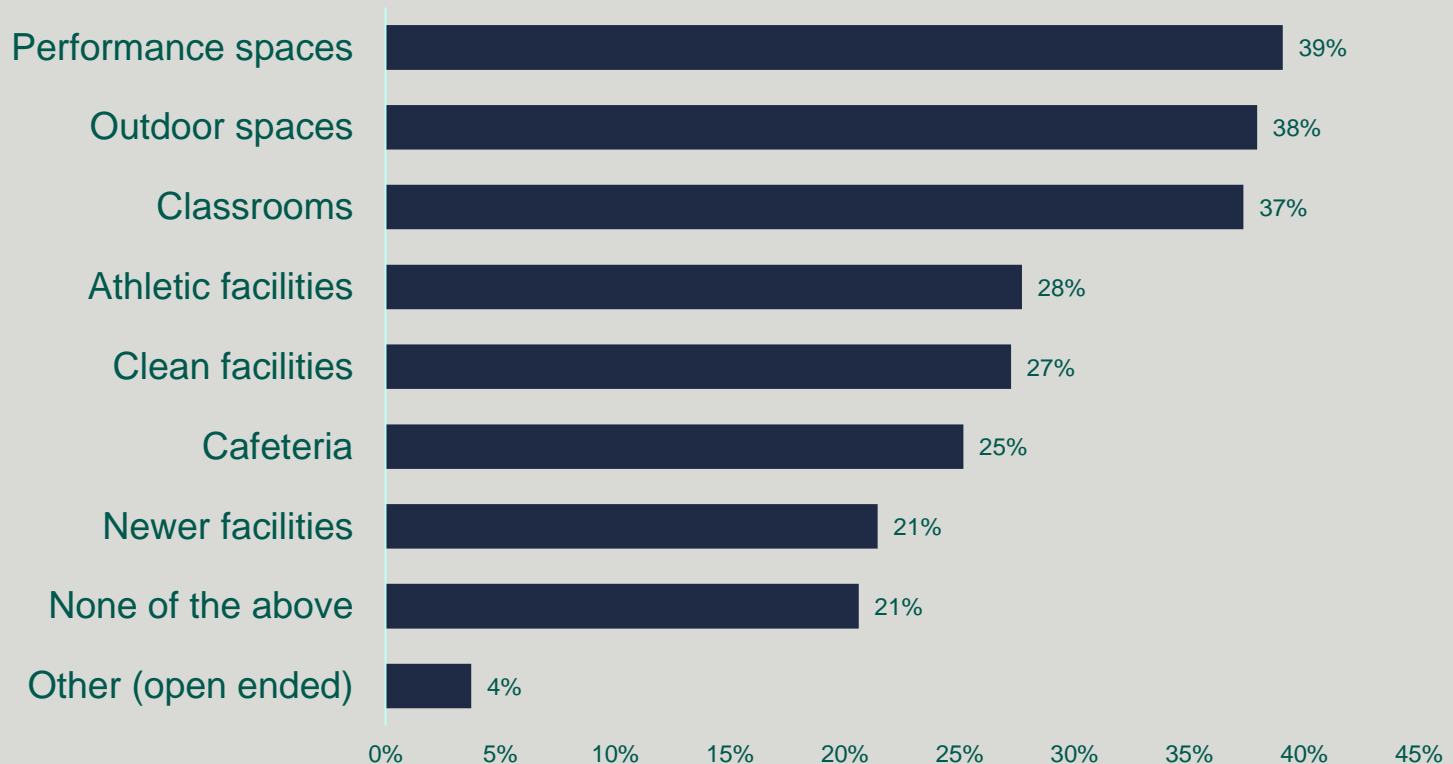
Hanover analyzed responses to four student survey questions: one open-ended question; one closed-ended question; and two mixed open- and closed-ended questions that included an 'Other' option for open-ended responses.

Respondents comprised 1670 English-speaking students and 19 Spanish-speaking students in Grades 6-12.

Survey Question	Type	# Valid Responses
What do you like about your school building? Please check the ones you like.	Mixed: choose all that apply; 'Other' option	1689
If you were making spending (budget) decisions for CPS, what would you prioritize when it comes to improving your experience at school? Please rank 1-6 with 1 being the most important, and 6 being least important. Each item should be assigned its own number to rank order the list. Consider which priority has the potential to have the most impact for all students at your school.	Closed-ended: ranked order	1689
How can we use the spaces in underutilized buildings more creatively? Please check what would be useful to you and your community, if applicable. We would love to hear your ideas under Other.	Mixed: multiple choice; 'Other' option	1676
Is there something important you think we should know about your school's building?	Open-ended	803

PREFERRED SCHOOL SPACES: CLOSED-ENDED

Performance spaces (39%), outdoor spaces (38%), and classrooms (37%) were the most frequently mentioned among respondents' preferred spaces in school buildings. In contrast, less than a quarter of respondents mentioned newer facilities (21%).



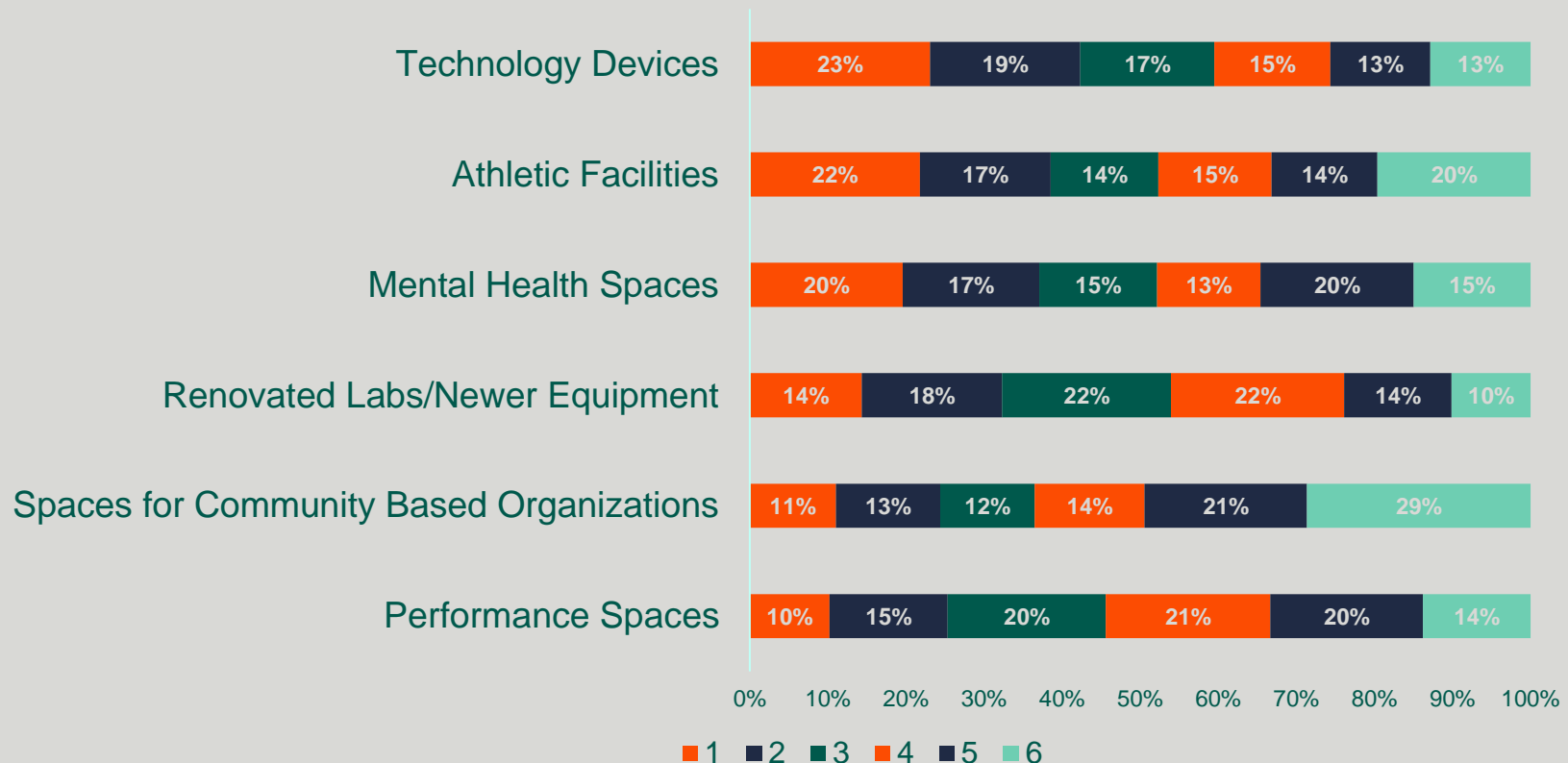
PREFERRED SCHOOL SPACES: OPEN-ENDED

Sixty-two respondents provided comments in the survey. Among these, several respondents mentioned spaces associated with enrichment activities (8), hallways (6) and libraries (4). Multiple comments included concerns about the state of school facilities.

Topic	Example(s)
Hallways	"I like the big hallways and that the air works (sometimes)"
Library	"[I like] comfortable or calming areas like libraries"
Heating and Cooling	"Central air and heating"
Enrichment Activities	"Culinary Kitchen, Maker Space"; "The art classroom"
Religious Accommodations	"Praying facilities specifically for Muslims"
Bathrooms	"Need to fix the broken bathrooms, doors, sink, etc."
Modernization	"Needs modernization in my opinion. Only a few classrooms got a modernization, but every classroom needs one"

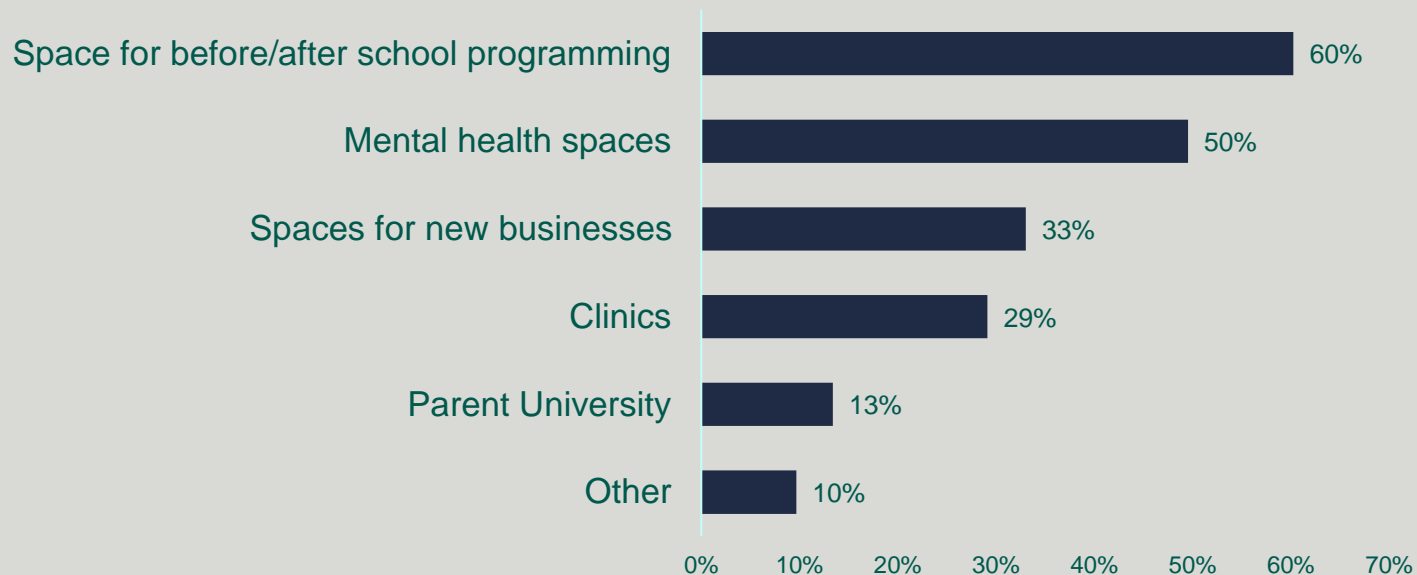
RANKING BUDGET PRIORITIES

Student respondents ranked technology devices (42%) and athletic facilities (39%) among their top two priorities for CPS spending. In contrast, less than 30 percent of respondents ranked performance spaces (25%) and spaces for community-based organizations (24%) among their top two priorities.



CREATIVE USES FOR BUILDINGS: CLOSED-ENDED

Spaces for before and after school programming (60%) and mental health spaces (50%) were most frequently mentioned among closed-ended options for creative uses for school buildings. In contrast, only 13 percent of student respondents mentioned parent universities.



CREATIVE USES FOR BUILDINGS: OPEN-ENDED

Comments were provided by 153 respondents. Among these, the largest number referred to repurposing underutilized spaces as athletic facilities (35). Multiple comments mentioned the need for eating spaces (12), community spaces (12), and study spaces (8).

Topic	Example
Athletic facilities: gyms, fields	"We have a track team, but they run in the hallways of the school since we don't have a track or a big enough gym."
Cafeteria, eating spaces	"During lunch we are forced inside all day and it would be nice to be able to go out."
Community spaces	"Community spaces, specifically designed for teenagers to socialize in a safe and welcoming environment. "
Study spaces	"Places to work on college resumes, etc. A quiet place to do homework too."
Religious spaces	"Spaces for prayer for all religions."
Arts and Music spaces	"Instrument rooms (free space with instruments) guitars, drums, bass, piano etc."
Sensory spaces	"Kids with disabilities should have more spaces as well like a sensory room."

INFORMATION ON BUILDINGS: OPEN-ENDED

The most common concern among respondents was the state of the **bathrooms**, with many participants describing them as dirty, broken, or lacking in basic amenities such as mirrors, soap, and feminine hygiene products. Some participants also reported that there are not enough bathrooms open for the number of students, leading to long wait times.

Another major theme is the poor **condition** of the buildings themselves. Participants described their schools as old and outdated. They reported issues such as broken windows, leaking roofs, and malfunctioning **heating or cooling** systems. Some participants also mentioned problems with cleanliness and **pests** such as rats, roaches, and bedbugs.

Participants also expressed dissatisfaction with the **size and layout** of their schools. They described their schools as overcrowded. Some participants mentioned that their schools were originally designed as elementary or middle schools and are not suitable for high school students. They also complained about narrow hallways, small classrooms, and a lack of common spaces for studying or relaxing.

The quality of school facilities was another common concern. They mentioned issues with the water fountains, the Wi-Fi, and the **athletic facilities**. Some participants also expressed a desire for more outdoor spaces, such as sports fields or courtyards.



Thank you.

CONTACT

Sean Watkins, PhD

Content Director, K-12 Research and Professional Services

E: swatkins@hanoverresearch.com

P: (202) 240-1591

 hanoverresearch.com