



**ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT
A VISION FOR THE FUTURE - UPDATED**

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Since I proposed the vision for the St. Joseph School District on February 11, we have received much input from the community. At the time, I said that the vision represented “a first draft” of a plan. I also stated that I wanted to ensure that the community had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposal before we actually purchased the Karnes Road site, then under negotiation.

The good news is that you did respond. Along the way, we learned that we cannot operate in a vacuum and that the St. Joseph School District is at least partially responsible for ensuring that the infrastructure will support new schools. With that in mind, we have dropped our pursuit of the Karnes Road site and, fortunately, found a new site in the northeast along Cook Road.

However, the underlying reasons for announcing the vision are still in place:

- our 18 elementary schools are too many given our decline in enrollment over the years;
- our elementary schools are too small, making them inefficient to operate;
- our elementary schools are too close together and no longer reflect our neighborhoods (we have seen a significant shift to the east side of the city);
- our buildings are aging – the average age is 70, with a few at or approaching 100 years. While we are proud of our facilities, we cannot continue to make “band-aid” type repairs;
- financially, we can no longer sustain the 18 elementary school model.

The other components of the vision remain intact. I would like to present them to you, in shortened form, along with the new site for the northeast school. Once again, I invite you to share your comments on any part or all of the plan by emailing them to longrangeplanning@sjsd.k12.mo.us or by going to <http://www.sjsd.k12.mo.us/vision/index.asp> and responding there.

CARDEN PARK SCHOOL

One of the problems facing the District is aging facilities. To begin to address this issue, we have proposed closing both Neely and Hall Elementary schools, both of which will be 100 years old in 2009. Our plan is to ask the City Council to give us Carden Park (16 plus acres), located between the two schools at 16th and Duncan streets, to be used as the site for a new school.

While the new school would accommodate approximately 600 students, class sizes would remain small. Nearly all of the Neely students would attend the new school, as would most of Hall’s students. Some Hall students would probably be redistricted to Parkway, and some could also be redirected to Mark Twain. Because the reality of a new school is



several years away, the details regarding redrawn attendance areas have not yet been developed. Hopefully, we could find a financially sustainable alternative use for Hall and Neely. However, our pledge to the neighborhoods and the community is that the facilities would not become an eyesore, and they would be razed if a viable alternative use is not found.

NORTHEAST SCHOOL

Since our last elementary school (Parkway) was built in 1971-72, our community has shifted to the east. The northeast, in particular the area east of the Belt Highway and north of Gene Field Avenue, has seen tremendous growth in housing to date, with additional housing developments planned for that area. Our community has always placed great value on the neighborhood school concept; yet, the northeast does not have a neighborhood school.

The District is proposing to build a new school on 15 acres at the intersection of Cook and Bishop roads (4701 Cook Road). In addition to serving the needs of the northeast part of St. Joseph, the new school, which would accommodate approximately 600 students, would alleviate the crowded conditions at Coleman Elementary School, and allow the District to “right-size.”

This right-sizing would include the closing of Noyes Elementary, which would continue in service as the site for the gifted program and the District’s Special Services staff. The District would also close Webster Elementary School, converting it to the adult education center – those programs would be shifted from the Ruth Huston Learning Center at 803 S. 13th St. That facility would be closed and razed or sold.

SKAITH ELEMENTARY ADDITION

The southeast portion of St. Joseph has experienced growth and, with the extension of Riverside Road, is poised for additional growth. To accommodate this growth, we have proposed building additional classrooms and a multi-purpose or “flex” facility at Skaith Elementary. The additional classrooms would increase Skaith’s enrollment to the 550 to 600 student range. The multi-purpose facility would serve the students and neighborhood in that area.

SOUTH SIDE PROPERTY

We need to purchase property for a new school on the South Side. This acquisition would allow us, down the road, to close Hyde Elementary, reconvert Spring Garden Middle School to a large elementary school, and build a new middle school to serve the South Side. The Hyde site could be used by Benton High School, or perhaps a viable alternative use is yet to be proposed. This component would provide for the purchase of property only – no construction is included under this aspect of the plan.