

Spring 2025 Capital Community Engagement Meeting Questions

The following questions were received prior to, during, and after the Capital Community Engagement sessions held in April. Many were answered during the engagement sessions, but we wanted to include all of the questions in case others had similar concerns. Questions that are closely related have been grouped together.

Question: What determines which schools get funding? How does CPS identify the needs of schools and how do they make sure these needs are being addressed? Does CPS consider the Equity Index alongside the need-based criteria?

Answer: The CPS Facilities Team maintains/repairs building systems on a day-to-day basis and closely collaborates with Capital to address critical building needs. CPS prioritizes capital projects for various categories based on the condition of the facility, the Equity Index, available funding, and alignment with CPS' academic initiatives in order to maximize the positive impact on students.

CPS has historically prioritized projects based on building needs, which are evaluated through facility assessments. CPS is seeking public input on the prioritization of these facility needs categories and will incorporate them into project prioritization.

CPS has recently completed a new round of facility condition assessments in all CPS-owned and operated facilities. A few points to highlight on the facility condition assessments:

- A facility condition assessment is a visual-only inspection of the building's systems. It is not destructive.
- Each report includes a rank and quantity for all assessed items at each CPS operated facility.
- These assessments are available on the CPS website [here](#).

Prioritizing critical capital needs is a process, as facilities systems are dynamic and constantly changing. For example, systems can change significantly from one assessment to another due to factors like the weather, accelerated deterioration, deferred maintenance, and recent investments.

The Office of Equity developed the Equity Index based on public feedback. The Equity Index helps identify opportunity differences so that resources can be prioritized for the schools in greatest need. The index is composed of eight factors to better understand the needs of schools based on their student population, the communities in which they reside, and historical Capital funding the schools have received. These indicators include:

- **The Simpson Diversity Index:** This index measures the likelihood that two randomly selected students will be of the same race (how not diverse a school is).

- **The percent of students in temporary living situations:** The percentage of all enrolled students that lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and may require additional resources at school.
- **The percent of students who are designated as English language learners.**
- **The percent of students with disabilities:** The percentage of all enrolled students with an assigned Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- **Community Hardship Index score:** Chicago Community Area Hardship Index reflects 6 socioeconomic indicators of public health significance based on students' residing community areas.
- **Community Life Expectancy:** Average community life expectancy in students' residing community areas.
- **Percentage of families living below 200% of the federal poverty line:** 200% poverty rate (family income within 200% of the federal poverty line) based on students' residing census tract.
- **Historical Capital and Outside Funding:** Consists of Capital Investments, TIF Funding, and Friends of Dollars ranging from 2008 - 2023. Including this indicator will help address historical differences in Capital Funding, Tax Increment Funding, and other types of outside funding.

The facility condition and Equity Index are used in conjunction with the District's academic initiatives and available funding to drive project prioritization.

Question(s): My school has a specific need. How does my school make a bid for improvement?

Answer: To advocate for a specific school's facility needs, the community can help by please filling out the [CPS SY25 Spring Survey](#). As detailed in our answer to the previous question, capital projects are prioritized based on the condition of the facility, the Equity Index, available funding, and alignment with CPS' academic initiatives.

Question: What is CPS going to do with all the abandoned elementary and high schools around the city?

Answer: Some of the closed buildings may be sold and repurposed for community use, commercial use, or mixed use. Interested parties have already drafted informal proposals for a number of properties. All proposals will be reviewed, but only formal proposals that are adequately financed, sustainable, and meet the requirements of the CPS bid solicitation will be considered for ownership of the property. All properties are sold "as is, where is" and will be conveyed to new owners.

Question(s): There were several environmental-themed comments and questions, including:

- **What is CPS' plan to reduce pollution and expand clean energy projects?**

- **What is CPS' plan to invest and address pollution reduction and expand clean energy projects?**
- **How can we ensure that schools located in Chicago's environmental justice communities will be prioritized for green building upgrades?**
- **How much is spent on addressing environmental issues like lead in water, asbestos, and mold?**
- **How will CPS prioritize the health of students who live in areas with high levels of air pollution?**

Answer: Our approach to sustainability is based on reducing our carbon footprint and creating learning environments that promote efficiency and resilience, and provide comfortable learning environments for students and staff.

Our approach for sustainable capital planning and construction is based on the following:

1. At a macro program level: embedding sustainable principles into our specifications—the standards that guide materials, technologies, and construction methods in our buildings.
2. At a micro project level: integrating sustainability into our planning and design process—ensuring that the project scope—within available budget—supports energy efficiency, maintainability, and a healthier learning space.

Following are some highlights of our planning and design practices to support sustainability:

- Making HVAC upgrades so our schools have equipment that is more energy-efficient and providing cleaner air quality.
- Incorporating sustainable materials into these capital projects, like energy-efficient mechanical equipment, roofs with higher R-value, and low volatile organic compounds content paint.
- Continue our energy efficiency program where we prioritize projects based on collaboration with Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) to identify areas with the most significant potential for energy efficiency improvements.
- Monitoring and maintaining systems and equipment for their full life-cycle, to reduce waste and maximize investment.
- CPS Design and Construction Guidelines direct all projects to implement “thoughtful, resilient design solutions that utilize existing or low-impact materials and green infrastructure to minimize environmental impacts to the greatest extent possible. Projects shall strive to enhance and create sustainable urban ecologies.” [Design and Construction Guidelines, Volume 3, Chapter 1.1.1]
- All projects meet the relevant requirements of the Chicago Energy Transformation Code.
- Typical classroom configurations maximize natural light and views beyond code requirements.
- Typical layouts of sites, spaces, and facilities support user recycling programs.

- Product specifications mandate strong VOC content restrictions for all installed products including adhesives, sealants, paints, and roofing [01 57 19 Indoor Air Quality Controls, 01 33 29 Sustainable Design Requirements, and individual technical sections].
- Product specifications include local manufacturers and suppliers, when available, to assist in reducing the effects of shipping.
- Building envelope projects incorporate improvements to building envelope performance, including:
 - Improved roof reflectance [07 52 16.11/12 Cold/Hot Applied Modified Bituminous Membrane Roofing]
 - Improved roof insulation [Design and Construction Guidelines, Volume 3, Chapter 2.1]
 - Improved window thermal, water leakage, and air leakage performance [08 51 13 Aluminum Windows]
- Site projects embrace storm water management considerations through reduced paving, increased permeability, and collection/control of stormwater run-off. [Design and Construction Guidelines, and City of Chicago Code Requirements]
- New construction (over 7,500 SF) will be designed for Solar Readiness.
- Bathroom, locker room, and cafeteria projects improve water use efficiency through low-flow, high-efficiency, and sensor-controlled fixtures. [22 40 00 Plumbing Fixtures]
- Mechanical systems projects improve system efficiency and user comfort through:
 - High efficiency systems
 - Building Automation Systems and controls[Design and Construction Guidelines, and multiple Specification sections]
- Lighting and electrical projects increase energy efficiency and improve lighting controls to reduce energy consumption. [Design and Construction Guidelines, multiple Specification sections, and Light Fixture Schedules]
- Indoor Air Quality management practices include VOC content restrictions, hazardous materials monitoring, and comprehensive final cleaning processes. [01 57 19 Indoor Air Quality Controls]
- Waste Management requirements dictate minimizing waste and maximizing salvage and Recycling [01 74 19 Construction Waste Management and Disposal]

In addition to these areas, we are looking forward to exploring other sustainable options for our facilities in collaboration with CTU.

Indoor Air Quality Assessments

Ensuring optimal indoor air quality (IAQ) is essential for the health and well-being of students and staff within educational environments. In alignment with the Healthy Green Schools standards, the Facilities team conducts comprehensive quarterly assessments across all CPS schools. These assessments are designed to proactively monitor and address potential indoor air quality issues, fostering a safe and conducive learning atmosphere.

Assessment Protocol

Each quarter, the facilities team evaluates IAQ in five designated locations per school:

- Cafeteria
- Gymnasium
- Library
- Classrooms (2)

When a school lacks one or more specified areas, an equivalent space or an additional classroom is selected for evaluation to ensure consistency in the assessment process.

Measured Parameters

The following IAQ parameters are meticulously evaluated during each assessment:

- Temperature: The measurement of ambient indoor air temperature.
- Relative Humidity (RH): The ratio of the current amount of moisture in the air to the maximum amount it can hold at that temperature, expressed as a percentage.
- Carbon Dioxide (CO₂): A colorless, odorless gas that indicates indoor ventilation effectiveness.
- Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}): Airborne particles with a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less, originating from sources such as combustion and dust.
- Coarse Particulate Matter (PM₁₀): Airborne particles with a diameter of 10 micrometers or less, including dust, pollen, and mold spores.
- Formaldehyde (HCHO): A volatile organic compound commonly emitted from building materials and furnishings, known for its potential health effects.
- Mold and Mildew: A visual inspection is conducted to identify any signs of mold or mildew growth.

Water Quality Testing

As part of our commitment to ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff, CPS samples water in our schools and facilities on an annual basis. The water testing schedule was developed based on criteria that includes the age of the school, age of the students (with priority given to schools with pre-k programs), presence of a kitchen (where meals are prepared), and presence of pipes that could need repairs or replacement.

In 2016, CPS began the first round of our Districtwide water testing program out of an abundance of caution to ensure drinking water in our facilities met all federal, state, and local regulations. CPS collaborated with the Chicago Department of Water Management (CDWM) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to establish testing procedures and protocols that help ensure the quality of potable water in schools.

In addition to meeting state requirements, CPS also took the additional step to test water quality on an ongoing basis, and began a second round of comprehensive testing program starting in Spring 2019 that was to be completed by the end of the 2022 school year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent delay in returning in-person learning, the program was paused in March 2020. CPS water flushing protocols were modified to address issues like stagnant water in unoccupied school buildings during the pandemic. In August 2021, limited water testing was conducted at all scheduled schools. In October 2021, the original water testing program

resumed. The on-going drinking water testing program, with sampling at 25% of schools per year, will continue annually.

The District follows the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidance to ensure safe drinking water.

Question: Does the Equity Index take into account where a student lives or where their school is located?

Answer: The Hardship Index, Community Life Expectancy, and 200% Poverty Rate are based upon the community in which the student resides, not where their school is located.

Question: How is CPS addressing ADA accessibility?

Answer: Per the latest assessment, nearly 400 schools are First Floor Usable (FFU) or better, which means they have:

- An accessible parking lot
- An accessible entrance
- An accessible route from the entrance through the first floor
- An accessible main office
- Accessible public restrooms (one set of male and female student restrooms or one public/student all-gender bathroom)

CPS is working very closely with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to develop a long-term ADA capital investment strategy. The first phase of this strategy is to make all campuses FFU, and the next phase will be to make all campuses fully accessible. This schedule will be driven by available capital funding.

Question: What is the relationship between the capital budget and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds?

Answer: CPS is continuing to aggressively pursue funding at all levels—federal, state, and local. Federal funding includes various grants, state funding includes funds from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and local funding includes TIF, Open Space Impact Fees (OSIF), and aldermanic menu funding. CPS' approach for capital planning and budgeting is to leverage outside funding where feasible to support our facility and programmatic needs.

Question: What athletic amenities does CPS have? Does CPS collaborate with the Chicago Park District?

Answer: There are a variety of athletic amenities located throughout the city. These include baseball/softball fields, football/soccer fields, tracks, pools, and tennis courts. For Chicago Parks, there are 187 locations with fields, with 48 of these locations having multiple fields. In all,

the Park District manages 295 fields across the city. The below map shows the distribution of the Park District locations, as well as the 38 CPS high schools that have football/soccer fields across the city.



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The CPS Office of Sports Administration (OSA) oversees the management of seven municipal stadiums that provide shared turf fields and stadiums for schools across the District. These are vital venues to ensure equitable access to athletic facilities for all CPS student-athletes. All reservations and scheduling within each stadium are orchestrated by the District's Athletic Program Administrators and Stadium Manager within OSA in coordination with our member schools.

CPS also has 57 operational indoor pools located throughout the city.