

## **UNDERSTANDING CPS' CAPITAL NEEDS REVIEW PROCESS**

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On August 22, 2011, Governor Quinn signed Public Act 097-0474, amending the Illinois School Code by adding requirements for School Action and Facility Master Planning. In summary, the bill requires that the Chicago Public Schools (CPS):

- Follow a clear process for school actions
- Publish space utilization and facility performance standards
- Produce plans for capital improvement and a 10-year education master facility plan
- Ensure that information regarding capital expenditures and leases are accessible to the public

A key element to facility master planning is a capital needs review process. There are two ways in which CPS will assess the capital needs of its facilities: (1) a Self-Assessment form to be completed by school administrators and (2) a detailed biennial assessment of each facility operated by the district. This two-step process will allow CPS to better understand the conditions at every school throughout the district, assist with developing capital improvement plans and a 10-year education master facility plan and, most importantly, allow CPS to prioritize projects to ensure that the schools with critical needs get addressed in a timely manner.

The Self-Assessment form is being made available to every attendance center in the district. This form will allow the staff at each school to perform its own assessment of its own facility and report any potential concerns to the Department of Operations. In the past, these assessments were performed by the Department of Operations in conjunction with school staff. While Operations will continue to conduct regular assessments, the Self-Assessment form, which includes a Capital Improvement Request form, has been developed to enhance the process. These self-assessments are critical, as the staff working in the building have an intimate knowledge of the issues within their building. The results of all assessments and capital improvement requests will be shared with Asset Management and the Capital Improvement teams in order to evaluate where maintenance and renovation funds need to be directed.

The biennial assessment will be conducted every two years (was previously done every three years) by a team of highly skilled building assessors. Every building owned, operated, or leased by CPS is assessed by a team of architects and engineers that are able to diagnose issues with a building that may not be apparent to the staff working within the building. The results of these assessments are sent to CPS' Capital Improvement team for review, analysis and publication on the CPS website. The Capital Improvement team then uses the data from all schools to identify the most critical needs and prioritize capital improvement plans. This process will result in the 1- and 5-Year Capital Improvement Plans, which will be made publicly available.

While the recently enacted legislation has changed some timelines and the manner in which some information is distributed, please be assured that the fundamentals of this process have been in place at CPS for many years, and facility assessments are currently posted online.