



# RENOVATE OR BUILD NEW?

*The question goes beyond rehabilitation or new construction. It's all about providing the best place for our students to grow and learn.*

## FOR COMMUNITIES, HISTORY COUNTS

Communities have options and flexibility when deciding whether to construct a new facility or retain the current building. Whether the decision is to renovate or build a new school, the ultimate objective is the same—provide the best possible place for students to grow and learn.

The Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) works as a partner with the district to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each building from a structural and educational standpoint. The significance of each school to the community is another critical factor to consider.

Districts have found that communities may favor the restoration of historic schools if the cost of renovating a facility does not cost more than building a new one. That finding speaks to Ohio's desire to preserve those facilities that have meaning and relevance to our past. Many older school buildings reflect the value accorded to education by past generations.

As these buildings are important to the communities where they are located, OSFC embraces the principle that it is essential to balance the past and the future. OSFC works closely with local communities to ensure that, where possible, these local treasures should be renovated and upgraded to accommodate 21st Century systems and equipment. Renovated or built new, the goal is the same—providing quality learning facilities for Ohio students.

## RENOVATE OR REPLACE?

One of the most important decisions a school district must make when participating in an OSFC project is whether to renovate an existing facility or replace it with a new school. There are costs and benefits to either choice, and the community must weigh all of these factors in their decision.



*Columbus Public School District*

Although it is recommended that a building be replaced should it be very costly to renovate, OSFC recognizes that a school facility could have historical value or may serve a special function in a community. Should the district and the community choose to retain their current buildings rather than construct a new school, OSFC may approve renovations and expansions that cost up the full amount of a replacement facility.

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY TO CONSIDER

- Does the building have historical significance?
- Do the costs of rehabilitating the current facility outweigh the costs of building new?
- Can the facility be renovated to accommodate 21st Century instructional delivery practices and modern technologies?
- Are there parts of the building that should be retained? Are there sections that should be replaced?
- Is the facility properly sized for the school population of today and of the future?
- Is the building well lit, spacious and comfortable?
- Will the facility be operationally efficient?
- Does the environment impart a feeling of safety and wellbeing?

# RENOVATE OR BUILD NEW?

## ASSESSING EXISTING FACILITIES

Each existing building is assessed to determine its effectiveness as an educational structure. OSFC contracts with independent professional design firms who visit the site to evaluate the major components of the building including plumbing, heating, roofing, ventilation, air conditioning and electrical systems. They review the general finishes, lighting, security, access for students with disabilities, site condition, sewage treatment and water systems, doors and windows, the presence of environmental and health hazards, and the quality of technology.

Beyond an evaluation of the building's systems and structural soundness, OSFC and its representatives work hand-in-hand with administrators to assess the educational adequacy of the building, or the ability of the physical environment to provide a quality 21st Century learning environment for students and teachers. Is the building well lit, spacious, and comfortable? Does the environment impart a feeling of safety and wellbeing? Is the facility properly sized for the school population of today and of the future?

Project partners will consider current and potential student enrollment and the future educational needs of the building. OSFC will discuss the assessment report with district administrators and members of the community, and together they will determine the best course of action for the district.

## PRESERVING THE PAST IN A NEW BUILDING

There are countless ways to commemorate the historical significance of an older building in the newly constructed replacement building. Districts that have built new schools through OSFC programs have developed creative ways to reuse parts of the older building in the new school to give it character and to recognize history. Elements from the older building such as archways, entrances, sinks, drinking fountains, friezes, cabinetry, stained glass windows, columns, signs and plaques have been incorporated into new buildings. In some cases, an entire section of a historic school has been rehabilitated, while a new addition is built



*School districts preserve the past in creative and unique ways. Dayton Public Schools preserve the past in their new buildings—upper left: school bell holds a place of honor above the entrance to the new building; upper right: the original dedication plaque welcomes visitors at the school's main entrance; bottom: entrance columns provide a historical link to the past in a new setting.*

around it. The juxtaposition of a community's past and future in a single facility is an exciting way to pay homage to history while welcoming the decades to come.

Buildings can also be converted to uses other than education, such as board offices, residential units, community health centers, libraries or commercial office spaces. Although the state does not share in the cost of such conversions, many communities have supported this option as a way to creatively reuse a historic building.

## ABOUT THE COMMISSION

Established in 1997, the Ohio School Facilities Commission administers the state's comprehensive Kindergarten through 12th Grade public school construction program. The agency helps school districts fund, plan, design, and build or renovate schools.