DPSCD School Board Approval of $700M Facility Investment to Dramatically Improve School Buildings

*Investment Includes New Schools, School Additions, and Renovations Districtwide*

DETROIT – May 16, 2022 – Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) announced today a $700 million investment for school buildings after the School Board’s 5-0 approval at its regular May board meeting last week. The school district developed a 20-year facility master plan that will ultimately cost $2.1 billion based on its current set of operating school buildings. The plan was developed by reviewing citywide residential rates, district and school enrollment trends, school building utilization rates, and the facility costs to completely modernize each operating school building. The opportunity to improve school building facilities is a result of Federal COVID Relief Funding and allows the school district to address long-standing facility needs without taxing Detroiters.

“The pandemic has certainly stalled our reform efforts as a school district; however, this investment and the improvement in the quality of our school buildings will jump-start the momentum we had before the pandemic when every metric was moving in the right direction from enrollment, attendance, and student achievement,” said DPSCD Superintendent Dr. Nikolai Vitti. “One of the most repugnant examples of the injustices our students and staff face is having to learn and work in school buildings that do not meet the standards of wealthier cities and school districts. Unfortunately, we have normalized school buildings without modern HVAC systems, substandard roofing, or rundown masonry. Our children and employees deserve better and this investment will make a significant difference in their learning and working environment,” said Dr. Vitti.

The school district has not had a facility master plan in decades due to Emergency Management and no funding for facility improvements. The facility master plan and subsequent investments focus on protecting neighborhood schools and re-establishing feeder patterns, which were fragmented through decades of school closings and disinvestment. After an extensive community and school engagement process spanning three months, which included school and district administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, community members, and students; the school district revised its original recommendations for the $700 million investment.

The approved plan outlines the construction of five new buildings, five building reactivations and five additions to existing buildings. Planned new buildings include Cody High School, Pershing High School (including a culinary CTC program), Phoenix Elementary-Middle School (to be named by the School Board after construction), Paul Robeson/Malcolm X Elementary-Middle School and Carsten Elementary-Middle School, on the site of the Golightly CTC Building.

In addition, reactivated buildings include Vetal Elementary-Middle School, Northern High School as a new DPS:CD Central Office location and Pre-K centers at the Hancock Building, Adult Education West, and the Fleming Building. The reactivated buildings will address overcrowding in specific areas in the district while also increasing enrollment by expanding seats for Pre-K students.

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Other highlights of the Facility Master Plan are:

- Upgrading the District schools’ overall Facility Condition Index (FCI) rating from 40 (deficient) to 28 (fair) by 2027 with the $700M set of investments.
- Improving overall District utilization rate from 71% to 78%.
- The $700M investments include $281M in new school buildings, $35M to reactivate school buildings for Pre-K and schools to address overcrowding, $82M to add new buildings on existing school campuses to address overcrowding and improve enrollment, $296M to renovate school buildings districtwide with a focus on HVAC systems, roofs, and masonry, and $11M to demolish school buildings that will be deactivated or causing neighborhood blight concerns.

“I want to thank the District team for their hard work and thoughtfulness in developing the facility master plan. As a School Board, we know how long everyone has waited for school building improvements so this investment is long overdue but we hope it provides everyone with the confidence that we are using one-time funding in a responsible way and continuing to work the best we can to address the short and long-term challenges of the school district,” said Board of Education President Angelique Peterson-Mayberry. “The work of improving our school district never stops and this School Board and Superintendent Team continues to make our students the focus of our investments and reform.”

The School Board’s approval of the $700 million facility investment vote last week also ended the District’s moratorium on selling its vacant properties since the facility master plan provided a future vision of how properties could be used. Currently, the District owns nearly 30 vacant school building properties. Most vacant school buildings in the city are owned by the City of Detroit. The District will rely on School Board policy to determine what properties will be sold, which will entail a recent appraisal of the property’s worth, a bid process, and an evaluation process on bids to ensure the purchase price is at or exceeds the appraisal price, provides a benefit to the community and school district, and that the buyer can demonstrate the ability to purchase the property. All property transactions require a Superintendent recommendation to the School Board for review and approval.

About DPSCD:
Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) is Michigan’s largest public education system. It is governed by a locally elected, seven-member board with Dr. Nikolai Vitti serving as superintendent. The District’s mission is to provide every student with a beneficial and rightful educational experience, preparing students to be career and college ready, and qualified to compete in the global market. The District has more than 100 schools and educates nearly 50,000 children. For more information, visit detroitk12.org and follow @detroitk12 on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.