

W. Aurora considers options

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AURORA - West Aurora school board members on Monday began discussing how to deal with the district's growing enrollment and aging facilities.

School board members looked at four options as part of the district's proposed master plan. Lincoln Elementary School in Aurora, Nicholson Elementary School in Montgomery, and the Todd Early Childhood Development Center in Aurora would be closed under all the options presented by the district's architect, Pat Callahan.

He recently examined the condition of the district's 20 buildings. Lincoln, Nicholson and Todd schools are among the oldest buildings in the district. Lincoln was built in 1892, Todd in 1934, and Nicholson in 1938.

One of the options included converting Washington Middle School in Aurora into an elementary school and building a new middle school near the intersection of Prairie Street and Orchard Road in Aurora.

Under that option, Nicholson and Lincoln students would go to Washington Elementary School, and the early childhood development center might move to West Aurora High School.

In addition, Jefferson Middle School would become part of the high school campus.

School board member Allan Rhea said he liked that option best.

"I like the idea of the three middle schools," Rhea said.

Under that option, Jewel Middle School in North Aurora, Herget Middle School in Aurora and the new middle school would serve as the district's three middle schools.

The district currently has four - Herget, Jefferson, Jewel and Washington.

A new middle school would cost an estimated \$21 million, and residents would have to approve a building bond referendum.

The option also included additions to Fearn, Goodwin and Schneider elementary schools in North Aurora.

Another option would be to expand Jewel Middle School. The school serves North Aurora and Aurora students and is on North Aurora's west side, which continues to surge in growth.

"The addition would double the capacity of Jewel, from 650 to 700 students to a capacity of 1,300 to 1,400 students," Callahan said.

According to a new study done by Northern Illinois University's Regional Development Institute, the district was projected to grow to between 13,888 and 15,448 students by 2016, up from its current enrollment of 12,250 students.

West Aurora Superintendent James Rydland said he did not expect school board members to come up with any solutions yet.

"This was to start the dialogue," Rydland said.

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