

RENOVATE OR REPLACE ?

Since 1998 THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAS ALLOWED STATE REIMBURSEMENT OF SCHOOL RENOVATIONS EXCEEDING 60% OF REPLACEMENT COSTS. FURTHERMORE, RECENT LEGISLATION HAS PROVIDED FOR INCREASED REIMBURSEMENT FOR RENOVATION PROJECTS.



This gives school districts a financial incentive to renovate buildings and preserve our architectural heritage. Many schools built before 1940 can be renovated at a cost 20-25% lower than new construction. If adequately maintained, the shells of older buildings are typically structurally sound. Most have large windows providing ample daylighting. High ceilings allow for concealed installation of modern mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and computer infrastructure.

School districts should ask these questions as a start in deciding whether to renovate or replace:

EDUCATION ADEQUACY: Is there enough space and is the space flexible enough to fit today's curriculum, with multiple teaching methods and emphasis on collaborative learning? Is there space

for specialized music and art rooms or teacher resource areas?

ENVIRONMENT FOR EDUCATION: What are the condition and location of entrances, exits, and lighting? Are restrooms and water fountains conveniently located? What facilities in the vicinity hamper education (e.g., an airport)?

SCHOOL SITE: Can safe ingress and egress be provided for vehicles and pedestrians? Do exterior lighting and landscaping ensure security? Can access to the building be monitored electronically or can administrative functions be relocated for better monitoring of ingress and egress from the school?

Older schools have been part of the local architectural fabric for generations and may serve as community focal

points. Renovation helps preserve local heritage and sets an example of good environmental stewardship. A thorough feasibility study can show whether renovating an existing school can save money, provide a state-of-the-art educational environment, and preserve a community's architectural fabric.

The Council of Educational Facility Planners, International recently published *An Appraisal Guide for Older and Historic School Facilities* to assist school districts in deciding between renovation and replacement. Other guides have tended to promote new construction. This guide strikes a balance between old and new.

For additional information regarding renovations/replacements please contact Robert Pillar at 724.285.4761.

