

Analysis of Northfield Public Schools

Part I: Overview: Over the past year, the Northfield Public School District has undertaken the responsibility of developing a Long-Term Facility Plan. The purpose of this initiative was to ensure the Northfield school-community that a comprehensive plan to address the repair and betterment needs of its schools was in place and followed by District leadership.

The first step in the planning process was to conduct a thorough review of all district facilities. This review was conducted by a qualified architect and engineering firm. Their findings were completed in the winter of 2015 and presented to the school board at its February work session. After a thorough review by the Board, it requested that the district administration share the 'Facilities Study' with the community in an effort to build an understanding of district needs and to provide opportunities for community feedback.

Beginning in the Fall of 2014 and continuing into the winter and spring of 2016, a series of meetings were held with key stakeholder groups throughout the community. As a part of their efforts, the District utilized the 'Thought Exchange' process as a means of encouraging community engagement in the planning process. The ultimate goal has been to keep the community's thoughts and opinions at the forefront as the District developed its long-term Facilities Master Plan. The Thought Exchange process presented the community with two approaches to consider in moving forward with the development of a final Master Facilities Plan. Those approaches and an analysis of community feedback are presented in parts II and III of this report. Part IV contains suggested alternatives pathways, based upon the community input, for the Board to consider in the implementation of its Master Facility Plan.

Part II: Approach A- Educational Upgrades To All Buildings:

Description: The objective of this approach is to focus the resources provided through the passage of a school bond levy toward making modest updates to each school in order to accommodate changes in educational programs and address safety needs. These changes included:

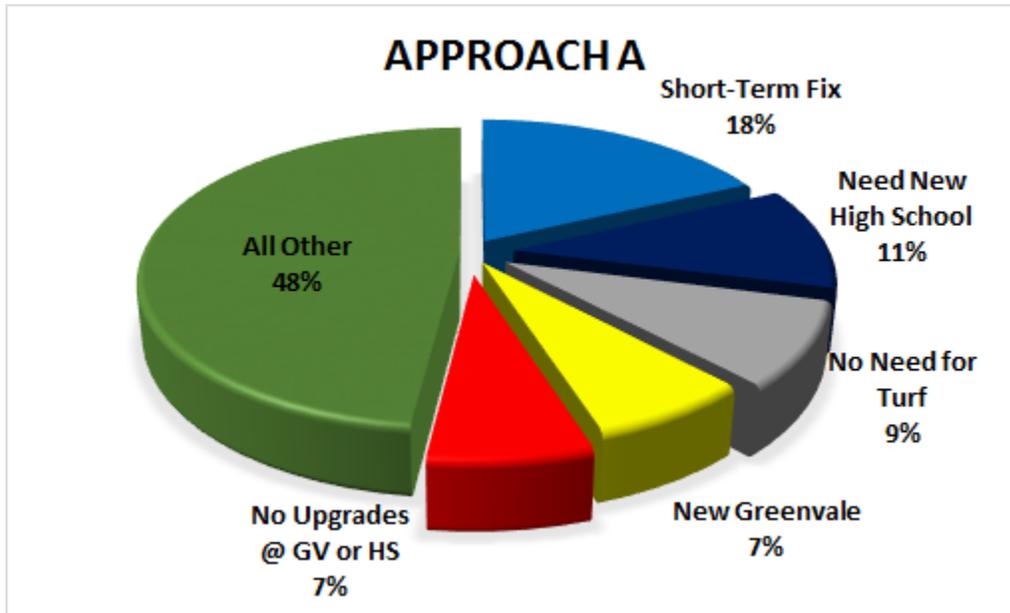
- Sibley Elementary
- Bridgewater Elementary
- Greenvale Park Elementary
- Northfield Middle School
- Northfield High School
- Longfellow School

Because of the building design and changes in program needs, the greatest changes would be to Greenvale Park.

This approach was presented to the community through the ‘Thought Exchange’ process. Five-hundred and eighty-four (584) community stakeholders participated in the process. Five key themes representing over 50% of the responses were identified through this process. Those themes were:

- Approach A represented only a ‘short-term’ method of addressing the needs of district facilities.
- Approach A failed to address the need for a new high school.
- The District should not consider upgrades to the current athletic fields.
- A new Greenvale Park elementary should be constructed to replace the existing facility.
- Do not spend dollars on either Greenvale or the high school.

Below is a graphic representation of the responses to Approach A.



In the case of school planning, the ‘Pareto Effect’- otherwise known as the 85-15 or 80-20 rule- suggests that 80% of the needs in a plan can be identified by 20% of the response. In the results of the Thought Exchange process as shown above, the results appear to suggest that there is an overwhelming sense that Approach A is too short-term to pursue.

Part III: Approach B- Limited Deferred Maintenance and Construction of New School(s)

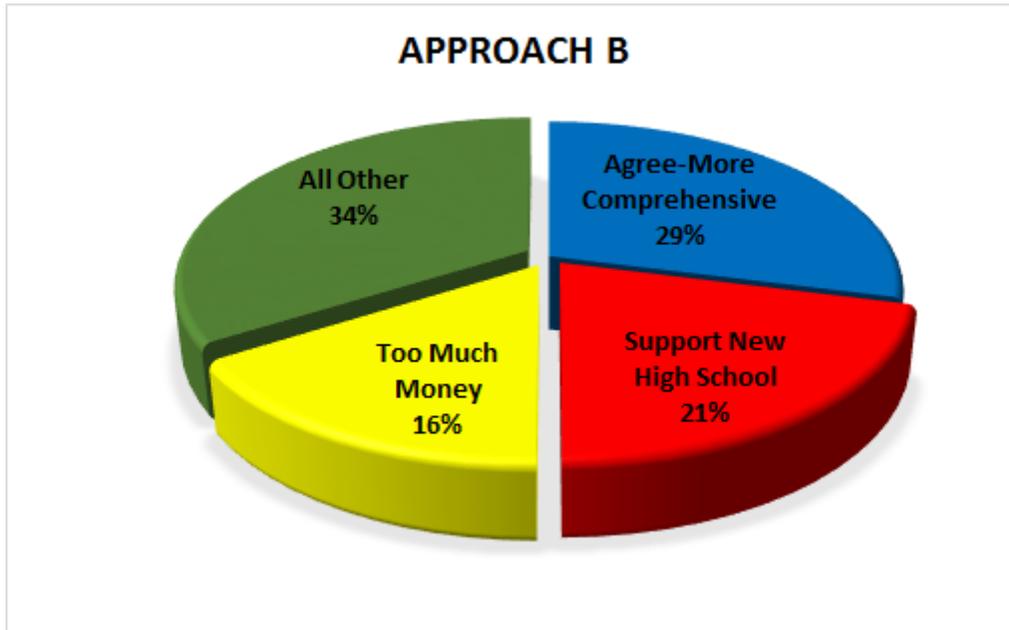
Description: The objective of this approach is to focus the resources provided through the passage of a school bond levy toward the construction of a new senior high school and new Greenvale Park elementary school and conduct more limited educational adequacy projects in

each school. In addition, there would be some realignment of programs/grade configurations. To this end, these projects would be inter-connected and would present some scheduling challenges.

In this approach, three key themes representing over 60% of the responses were identified. Those themes were:

- Approach B is more comprehensive and long-term in nature.
- This approach includes a new high school; something badly needed.
- The approach appears to be too costly for the community to support.

Below is a graphic representation of their responses.



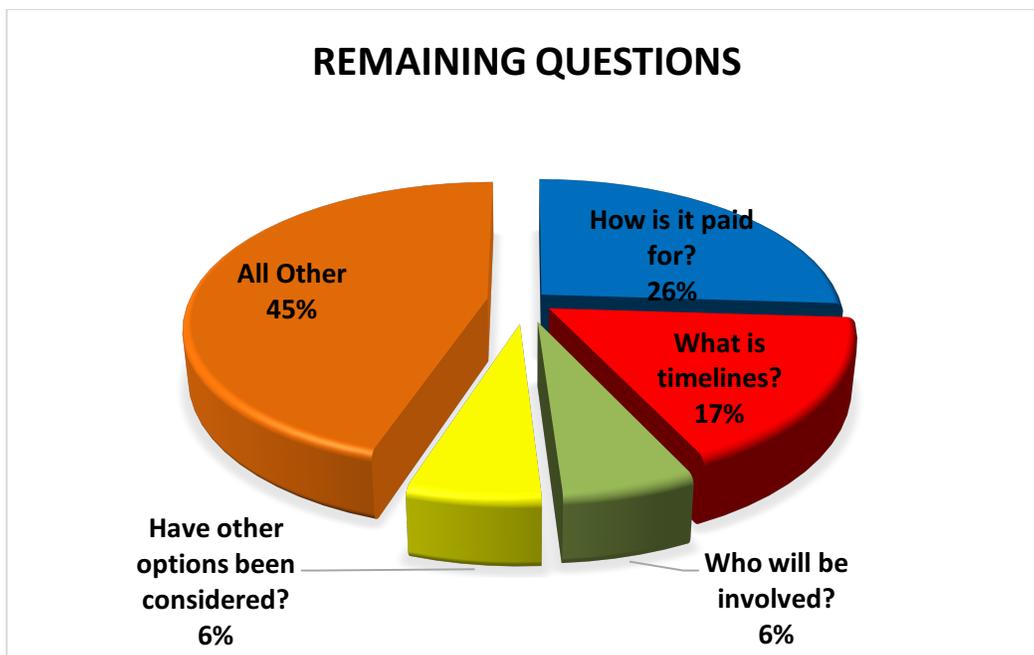
In the analysis of Approach B using the ‘Pareto Effect,’ the results of the Thought Exchange process as shown above, would suggest that there is an overwhelming sense that this approach has long-term benefits to the district. Also, this approach reinforces the community’s belief that a new high school is needed.

The Thought Exchange process also provided respondents with the opportunity to submit additional questions for the Board and district administration to consider.

As was the case in the response to Approach B, there were three (3) questions that were formulated by respondents and given overwhelming support. Those questions are:

- How much will this initiative cost the community?
- What are the timelines for project(s) completion?
- Who will be involved in the design, development and implementation of what is done?

The graph below illustrates the results of that question.



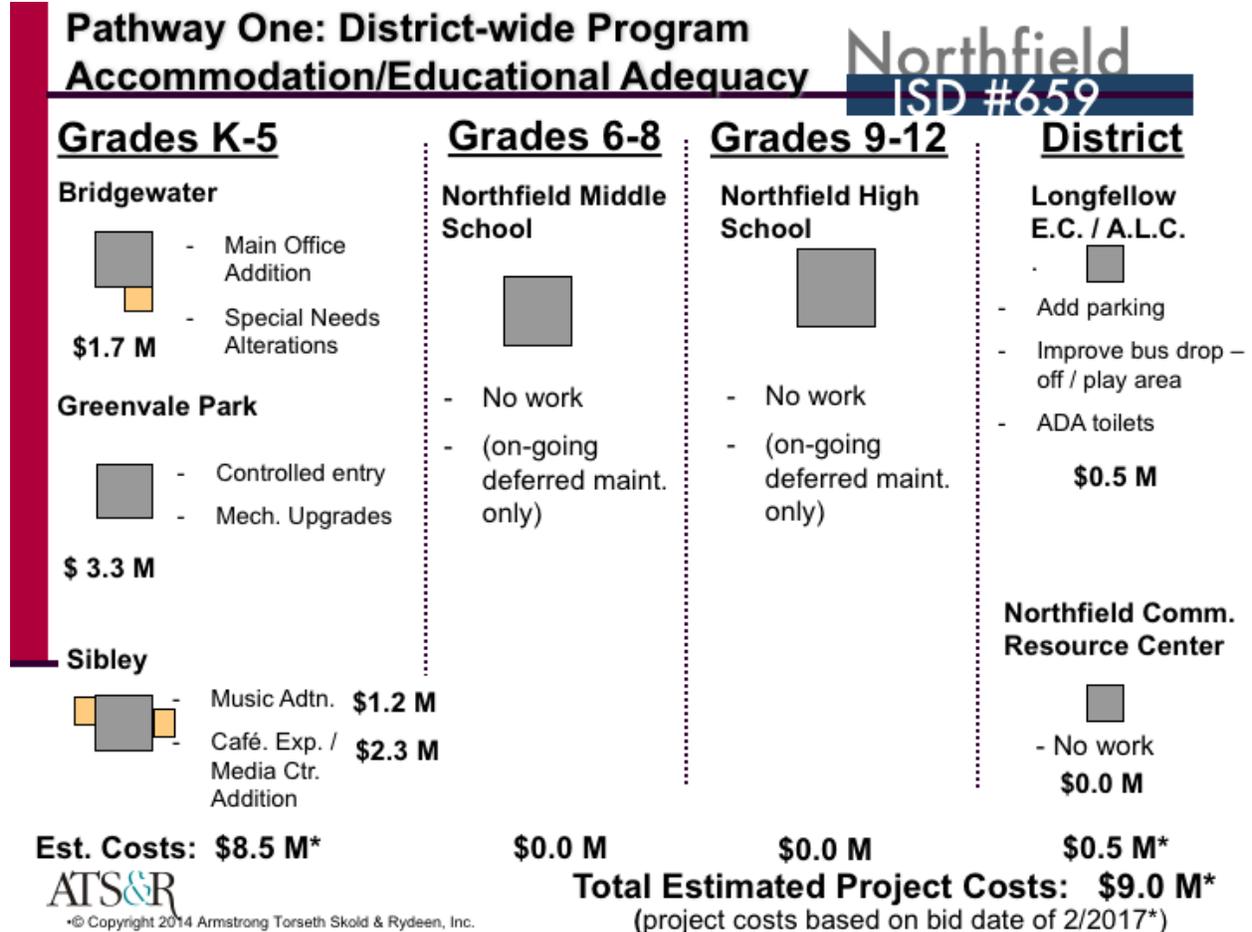
Part IV: Alternative Approaches Based Upon Thought Exchange Process

A careful analysis of the Thought Exchange Process, suggests the community views:

1. The high school to be outdated. Further expansion on this site should not be a priority.
2. Greenvale Park's design fails to provide either maximum security for students and staff or appropriate learning spaces for instruction.
3. A decision to pursue only projects designed to address immediate instructional needs is short-term and a less desirable approach to facility upgrades.
4. Any decision made by the board should take into consideration the tax impact on the community.

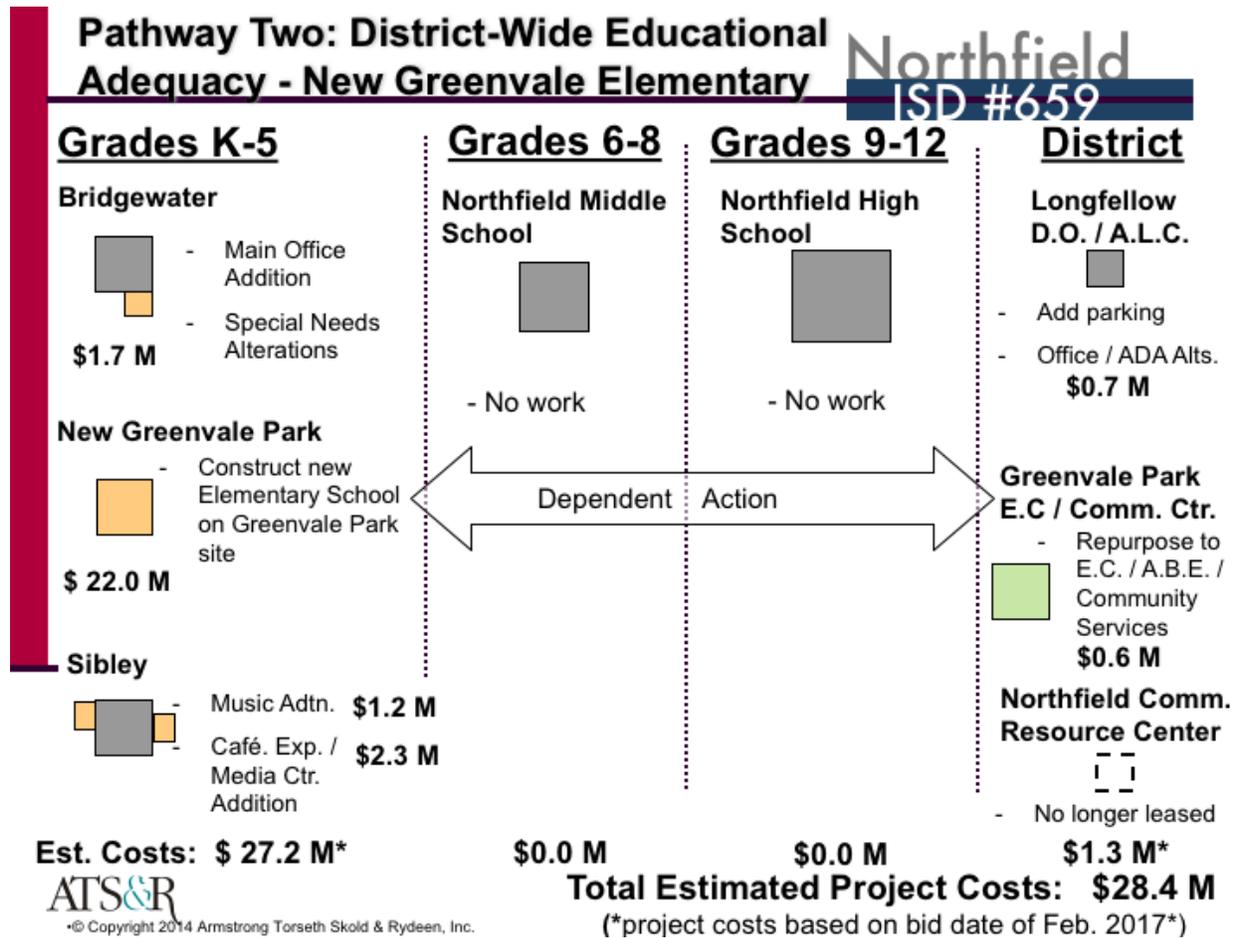
Following extensive community engagement, and based upon an analysis of the input received, it would appear as though the Board should consider one of several pathways in the development of its Master Facility Plan.

Pathway One: Design and construct minimal modifications to all buildings to accommodate educational changes and safety concerns in each. This approach is illustrated in the graph below.



Implementing this approach would provide the most significant changes in school design to both Bridgewater and Sibley Elementary Schools and modest educational upgrades to Greenvale Park Elementary School. Some modest repair and betterment projects would be carried out at Northfield Middle School and High School to ensure the long-term viability of each building. Parking lot upgrades would be completed at the Longfellow School as well.

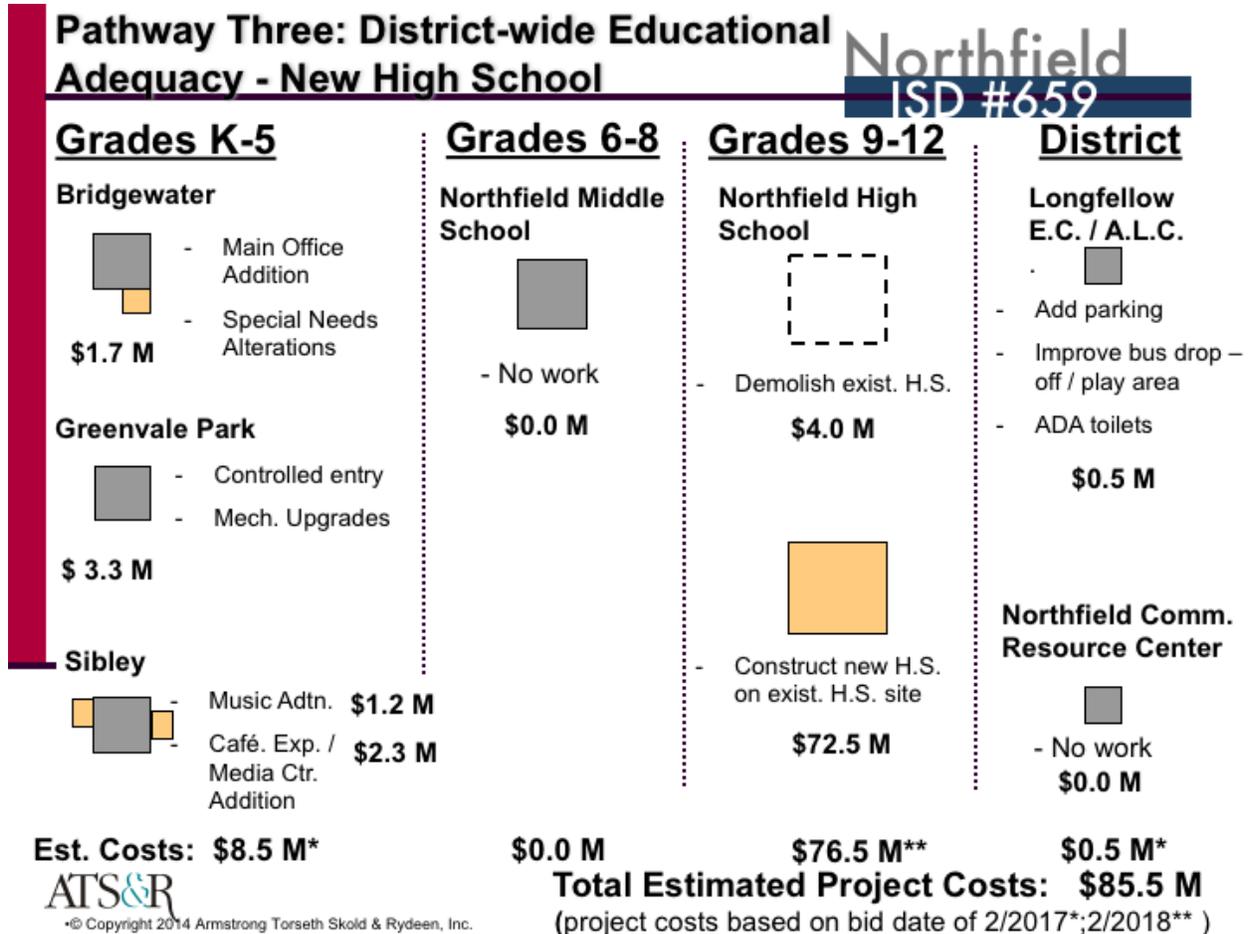
Pathway Two: Construct a new elementary school to replace Greenvale Park and repurpose the school to accommodate early childhood programs. Design and construct minimal modifications to all other buildings to accommodate educational changes and safety concerns in each. This approach is illustrated in the graph below.



Implementing this approach would provide modest improvements to both Sibley and Bridgewater Elementary Schools. Greenvale Park School would be repurposed to accommodate the District’s E.C. and A.B.E. programs. A new elementary school would be constructed on the current site at a cost of \$22M. Some modest repair and betterment projects would be initiated at Northfield Middle School and High School to ensure the long-term viability of each building. Construction of a new elementary school would take approximately two (2) years from the time the bond levy was approved. Greenvale Park would remain operational until the construction on the new elementary school was completed.

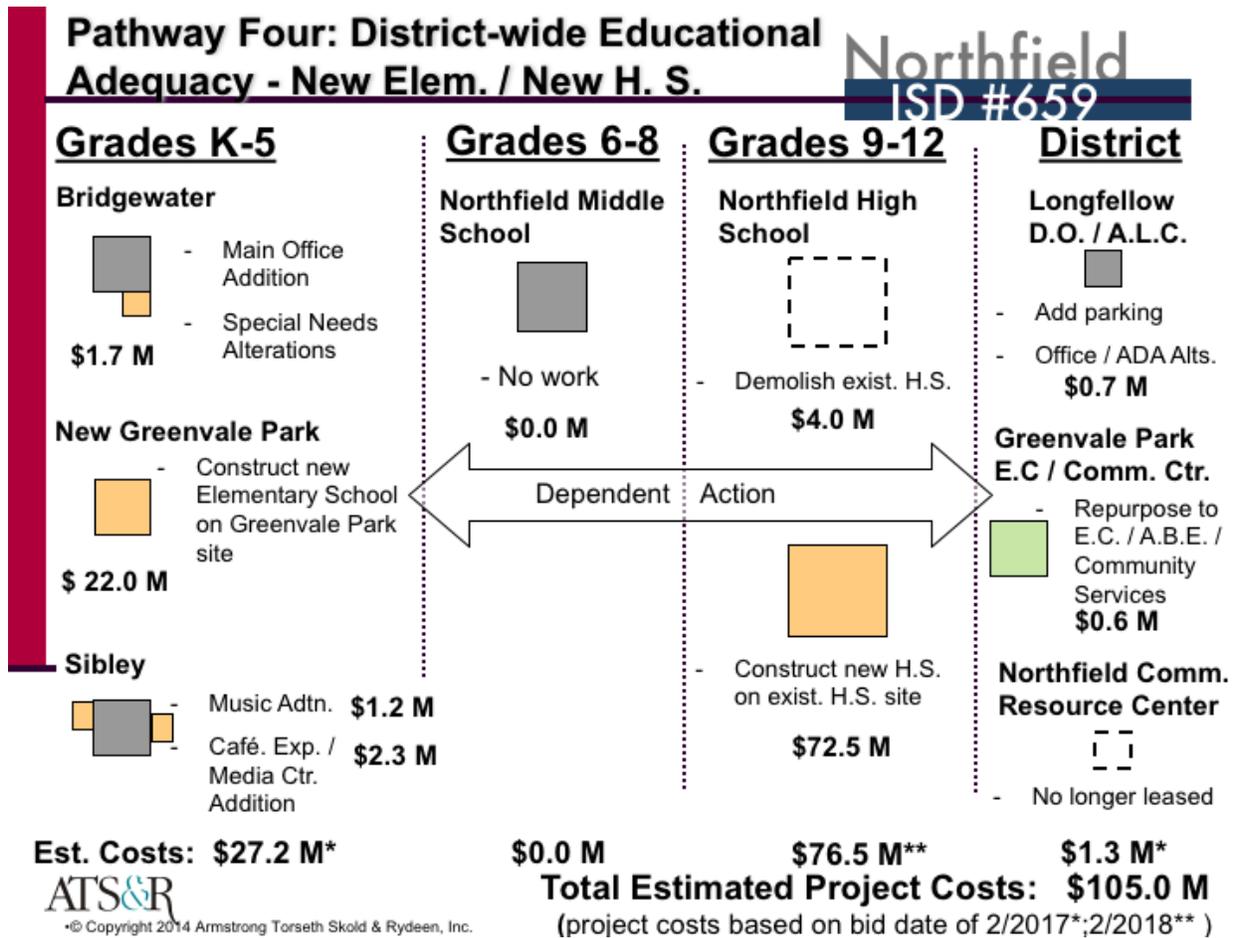
Following completion, Greenvale would be repurposed to accommodate the E.C and A.B.E programs.

Pathway Three: Construct a new senior high school. Design and construct minimal modifications to all other buildings to accommodate educational changes and safety concerns in each. This approach is illustrated in the graph below.



Implementing this approach would see only minimal upgrades in each of the District's elementary schools to accommodate identified educational adequacy issues in each. The focus of this approach is the construction of a new senior high school. It would be located on the existing site. Students would continue to use the existing high school until the new school is completed. Once completed, the current high school would be demolished and the site repurposed to accommodate athletic practice fields. It should be anticipated that completion of this project would take from twenty-four (24) to thirty (30) months following the passage of a bond levy.

Pathway Four: Design and construct a new elementary school to replace Greenvale Park. Design and construct a new senior high school. Design and construct minimal modifications to Sibley Elementary and Bridgewater to accommodate educational changes and safety concerns in both. Repurpose Greenvale Park to accommodate early childhood programs. This approach is illustrated in the graph below.



This pathway is a combination of pathways two and three; constructing a new elementary school as well as a new senior high school. While the results of the ‘Thought Exchange’ process found those responding to be more supportive of the construction of a new senior high school, support for a new elementary school and the general belief that Greenvale Park- as it is currently configured- is inadequate and should not be invested in by the District suggest that replacing both should be given consideration. It should be anticipated that completion of these two (2) projects would take from twenty-four (24) to thirty (30) months following the passage of a bond levy.

Part V: Steps Forward

District administration conducted over twenty (20) meetings in the community. As noted above, more than five-hundred and eighty (580) responded to the Thought Exchange Process. Based upon an analysis of the feedback, it would appear that Pathway One is the least favorably viewed by those who participated in the many outreach activities. Pathways Two and Three each have significant support. The question facing the Board then is to decide which should be done first; Pathway Two or Three? Or, given the importance to both Pathways whether to Implement Pathway Four. It goes without saying that each Pathway has implications for tax increases on the community.