

CHOICES FOR POTENTIAL CAPITAL
IMPROVEMENTS IN USD 320



Prepared for the
USD 320 Board of Education
Wamego, KS

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INTRODUCTION

What's the report about? Is there some emergency we haven't heard about? Is some surprise looming on the horizon? No. And no, again. However, the potential for a school housing problem is becoming increasingly clear.

This is not something new for school, parent, and community leaders. When this writer first worked in USD 320 (Wamego, Louisburg, Belvue and all other housing locations in the district) the year was 1974, and the big question being studied was whether to build a new high school west of town or expand the high school on its present site. Following a lot of study and two referendum elections, the community decided to keep the high school in its present location. The thinking was that the high school building should be the gateway to Wamego. Since that decision almost fifty years ago, the high school has undergone considerable expansion and modernization. It is the gateway to Wamego. During the same time, the Central Elementary School has been modernized and expanded, West Elementary School was constructed, and athletic facilities and a new middle school were constructed west of town.

Fifty years ago, Wamego was a so-called best kept secret. It was a nice community east of Manhattan and Fort Riley on the road to Topeka, missed by I-70 almost ten miles to the south. With the passage of time, Wamego has become increasingly well known as a good place to live, work, raise families, and educate kids. The same happened to Manhattan; and as Ft. Riley expanded and population growth occurred, the St. George and Westmoreland communities also grew. New schools have been built at St. George and Flush near Westmoreland.

Now a pocket of dramatic growth continues to develop just east of Manhattan in the Greater Green Valley/Lake Elbo area. This and other housing development, particularly that occurring along the Highway 24 corridor near Wamego is affecting school enrollment in USD 320. An unnamed individual involved with personnel changes at Ft. Riley recently voiced opinions about housing choices of incoming personnel. Some electing to live off-base are purchasing housing east of Manhattan and in the Green Valley area, and some are buying further east into the Rock Creek and Wamego School Districts. Their motivation is apparently to avoid housing costs and perceived traffic congestion in Manhattan, and difficult political questions awaiting resolution in the Greater Green Valley area. It is noteworthy that some housing purchasers from Ft. Riley and from Manhattan are willing to drive a few extra miles along Highway 24 well into the Wamego area.

School housing problems caused by home construction are somewhat paralleled by steady increase in the need for special education programs for exceptional children who range from students who are uncommonly gifted to others who are profoundly handicapped. The need for special student services in schools continues to grow and is worthy of careful attention. In some schools, special education programs require up to 25% of the classrooms in the school building. This is observed particularly in primary and elementary schools, because special needs children as young as three years old are being identified as in need of specialized education services.

It is time to begin studying what the future may hold for USD 320. This study is about school enrollment and special service needs in relation to available instruction space in the district school buildings.

CHAPTER ONE COUNTY POPULATION AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

This brief chapter contains very important county population data and school enrollment numbers including recent past enrollment figures and estimates of future school enrollment.

COUNTY POPULATION

USD 320 is located in south central Pottawatomie County. The county is somewhat unique among Kansas counties. First it contains 862 square miles of land area which makes it larger than most other counties. It ranks as the 44th largest of the 105 counties in the state. Also, in the 2020 census, its population was 25,349 making it the 24th most populous county in the state.

Between 2010 and 2020, Pottawatomie County was one of only 10 counties in the state increasing in population. It was recorded as the fastest growing county in the state at an impressive 11.7%. Moreover, Pottawatomie County was not only the fastest growing county, it was also one of only 18 counties that were increasing in population. The other 87 counties (or 83% of the counties in the state) were losing population.

Figures showing population change by ten-year intervals are listed below:

1980 – 14,782

1990 – 16,500

2000 – 18,265

2010 – 21,728

2020 – 25,349

The important feature of these figures is the fact that growth is accelerating. Estimates of future population growth are shown later in this section.

Concerning the age of the population, it is significant that the age group 19 years and younger is the largest age group in Pottawatomie County:

Persons age 5 and under 7.6%

Persons age 19 and under 29.0%

Persons age 65 and older 14.6%

These also are important figures because they indicate that the Pottawatomie County population is relatively young; and most important is the fact that the largest segment of the population is school age!

There are almost 10,000 houses in the county, and over 75% of these are owner occupied. These are impressive statistics in as much as records also indicate the majority of these houses (dwelling units) are located along and immediately north and south of the US 24 corridor between Manhattan and Wamego. In 2020, the county issued 164 building permits – almost 14 per month.

Even more impressive, is a census statistic indicating that in Pottawatomie County, over 94% of the age 25 and over group hold a high school diploma; and among those individuals in the over 26 age cohort,

34% hold a four-year college degree. Individuals with two-year certificates from technical schools and community colleges constitute an impressive group. In fact, Highland Community College maintains a campus at Wamego; and Manhattan Technical College has a facility in Wamego.

Demographers expect Pottawatomie County to continue to grow as evidenced by estimate of population numbers shown below:

2020 - 25,349

2025 - 27,844

2030 - 30,180

2035 - 32,712

2040 - 35,400

Population is expected to grow similarly in Riley County. Population increases of this magnitude mean that USD 320 school enrollment is destined to increase as the future evolves.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Before discussing enrollment, it is important to realize that counties in Kansas usually contain more than one school district. Only two of the state's 105 counties have just one school district whose boundaries are the same as the county boundaries; Hamilton County, home of Syracuse School District and Greeley County, home of Greeley County Schools based at Tribune. Sedgwick County (Wichita) is home to ten school districts and Butler County (El Dorado) is home to nine school districts.

Pottawatomie County contains four school districts: USD 320, Wamego; USD 321, Kaw Valley; USD 322, Onaga; and USD 323, Rock Creek. Kaw Valley district extends into both Jackson County and a small portion of Shawnee County. Similarly, Onaga district extends into a portion of Jackson County. USD 383, Manhattan, extends from Riley County into a small area of southwestern Pottawatomie County; USD 384 Blue Valley, based in Riley County at Randolph extends into western Pottawatomie County; and USD 380 Vermillion, based in Marshall County at Frankfort extends into a small portion of north central Pottawatomie County. It is noteworthy that the three largest school districts based in Pottawatomie County - Rock Creek, Wamego, and Kaw Valley - have substantial territory in and along the US Highway 24 corridor. These three school districts enroll over 1000 students each.

CURRENT AND ESTIMATED SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

The most popular method of predicting future school enrollment is the "cohort survival" method. It works very well in stable school districts. It is based on county birth rates. Unfortunately, it does not account adequately for population growth and resultant increases in school enrollment caused by construction of new residential housing. Another method for predicting future school enrollment is the "rolling average" method; but it also has limitations in accuracy in school districts where new residential housing is being constructed. The most accurate method for calculating estimates of future school enrollment is to maintain an annual census of the school district and monitor construction and occupancy of new residential housing. This is often not practical. Recommendations concerning enrollment estimating will be included in the closing chapter of this report.

The five tables that follow show current school enrollment by grades and also show estimates or future enrollment based on the best data currently available. The estimates are for only four years into the future. School personnel should recalculate the estimates of future enrollment each fall when the official September 20 headcount school enrollment figures become available. Generally speaking, in only a few years, the annual recalculations of future enrollment become increasingly accurate, especially when new housing is monitored regularly.

Following are the five tables that show current and future estimates of school enrollment by grade and by current school building grade organization. When studying the figures in the tables, readers need to keep in mind that the estimates are conservative because they do not include probable students who will reside in new housing currently being constructed and planned for the near and foreseeable future.

TABLE 1. ACTUAL AND ESTIMATED HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT FOR GRADES K-2. FALL 2021 THROUGH FALL 2025.

YEAR	GRADE			TOTAL
	Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	
Fall 2021	127	127	103	357
Fall 2022	114	129	129	372
Fall 2023	114	116	131	361
Fall 2024	114	116	118	348
Fall 2025	114	116	118	348

NOTE: Grades K, 1, and 2 are housed at Central Elementary. Also, Central houses the district pre-school. There were 69 preschool students in Fall 2021. Pre-schoolers attend one-half day, consisting of six sections, and occupy three classrooms. There are 11 to 12 students per section.

Enrollment estimates through Fall 2025 show the pre-school enrollment will grow somewhat but is not expected to exceed 15 students per section.

TABLE 2. ACTUAL AND ESTIMATED HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT FOR GRADES 3-5. FALL 2021 THROUGH FALL 2025.

YEAR	GRADE			TOTAL
	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	
Fall 2021	120	127	132	379
Fall 2022	105	118	129	352
Fall 2023	131	103	120	354
Fall 2024	133	128	104	365
Fall 2025	120	135	130	385

NOTE: Grades 3-5 are housed at West Elementary.

TABLE 3. ACTUAL AND ESTIMATED HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT FOR GRADES 6-8. FALL 2021 THROUGH FALL 2025.

YEAR	GRADE			TOTAL
	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	
Fall 2021	99	131	123	353
Fall 2022	134	100	131	365
Fall 2023	132	136	101	369
Fall 2024	122	133	136	391
Fall 2025	106	124	135	365

NOTE: Grades 6-8 are housed at Wamego Middle School.

TABLE 4. ACTUAL AND ESTIMATED HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT FOR GRADES 9-12. FALL 2021 THROUGH FALL 2025.

YEAR	GRADE				TOTAL
	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	
Fall 2021	146	122	127	113	508
Fall 2022	126	144	120	134	524
Fall 2023	134	124	141	126	525
Fall 2024	103	132	121	146	502
Fall 2025	139	104	134	123	500

NOTE: Grades 9-12 are housed at Wamego High School.

TABLE 5. TABLE 4. ACTUAL AND ESTIMATED HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT FOR GRADES K-2 TOTAL, 3-5 TOTAL, 6-8 TOTAL, AND 9-12 TOTAL. FALL 2021 THROUGH FALL 2025.

YEAR	GRADE				TOTAL
	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12	
Fall 2021	357	379	353	508	1597
Fall 2022	372	352	365	524	1613
Fall 2023	361	354	369	525	1609
Fall 2024	348	365	391	502	1606
Fall 2025	348	385	365	500	1598

Review of the numbers in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that enrollment in Grades Kindergarten through Grade 5 is expected to remain quite steady. Some growth may occur in total enrollment of all six grades, but may change only slightly. Readers must realize that the figures in these tables do not show enrollment increases that will surely occur as new housing is occupied in USD 320.

Concerning Table 3, a small increase in middle school enrollment is expected by Fall, 2025. Again, readers need to be aware that the figures do not reflect enrollment increases that will follow construction and occupancies of new housing.

At the high school, as shown in Table 4, enrollment is expected to remain flat; however, as estimates are calculated each Fall, the resultant figures will reflect influx of students from new housing.

Table 5 is a summary of Tables 1 through 4 and is included as a convenience for readers.

CAUTION CONCERNING FUTURE ENROLLMENT ESTIMATES

Predictions of future school enrollment are only best estimates. The “cohort survival” method for estimating future school enrollment is very reliable in stable school districts where most enrollment growth is due to births that occur to mothers living in the district. The method does not work well in districts that are growing mostly by families moving into newly constructed housing.

To correct for this problem, school planners monitor housing development from the time land is plotted for housing development through the issuance of building permits, construction, and occupancy of new homes whether they be single or multiple family homes. Monitoring building permits, housing start-ups, and new housing occupancies (and accounting also for births) in a school district results in very accurate estimates of future school enrollment, especially for three to five years into the future.

USD 320 officials have not until very recently needed this kind of information because rapid housing growth in Pottawatomie County has been concentrated mostly west of the district boundary with USD 323, Rock Creek. It is time now for officials in USD 320, Wamego, to begin monitoring the housing development in the district - particularly new housing start-ups and occupancies.

Potential for school enrollment increases from occupancies of new housing yet to be constructed in the district, especially along the US Highway 24 corridor, is clearly observable. How best to monitor new housing occupancies is addressed in the closing chapter of this report.

CHAPTER TWO

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The citizenry of USD 320 is justifiably proud of its school buildings. Wamego, and later USD 320, citizens have elected good school boards who have been careful to hire dedicated personnel to operate, care for, and teach in the schools. The boards have also provided leadership for citizens to finance outstanding school buildings. Today, those past decades of commitment to having exemplary school buildings is clearly apparent to even casual observers.

In this chapter, each school building will be briefly described since readers of this report are familiar with the buildings. The instructional rooms and how those rooms are being used currently are shown for each school. It is important that readers be aware that each building is very well utilized and has only limited space available for additional students.

CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Grades Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st Grade and 2nd Grade

Central Elementary was opened in 1963 and modernized and expanded in 2010. It is operating essentially at capacity supporting an enrollment of about 357 students plus a 69-student preschool.

The 2010 capital improvement project included a large addition along 7th Street. The building is a blend of modernized old (1963) and new (2010) and today is a marvelous, well cared for school building.

The school is landlocked, bordered on the south by 7th Street, on the east by Elm Street, on the north by 8th Street, and on the west by Poplar Street. The south boundary of the high school site is also located along 8th Street.

It is noteworthy that the original part of Central Elementary fronting along Poplar Street is a two-story building containing eleven 1st and 2nd grade classrooms, an art room, a special education classroom, and three classroom-sized instructional support rooms. The tabulation that follows shows the instructional rooms at Central Elementary. The tabulation begins at the east end of the building.

MAIN LEVEL

Room Name or Number	Room Use
123	Kindergarten
124	Kindergarten
122	Kindergarten
125	Kindergarten
126	Kindergarten
127	Kindergarten
128	Pre-school
129	Pre-school
172	Pre-school
133	Special Education
131	Computer Lab

MAIN LEVEL Continued...

132	Library
150	Special Education
149	Art
145	Grade 1
139	Grade 1
138	Grade 1
137	Grade 1
136	Grade 1
135	Grade 1

SECOND FLOOR

201	Grade 2
202	Grade 2
203	Reading
204	Resource (Grade 2; Fall, 2022)
205/206	Reading
211	Grade 2
215	Grade 2
216	Grade 2

BACK TO MAIN LEVEL

159	Music
155	Special Education
Gymnasium	Physical Education
Food Service	Dining

Review of the listing shows six sections of Kindergarten and Grade 1, and five sections of Grade 2; Three rooms are devoted to Pre-school, and two rooms are dedicated to Special Education in addition to typical resource rooms used for working with children with special needs.

**WEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Grades 3, 4, and 5**

West Elementary School is located south of 6th Street between Parkview Drive and J.C. Rogers Drive. Drivers can exit the site to 4th Street on the south. The site is adequately sized, but it is landlocked.

The building was opened in 1980 and expanded by a major addition in 1988 and again in 2005. The building houses Grades 3 through 5, comprising about 380 students. There are six sections of each grade. Section sizes are about 23 students for each class.

The building is well situated on its site and its design reflects up-to-date forward-looking elementary school design in Kansas. The building could be expanded to the west, and reasonably adequate playground space would remain.

Listed below are the instruction rooms and how the rooms are used.

Room Name or Number	Room Use
Gymnasium	Physical Education
Music	Music
Technology	Technology
Art	Art
Library	Research and Study

Northeast Outer Corridor

146	Special Education
Food Service	Dining

1988 Grade 5 Addition

134	Grade 5
131	Grade 5
130	Grade 5
129	Grade 5

Southwest Outer Corridor

124	Grade 4
128	Grade 4
123	Grade 4
122	Grade 4
115	Grade 3
116	Grade 3
114	Grade 3
110	Special Education

Central Clusters

111	Special Education
112	Grade 3
144	Grade 3
147	Grade 3
137	Grade 5
136	Grade 5
127	Grade 4
126	Grade 4

Like most elementary schools built in the past forty years, several small instruction rooms are strategically located throughout the building. These rooms are used for a variety of student services provided by permanently placed teachers as well as teachers who work in more than one building. Specialized services teachers work with students individually and in small groups. These students may be unusually talented or challenged by physical, mental, and/or emotional characteristics that interfere

with learning and success in school. Providing services for special needs students is systemic throughout the whole country and apparent in all public schools.

WAMEGO MIDDLE SCHOOL
Grades 6, 7, and 8

The middle school was opened in 1992 and expanded to the west in 2017 by a science projects room flanked by four science instruction labs. The building is located on a 38-acre site fronting on Kaw Valley Road about 0.3 miles north of Highway 24. The site is bounded on the north by Say Road and on the west and south by private properties.

The building is well designed and representative of Kansas middle schools of similar size and age. Grades 6, 7, and 8 is the most popular variety of grade organizations in middle schools in Kansas.

The building currently houses about 350 students and may house nearly 400 by Fall, 2024. This will mean class sections of at least 20 students and upwards to the 25 to 30 student range. The critical determinant of class section size is not the number of students, rather, it is the number of instruction rooms. For example, a 4-room school supporting 100 students will have four class sections of 25 students each. If enrollment would increase to 128, then the four class sections would have 32 students in each of the four rooms. School boards in rural Kansas tend to prefer class sizes in the mid-20's. The instruction rooms and their uses are shown in the tabulation that follows.

Room Name or Number	Room Use
Commons	Various Uses
Gymnasium	P.E.
Library	Research & Study
C102	Social Studies
C105	Social Studies
C120	English
C119	English
C117	English
C115	Computer Lab
C112	Computer Lab
B106	Band Room
B132	Vocal Music
B112	1A Woods Tech.
B117	1A Woods Tech.
B124-126	HELP* (2 rooms)
B120	Art
A111	English
A112	English
A120	HELP*
A121	Social Studies
A124	Social Studies
A125	HELP*

E104	Science
E106	Science
E108	Science
E112	Science Projects
E113	Science
D143-144	HELP*
D141	Conference
D140	Math
D134	Math
D132	Foreign Language
D131	Math
D129	ACE**
D127	Technology

*HELP rooms are used by special education teachers to work with students requiring specialized and otherwise unique help and attention. There are 4 Help rooms - two standard room size and two larger rooms.

**ACE means Adverse Childhood Experience students, who because of such childhood and adolescent experiences need specialized help by special education teachers to assure that they achieve their best potential for academic and social success in schools.

Note about room size and use: Classrooms at the middle school are standard size typical of modern middle schools in Kansas. Academic classrooms range in size from about 750 - 850 square feet each and specialized rooms - such as science, art, music, and shop are necessarily larger.

Like at the elementary schools, the middle school classrooms are well utilized throughout the day. Also, like the elementary schools, a few more students could be housed at the middle school. This is likely to occur during the coming three to five years. It is important to realize that there is no room at the middle school for additional courses in the curriculum or for additional subject area teachers.

WAMEGO HIGH SCHOOL Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12

The high school is located about a block south of Highway 24 at its intersection with Lincoln Avenue, commonly known as Wamego's Main Street.

The high school is a large building bounded on the east by Lincoln Street, on the south by Eighth Street, the west by Poplar Street, and on the north by private properties. It is obviously the flagship school of USD 320.

The original portion of the building was opened in 1938 and modernized in 2005. The building was expanded to the south in 1978 by an addition containing principally a new food service and dining area

and varsity gymnasium. This addition included some additional classroom space and at the time was called the junior high school addition.

The building is uncommonly clean and well maintained. The old 1938 portion was planned and constructed during the Great Depression of the 1930's. These Depression Era schools were well designed and very well constructed. One example is the terrazzo floors and entry stairs. The life of terrazzo floors is virtually forever!

Standards of high quality planning and construction were applied to the additions, modifications, and improvements made to the building in more recent years.

The first floor of the building extends from the new science rooms at the north end past the 1938 auditorium and main section featuring clusters of instructional rooms, and on south to the 1978 gymnasium and food service/dining areas.

The second floor, again beginning at the north end of the building, features the new science rooms, the auditorium balcony, library, administration offices, counseling offices and classrooms around two sides of the new gym, the old gym, and vocal and instrumental music rooms.

Two unique features of this level are an exemplary library and the two music rooms, located near an exit providing outdoor access to a grassy area where the marching band practices for outdoor performances.

The top floor of the building is actually the third floor of the 1938 original section. The newer section of the building contains mostly classrooms.

In addition to the main building, there are four separate facilities located behind the building:

Athletic Fitness Training Building

This impressively sized building is located directly behind the main building adjacent to the grassy area. The building consists essentially of two large rooms - a wrestling room and a strength conditioning room. The wrestling room is a practice and calisthenics room and the other room is well outfitted with various exercise and strength conditioning equipment.

Greenhouse

The greenhouse is used by science and agriculture students. It is located immediately north of the agriculture building. It is about 30 x 60 feet in size and can be heated.

Industrial Arts Shop

The industrial arts/technology shop is located in a separate building north of the grass area on the west side of the high school. It is a very adequately sized facility featuring a computerized drafting room, material storage, finishing room, instructor office, and main shop area. It is well equipped with tools and machinery necessary to teach the industrial arts and shop technology curriculum.

Agriculture Shop

The agriculture shop is immediately west of the industrial arts building. It includes a comfortably sized and furnished agriculture classroom, instructor office, locker/washroom and an impressively equipped shop.

Parking at the high school is limited to two lots along Poplar Street and 13 spaces at the front of the building for visitors and office staff. There is driveway access to the north lot from Lincoln Avenue. The North parking lot along 8th Street is shared by one private dwelling house. Bordering the south parking lot are two private homes and the Sonic Restaurant which fronts on Lincoln Avenue.

The listing that follows shows the instruction rooms in the high school. It is important to realize that the rooms are used essentially every period of the school day. The building could accommodate a few more students; but to add courses to the curriculum or add teachers would be very difficult because there are no available rooms. There are some low enrollment classes; Advanced Science, Math, and English are examples. Also, there are some high enrollment classes such as Basic English and Social Studies courses. This is typical of today's comprehensive high schools.

First Floor Rooms

Room Name or Number	Room Use
117	Family and Consumer Science
129	Math
120	Physical Education/Gym
119	Family and Consumer Science
101	Science
122	Special Education
114	Business
103	Science
104	Modified Classroom (Mostly science)
127	Gifted Education
125	Math
111	Special Education
116	Math
130	Business
131	Math
132	Math

Second Floor Rooms

218	Language Arts
203	Science
208	Information Technology
206	Information Technology
216	HELP - Learning Support/Assistance
211	ESL/Internships

Second Floor Rooms Continued...

205	Foreign Language
212	Library
204	Technology Center/Virtual School
230	Art
217	Language Arts
223	Music
235	Music
220	Language Arts
224	Foreign Language
209	Special Education
219	Language Arts
223	Language Arts
212B	Special Education

Third Floor Rooms

306	Social Studies
305	Social Studies
307	Social Studies
304	Reading/Yearbook
303	Social Studies

Separate Buildings

403	Woods Shop
401	Agriculture Shop
135/136	Weight Training Building
–	Greenhouse

Again, it is important that readers understand that while the high school houses only about 500 students, the rooms are used extensively. There is room for some additional students, but not for additional courses or teachers.

OTHER DISTRICT FACILITIES

There are seven additional facilities in USD 320:

1. The *USD 320 District Office* is located on the former Catholic church property at 8th and Poplar Streets. This is an usually good and functional facility.
2. The *Special Services Cooperative* offices and a large community meeting facility, known as the *PLC Building*, along the west side of the Catholic church property off 8th Street.
3. Parking at 8th and Poplar Streets for the District Office, Special Services Cooperative, and PLC Building.
4. Play field of probably five acres just west of the District Office and north of the PLC Building. Access from Lilac Street is unimproved and awkward.
5. The *USD 320 District Kitchen* is relatively new and located south of Highway 24 on the west side of Columbian Road.
6. The *Maintenance and Transportation Facilities* are located off Columbian Road near the District Kitchen.
7. The interscholastic athletic complex, *Wamego Sports Complex*, is located near the maintenance and transportation facility off Columbian Road south of Highway 24.

CHAPTER THREE RECOMMENDATIONS AND CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE

It is important to once again acknowledge the work of former school boards that served Wamego and later USD 320. These boards provided leadership for the community to commit to good schools and outstanding school facilities. May that tradition continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Assign an individual in the school system or obtain a paid volunteer to prepare quarterly and annual reports showing:

- A. Permits issued by Wamego City and Pottawatomie County for land to be platted for future housing development.
- B. Building permits issued by Wamego and Pottawatomie County for residential housing construction.
- C. New housing construction start-ups.
- D. New housing occupancies including numbers and ages of pre-school and school age children.
- E. On a map of the district show the locations of platted land and new dwelling house locations.

Currently, school officials do not have this information in a form suitable for helping calculate accurate estimates of future grade-by-grade school enrollment. Quite obviously, this information is critical to future capital improvement planning.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Respectfully ask the owner of the dwelling house that fronts 8th Street and extends north into the south parking lot of the high school site for a right of first refusal to purchase that property if and when it becomes for sale.

Additionally, there are two dwelling houses adjacent to the north parking lot of the high school that appear to be accessible only from Poplar Street. The school board should seriously consider asking the owner(s) of those two properties for a right of first refusal to acquire if and when either or both properties become for sale.

RECOMMENDATION 3: As long as the high school is at its current location, retain and continue to maintain the grass area behind the high school and adjacent to the weight training building as a place for outdoor practice by the high school marching band and for students and community citizens wishing to use the track that borders that grass area.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Retain and continue to maintain the school district central office facility at its present location at least into the foreseeable future. It is part of the former Catholic Church property located at 8th and Poplar Streets. The property is a potential site for a future educational facility, but the potentiality is currently unclear.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Information described in Recommendation 1 above will surely be in report form by early next school year. Official fall headcount grade-by-grade school enrollment will be available on September 20, 2022. An accurate projection of school enrollment can be calculated at that time. If figures show an increase in future school enrollment, then the board should appoint a citizen advisory committee to study the enrollment estimates and evaluate choices for capital improvements at schools needed to accommodate additional students.

The committee would be advisory to the superintendent and board. G. Kent Stewart, in his book, *Avoiding School Facility Issues* (2007), reminds readers that educational facility decisions are often potentially controversial; and controversy is best avoided by developing good information and involving the community early in the decision-making process. Advice by an advisory committee is very valuable because it usually represents the feelings and opinions of the community; and is therefore very helpful to planning future capital improvement projects that the community will support. A committee of no more than 19 persons representing the schools and the community is recommended.

CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE

Basil Castaldi, in his textbook, *Educational Facilities* (1994), offered thirteen principles for long range planning.

Four of the principles seemed particularly applicable at this time to USD 320. These are:

1. The plan ensures continued effective use of existing serviceable facilities.
2. The plan does not unduly or unreasonably freeze the actions of future school boards.
3. The plan avoids a policy of making small tack-on additions to existing school buildings.
4. The plan respects the financial ability of the school district—will not overburden taxpayers

The choices offered below represent only a few that are available to meet future needs for additional classroom space. They are offered only to stimulate thinking by people who will be involved in planning for modifications to school buildings; and perhaps additional buildings. Readers and evaluators should keep uppermost in mind that: First, a number of choices are available; and second, 20 years from now, choices made today will be viewed as having been good choices.

CHOICES TO RELIEVE POTENTIAL CROWDING IN THE SCHOOLS

Following are some choices for obtaining additional instruction space.

Group A Choices

1. Remove the preschool program from Central Elementary, and place it in a new facility on the site west of the district offices building. Pre-school is now using three rooms at Central; Kindergarten is using six rooms. There may be insufficient space to include Kindergarten in a facility on the suggested site. A pre-school facility could include a variety of early childhood services in addition to the currently formal preschool program. Central would be a K-2 school.
2. Remove Grade Two from Central Elementary and expand early childhood services. This is not feasible because state law requires that first grade and younger students be housed on ground floor only. Perhaps Grade 9 high school students could use the upper floor at Central for English or Social Studies classes. Central would be a Pre-K-1 school with the top floor for Grade 9.
3. Construct a six to eight room addition on the west side of West Elementary to house Grade 2 from Central Elementary. Central would not house Grade 2 students, but would have a Grade 9 floor; and West Elementary would become a Grades 2- 5 school instead of its current Grades 3-5 configuration.
4. To relieve the Middle School, construct additional academic rooms as needed.
5. The High School would be relieved by having most or all of its Grade 9 English and Social Studies classes at Central Elementary.

Group B Choices

1. On the former Catholic Church property at 8th and Poplar Streets, construct a classroom building for the high school English and social studies classes. This makes the high school a campus plan school and frees the main building from future crowding. It would be a four-building campus—Weights training, agriculture shop, woods shop, and the English/social studies building; and would preserve the grass area for Marching band practice. It would be tempting to build in the main campus, but to do so will crowd the campus, lose the grass area, and probably eliminate some student parking spaces.
2. Crowding at the other buildings could still be relieved as described in Group A above with the key choice still being to build a preschool center west of the District Office building. Also, Central would not lose Grade 2 because Grade 9 would still be at the high school. Some additional classrooms will still need to be constructed at West and the Middle School.
3. As an alternative to relieving potential crowding at the high school and since the community wants the high school building in its present location would be to build a Grades 9 and 10 building either west of town near the athletic facilities or on the Middle School site.

Group C Choices

1. House the Middle School grades in the High School building.
2. Expand the Middle School building at its present location to become the High School.
3. Relieve the elementary schools as described earlier in these choices.

CLOSING OBSERVATIONS AND A SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The school board is to be complimented for requesting this study of future school facility needs. Current estimates of grade-by-grade enrollment and the current status of current and planned housing construction both suggest that there is time for the board, school officials and other school personnel, and particularly community leaders to continue to collect and evaluate important information, and to chart a course for the future that will be supported by the community.

There is no reason at this time to rush important decisions. First, obtain needed information suggested in Recommendation I at the beginning of this chapter. If the information (it will become available in September) warrants continued planning, then a citizen advisory committee should be appointed as described in Recommendation 5 at the beginning of this report.

The various choices are listed as departure points for study. No one knows at this time what configuration of choices will ultimately constitute a plan for the future. Rest assured that with ample involvement of stakeholders the right plan will be adopted. At that point, architectural assistance should be obtained to make sketches and cost estimates.

Whatever is chosen for the future needs to be:

ECONOMICALLY REALISTIC

EDUCATIONALLY SOUND

POLITICALLY FEASIBLE

REFERENCES AND ASSISTANCE

PUBLICATIONS

Castaldi, Basil. Educational Facilities. 1994. Allyn and Bacon Needham Heights, Mass

Stewart, G. Kent. Avoiding School Facility Issues. 2007. Information Age Publishing. Charlotte, NC

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PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

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TECHNOLOGY SOURCES

The World Wide Web/Internet is an important source of technical information about public schooling in general, and was consulted particularly for information about how development of new housing affects school building planning.