



How to find the information to advocate for building repairs at your school

With buildings over 100 years old (some even nearing 150!), it is not a surprise that there are huge capital improvement needs across the city. However, members need to understand that the distribution of capital funds is not equitable across the district and schools need to advocate for the repairs they need. This advocacy should include parents, community members, and local politicians when possible. Being able to document the needs of your building, especially in comparison to others that are getting repairs and renovations, helps improve the odds that your building will finally get on the capital improvement list.

CPS is required by law to put facility-related data, assessments and plans online and these documents can be very useful in your advocacy efforts. Most people in Chicago are unaware of these requirements and do not know where to find these documents.

This “how-to” guide provides an overview of the websites and documents that will help you fight for vital school repairs, but do not trust these documents to be up-to-date or completely accurate. **It is very important that you and your colleagues document and take photos of the conditions of your buildings.** Articles 14-1 and 14-2 of the CTU contract protect staff and students from working in unsafe building conditions, and Articles 44-3, 44-4, and 44-5 stipulate that schools need to be cleaned daily. When these contract articles are violated, union members need to fight back at every level: the PPC, the LSC, the Board of Education and ultimately file grievances if there is no remedy.

1. The draft **1-year and 5-year Capital Improvement Plans (CIP)** must be shared with the public and CPS is required to hold a public hearing each year before the Board approves them. These documents are available online going back to FY2013: <http://www.cps.edu/finance/Pages/financialinfo.aspx> and list each project CPS is planning. The hearings are usually in August in conjunction with the full budget hearings.
2. The **Capital Expenditure Reports** go back to FY2012 and are also available on the financial information website listed above. These can be downloaded as excel spreadsheets. The most useful function of the expenditure report website is that there are many ways to do research to highlight disparities—for instance, you can see which schools have had their boilers replaced or received an annex. This is important because oftentimes when people tell CPS that their school needs work done, CPS responds that “there isn’t any money” and we all know that is not true—CPS spends a lot of money on capital improvement each year:

Category	Budget							Budget
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Building Condition	99,091,974	179,603,601	22,500,000	34,177,000	68,560,000			403,932,575
Building Interior	14,325,033	18,413,535	6,325,000	5,000,000	22,350,000	150,000	39,780,000	106,343,568
Educational Programming	10,840,963	72,106,609	322,426,400	11,792,400	35,504,360			452,670,732
Facility Needs						100,729,000	247,640,000	348,369,000
Facility Site Improvements	1,506,709	3,818,750	1,181,450	5,100,000	27,603,000		35,830,000	75,039,909
Facility Upgrades						4,860,000		4,860,000
IT, Security and Other Projects	453,146,321	13,368,905	120,895,941	105,810,868	114,434,270	13,200,000	57,427,000	878,283,305
Major Renovations	25,989,000	186,300,000		53,600,000			83,570,000	349,459,000
Management/Administrative						13,078,361	23,909,639	36,988,000
New Facility Construction		186,330,000		132,000,000	241,450,000	10,200,000	420,010,000	989,990,000
Potential Outside Funded Projects						11,760,000		11,760,000
Programmatic						2,944,000	29,610,000	32,554,000
Site Improvements						20,635,000		20,635,000
Grand Total	604,900,000	659,941,400	473,328,791	347,480,268	509,901,630	177,556,361	937,776,639	3,710,885,089

3. The school **Facility Assessment Reports** can be found on each school's profile page on the CPS website: http://www.cps.edu/Schools/Find_a_school/Pages/findaschool.aspx. On the school profile page, click on the "Downloads" tab and all of the building-related information is towards the bottom. The report is anywhere between 25—100 pages long, depending on the size of the building. Most of the information is too detailed and technical to be useful, except it is important to look for two things: the date of the last assessment, and the ranking of the area(s) you are concerned about. Items ranked 2-4 need full replacement, 5-6 need regular maintenance and 7 means it is new. If something was ranked low in your building, but the assessment is three years old, you can assume that needs immediate attention, despite whatever CPS says about it. Most pertinent to this assessment is the fact that the assessors *"generally do not test operability of every feature – for instance, they do not open windows or turn on air conditioners; nor do they break into walls, ceilings or floors to test or investigate."* In other words, they simply walk through the buildings and only note the visible issues.
4. The school **Asbestos Report** is also on the "Downloads" tab on your school's profile page. Every report includes a letter to the school community claiming that: *"Although asbestos-containing materials have been identified at [this school], there is no reason to believe that any threat to the health of students or staff exists at this time. CPS will continue to carefully monitor the condition of asbestos-containing materials and if conditions warrant, all appropriate steps will be taken to maintain the health and safety of all building occupants."* However, look through each page of the document to learn precisely where the asbestos is in your building, and then go to the Asbestos Nation report on CPS and see whether or not they are concerned about your building: <http://www.asbestosnation.org/facts/inspectors-find-widespread-asbestos-risks-in-chicago-schools/>.
5. If you are concerned about **lead in the water fixtures** in your school, CPS has uploaded the test results from 2016: <http://cps.edu/Pages/LeadTesting.aspx>. The Illinois EPA has set 15 parts per billion (PPB) as the level of lead that requires action, but environmental scientists say that *any* exposure to lead, especially for developing fetuses and young children, is dangerous. There are also issues with the testing procedure and accuracy as a given fixture can test negative one day and positive the next, or vice versa.
6. The CPS **Facilities Standards** website has information on:
- 1) school utilization rates,
 - 2) policies regarding the physical conditions that classrooms and schools must comply with,
 - 3) the 10-year Educational Facilities Master Plan for the entire district,
 - 4) a database of all buildings owned and leased by CPS,
 - 5) the capital needs assessment process, and
 - 6) a sample guide for schools to conduct their own facilities assessment.
- http://cps.edu/About_CPS/Policies_and_guidelines/Pages/facilitystandards.aspx
7. The Aramark and Sodexo contracts are summarized on the CPS Board of Education website and in detail on the CPS Contracts and Procurement website: https://www.cpsboe.org/content/actions/2017_01/17-0125-PR3.pdf, https://www.cpsboe.org/content/actions/2017_01/17-0125-PR6.pdf and https://www.cpsboe.org/content/actions/2017_01/17-0125-PR4.pdf

The full contracts, including the detailed Scope of Services that specifies the cleaning schedule and level of quality that the companies are required to comply with, are on the CPS Contracts and Procurement website: <http://cps.edu/procurement/Pages/procurement.aspx>. Click on "Contracts Awarded" and type in Aramark or Sodexo. Make sure to select "All Years" to see all of the contracts.