

SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION AND REZONING/REDISTRICTING WORK TO DATE STATUS THROUGH OCTOBER 1, 2026

Executive Summary

The District's work has progressed through three connected stages: an initial school consolidation exploration in 2024–2025; a districtwide rezoning/redistricting and demographic study in 2025–2026; and renewed consolidation analysis in 2026 after rezoning alone was found unlikely to resolve long-term underutilization and fiscal pressures. The process has included data analysis, scenario modeling, Board presentations, school-based meetings, town halls, surveys, an address-locator tool, and operational-efficiency work. In August 2026, HPM presented consolidation scenarios involving Carter Elementary, Hartley Elementary, and VIP Academy. On September 1, 2026, the District paused the previously shared scenarios and announced a new advisory committee process; therefore, no consolidation recommendation is currently moving forward.

Chronology of Work and Efforts

1. Initial Consolidation Exploration with Towering Your Success | July 2024–April 2025

- **July–August 2024:** The District initiated planning and preparation in response to a Board request to explore school consolidation. A steering committee structure, goals, decision criteria, and a communication approach were developed.
- **September–November 2024:** Enrollment, facility utilization, per-pupil spending, facility age, projected growth, state funding targets, and specialized programming were reviewed through a seven-factor consolidation matrix.
- **Fall 2024–Spring 2025:** The District conducted monthly steering committee meetings; seven school-based community meetings at Williams, Hartley, Porter, Heard, Skyview, Southfield, and Ingram-Pye elementary schools; two in-person districtwide town halls; one virtual town hall; surveys; and focus groups. Recurring concerns included neighborhood preservation, transportation and accessibility, class size and staffing, and student well-being.
- **March 20, 2025:** The Board received a comprehensive presentation covering enrollment trends, facility utilization, financial impacts, community feedback, and consolidation and non-consolidation scenarios.
- **April 17, 2025:** The District presented three consolidation scenarios and two non-consolidation scenarios. The recommended immediate path was to pursue districtwide rezoning first and complete an organizational efficiency study rather than close schools at that time.

2. Rezoning/Redistricting Study with HPM | September 2025–April 2026

- **September 29, 2025:** District leaders began formal work with HPM Leadership on the rezoning/redistricting initiative.
- **October 30, 2025:** At the Board retreat, HPM’s proposed process was shared: ten-year enrollment projections, subdivision and student-potential analysis, boundary criteria, GIS planning units, staff and community work sessions, an online survey, and final recommendations to the Board.
- **January 26, 2026:** A Board work session with HPM examined redistricting history, utilization, staffing implications, and the relationship between attendance boundaries and locally funded positions.
- **Early 2026:** HPM completed demographic analysis and developed preliminary attendance-zone options with District staff. Planning units allowed real-time modeling of enrollment, utilization, transfers, and demographic effects.
- **April 16, 2026:** HPM presented three preliminary attendance-zone options to the Board.
- **April 20–21, 2026:** The District held an in-person town hall at the Professional Learning Center and a virtual town hall, launched an online survey, and provided an address-locator tool. Feedback addressed transportation, sibling separation, Pre-K access, school capacity, health-center continuity, staffing transitions, feeder patterns, and implementation timing.

3. Key Rezoning Findings

- PK–12 live-in enrollment declined from 21,410 in 2020–2021 to 20,766 in 2025–2026, a decrease of 644 students, or 3%.
- Enrollment was projected to decline to 19,846 over ten years, a further decrease of 920 students, or 4.4%.
- The 19 zoned elementary schools were operating at 77.6% utilization, with more than 2,600 empty seats.
- Nine of the 19 zoned elementary schools had K–5 enrollment below 450, the state threshold associated with full minimum-program staffing.
- Middle and high schools were generally well utilized, although Howard Middle School showed slight overutilization.
- Existing feeder-pattern splits included John R. Lewis Elementary feeding three middle schools and Ballard-Hudson Middle feeding two high schools.
- Survey results reported in August 2026 included 331 responses and approximately 50 attendees at the April 20 meeting. Option 1 was generally the most acceptable rezoning proposal, but many respondents viewed it as a short-term solution. Centralizing Pre-K at Williams drew significant opposition, especially because of transportation, childcare, and sibling-separation concerns.

4. Integration with Budget and Operational-Efficiency Planning | May–June 2026

- **May 2026:** Consolidation, rezoning, and operational efficiency were identified as components of the District’s long-term budget strategy. Public budget discussions clarified that the 2024–2025 consolidation work had led to rezoning/redistricting as the next step.
- **May–June 2026:** The District continued Phase 4 of the LeanFrog operational-efficiency study and prepared Phase 5 for instructional and student-support functions. The work was intended to inform resource alignment, staffing, facility use, technology modernization, and longer-term savings.
- **FY27 budget adoption:** The Board directed the administration to return with school-consolidation recommendations identifying a minimum of two schools for consideration. Planning documents anticipated Board decision-making in FY27 and possible FY28 implementation.

5. Renewed Consolidation Analysis and Board Presentation | August 2026

- **August 5–10, 2026:** HPM and District staff refined a Board presentation using criteria that included facility condition and future capital needs; sustainable operating and per-pupil savings; receiving-school capacity; educational and program opportunities; transportation time, cost, and safety; community impact and property reuse; enrollment trends; feeder patterns; and other relevant considerations.
- **August 10, 2026:** HPM presented three paths for consideration: **Option 1**—close Carter and Hartley elementary schools; **Option 2**—close Carter Elementary; and an **independent option**—discontinue VIP Academy as a stand-alone program and provide virtual learning through a more efficient delivery model. The presentation also referenced alternative pairings involving Union and Williams elementary schools.
- **Estimated impacts presented:** Carter and Hartley consolidation was estimated to provide approximately \$1.75–\$2.75 million in net annual cost avoidance plus approximately \$10 million in one-time avoided Carter renovation costs. Carter-only consolidation was estimated at approximately \$1–\$1.5 million annually plus the same estimated renovation avoidance. The VIP option was estimated at approximately \$800,000–\$950,000 annually, including about \$450,000 in curriculum savings.
- **Planned follow-up:** Public engagement, a community survey and school-locator tool, and facility-condition assessments were identified as prerequisites before Board action.

6. Pause and Advisory Committee Reset | September 2026–Present

- **September 1, 2026:** The District notified the Carter Elementary, Hartley Elementary, and VIP Academy communities that consideration of the previously shared scenarios was paused and that no consolidation recommendation was moving forward at that time.

- The District announced a new advisory committee composed of Board members, District leaders, and consultants to establish evaluation criteria, review data and community feedback, examine multiple perspectives, and guide any future options.
- Current planning continues to connect consolidation and rezoning decisions with enrollment monitoring, operational efficiency, fiscal sustainability, facilities assessment, and the long-term design of virtual learning.

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Summary Table

Date/Period	Work or Effort	Outcome, Finding, or Recommendation
July–August 2024	Initiated consolidation planning with Towering Your Success in response to a Board request; developed a steering committee structure, goals, decision criteria, and communication approach.	Established the framework for a formal consolidation review.
September–November 2024	Reviewed enrollment, facility utilization, per-pupil spending, facility age, projected growth, state funding targets, and specialized programming through a seven-factor matrix.	Created a consistent, data-based method for comparing potential consolidation scenarios.
Fall 2024–Spring 2025	Held monthly steering committee meetings; seven school-based community meetings; two in-person districtwide town halls; one virtual town hall; surveys; and focus groups.	Key concerns included neighborhood preservation, transportation, accessibility, class size, staffing, and student well-being.
March 20, 2025	Presented enrollment trends, facility utilization, financial impacts, community feedback, and consolidation and non-consolidation scenarios to the Board.	Provided the Board with a comprehensive decision baseline.
April 17, 2025	Presented three consolidation scenarios and two non-consolidation scenarios.	Recommended districtwide rezoning and an organizational efficiency study before closing schools.
September 29, 2025	Began formal rezoning/redistricting work with HPM Leadership.	Launched consultant-supported demographic, boundary, and scenario analysis.
October 30, 2025	Shared HPM’s proposed process at the Board retreat, including ten-year projections, GIS planning units, boundary criteria, engagement, and final recommendations.	Established the methodology and engagement sequence for the rezoning study.

January 26, 2026	Conducted a Board work session on redistricting history, utilization, staffing implications, attendance boundaries, and locally funded positions.	Connected boundary decisions to school utilization and staffing costs.
Early 2026	Completed demographic analysis and developed preliminary attendance-zone options using planning units to model enrollment, utilization, transfers, and demographic effects.	Produced data-informed rezoning alternatives for review.
April 16, 2026	HPM presented three preliminary attendance-zone options to the Board.	Advanced the options to public review and feedback.
April 20–21, 2026	Held in-person and virtual town halls; launched an online survey and address-locator tool.	Feedback focused on transportation, sibling separation, Pre-K access, capacity, health-center continuity, staffing, feeder patterns, and timing.
2026 Study Findings	Confirmed declining enrollment, 77.6% elementary utilization, more than 2,600 empty elementary seats, nine elementary schools below 450 K–5 students, and split feeder patterns.	Rezoning alone was viewed by many respondents as a short-term response; centralizing Pre-K at Williams received substantial opposition.
May–June 2026	Integrated consolidation and rezoning with budget planning and LeanFrog operational-efficiency work.	Recommended aligning staffing, facilities, technology, and resource decisions with long-term fiscal sustainability.
FY27 Budget Adoption	The Board directed the administration to return with consolidation recommendations identifying at least two schools for consideration.	Planning anticipated FY27 decision-making and possible FY28 implementation.
August 5–10, 2026	HPM and District staff refined consolidation criteria covering facilities, savings, capacity, educational opportunities, transportation, community impact, enrollment, and feeder patterns.	Established a broader decision framework for evaluating consolidation options.
August 10, 2026	Presented options involving closure of Carter and Hartley elementary schools, closure of Carter only, and discontinuation of VIP Academy as a	Estimated annual impacts ranged from approximately \$800,000 to \$2.75 million, with approximately \$10 million in possible avoided Carter

	stand-alone program; alternative pairings involving Union and Williams were also referenced.	renovation costs. Public engagement and facility assessments were identified as prerequisites to action.
September 1, 2026	Notified Carter Elementary, Hartley Elementary, and VIP Academy communities that the previously shared scenarios were paused.	No consolidation recommendation moved forward; the District announced a new advisory committee process.
September 2026–Present	Continued enrollment monitoring, operational-efficiency work, fiscal analysis, facility assessment planning, and review of virtual-learning delivery.	Maintain the pause while the advisory committee validates data, applies transparent criteria, compares rezoning-only, consolidation-plus-rezoning, and status-quo scenarios, and develops student-centered transition and community-impact plans before recommending Board action.