The HIGHLANDS Report

Northern Highlands Regional High School District • Allendale, Upper Saddle River, Ho-Ho-Kus • September 2002

Northern Highlands Expansion Vote September 24th

Since the defeat of our referendum in April a number of actions have been taken in an effort to prepare for enrollment that has already increased well beyond expectations, and continues to do so. We now have 1,141 students which is more than the 1,106 who were enrolled in grades 5-8 in 1998. This is significant because it means that the most recent trend is an increase over the middle school population, compared to the past when less than 100% of the middle school population arrived at Northern Highlands. We will exceed 1,400 students by 2005-2006.

The Northern Highlands Board of Education voted unanimously to split the project into two questions. The cafeteria expansion and additional parking were separated from the program driven construction portion which will be better described in this newsletter through reprints of articles by Judy Dayner and John Keenan which were originally included in a January 2002 Highlands Report. The new plan was submitted to the Department of Education, and was approved with a guarantee of state funding of just under 3 million dollars towards question number one, reducing it to 14.4 million.

The Board then successfully concluded negotiations with Ho-Ho-Kus resulting in a new contract with provisions for their making payments towards the bond in proportion to the number of students that attend Northern Highlands.

This was significant because the original contract had four years to run, and Ho-Ho-Kus had no obligation to enter into these discussions. The excellent relationship and mutually beneficial financial arrangement prompted both sides to extend this agreement, and to provide for movement towards regionalization. We must always remember that Highlands courted Ho-Ho-Kus to keep programs alive and to bring down per pupil costs, and that although their 9-12 costs are somewhat less, without their tuition, taxes would rise in Allendale and Upper Saddle River with no improvement in our facilities. Furthermore, the 9-12 differential decreases each year.

We have tried every conceivable way to bring information about the project to our constituents. We have been totally up-front and honest from the outset proclaiming that this project is based on need. At our community meeting on September 5th Modest Sobolta, architect, committee member, and Allendale resident told the audience that the original project proposal was more than 24 million dollars but the committee cut it by 25%. As Modeste described, if we had not been so scrupulously honest and had put up a 24 million-dollar project this past April, we would now be addressing a proposal that had been cut by more than 6 million dollars.

Please feel free to call me, John Keenan or Gary Lane with any questions.

Special Election on the School Building Proposal - Voting Information

Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2002 * Hours: 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Polling Places:

Allendale:
Districts 1 & 2 - Brookside School
Districts 3 & 4 - Hillside School

Upper Saddle River:
Districts 1 & 2 - Cavallini School
District 3 - Borough Hall
Districts 4 & 5 - Presentation Church

The Need for New Science Facilities

When students entered the classrooms of our new school in 1965, the science wing had six rooms, a small greenhouse, and an unusual feature for a high school, a state-of-the-art planetarium. The small enrollment guaranteed small classes and individual attention. By the early 1970s increased student population demanded an addition to the original building, including science classrooms and a science lecture hall - but the additional rooms were still small. Teachers lectured, wrote notes, and drew sketches on the board. Students were not expected to move about the classroom.

Flash ahead to 2002. The Learning Center, a hall for multimedia presentations used by all disciplines, has replaced the science lecture hall. Since students learn best by doing, not by listening, lectures are rare; overhead projectors and computer monitors have replaced chalkboards. Although today's classes are not small, students still use our small 35-year-old classrooms. Six clusters of four students each use each classroom computer, attaching probes from laboratory equipment so they can collect and analyze data. They visit Internet sites to download information, confer with scientists, learn through interactive programs, and post data relating to Real Time experiments all over the globe. The real experiments help students work cooperatively to solve problems and have replaced the limited, "cookbook" labs of the 1960s.

The National Science Teachers' Association and the State of New Jersey recently provided guidelines for science education that validate our approach. Highlands' students build bridges, construct trebuchets, prepare and run DNA fingerprinting gels, conduct seatbelt crash tests, devise chemical procedures, and perform a host of other inductive and deductive procedures. The business world of the 2000s demands that employees work cooperatively on projects; Highlands' students get that experience. But classrooms build in the early 60s do not reflect the way we not integrate technology into our curriculum. Inquiry-based learning simply requires much more room than lecture/note-taking lessons.

Because of the changes in science education, state requirements for classroom size and safety have changed drastically. Our old 900 square-foot labs are well below today's state standard of 1200 square feet. In our labs today student backpacks litter the floor and students climb over desks to move from one side of the room to the other to gather supplies. Experiments and projects are piled high because of the limited workspace for each class. Supplies and chemicals, which belong in a controlled chemical storeroom, crowd our prep rooms. Highlands' students currently work back-to-back at lab stations, though such a setup is prohibited as a safety hazard in new labs. Current state regulations also insist that lab-station layout allows teachers a clear view of all students; our layout does not, and thus does not permit constant personal contact between teacher and student. Nor are our classrooms accessible for disabled students; wheelchairs can't move through our aisles or fit at lab tables, so teachers try to set up chemicals, microscopes, and other lab supplies on temporary tables for disabled students.

Historically, our graduates have benefited from a strong science curriculum and from creative, inspired teachers who have upgraded their teaching strategies constantly to reflect international trends in technology and education. This is one reason our students have high acceptance rates at competitive colleges. But the physical restrictions of our lab space now limit our ability to upgrade our curriculum. Other comparable districts, even those not experiencing increasing enrollment, have already planned or are in the process of planning new science facilities: Ridgewood, Ramsey, Ramapo, Indian Hills, Old Tappan, and Demarest high schools are all preparing for the future. Student enrollment at Highlands has reached a critical stage; we cannot continue giving each student an outstanding science education unless we expand our facilities and increase technology integration. Students and teachers alike look forward to working and learning in spacious, safe classrooms that will allow them to incorporate state-of-the-art technology in their lessons.

Necessary Renovations of Existing Space

Changes in education, since our building opened in 1965, have forced both our curriculum and our use of the building to change in many ways. Today, the State requires four years of English, physical education, and health, three years each of science and mathematics, two years each of social studies, world languages, practical arts, and visual and performing arts. And, many of our students take more than these minimums.

But our enrollment has grown so much lately that we have had to turn some students away from classes they want to take, especially in the elective areas such as practical, visual, and performing arts. If we are to continue preparing our graduates well for college, the workplace, and an ever-changing world, we must take steps to enlarge and renovate our facilities.

In addition to the science labs (discussed elsewhere in this newsletter), the following areas are in need of upgrades:

Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) Lab
Many of our graduates pursue architecture and engineering in college. This program allows students to learn technical drawing at both introductory and advanced levels. The lab needs to be redesigned to integrate the manual drawing boards with the computer necessary to run the program AutoCAD 2000.

World Languages Lab
Although the state requires two years of foreign-language study, almost all of our students take three years, and 65% study a language other than their own for four years. Colleges encourage students to continue their language study, realizing that fluency in another language will add to their success. Our language lab, containing tape recorders installed in 1965, must be replaced with an interactive, multi-media computer lab. The Ramapo-Indian Hills district added this upgrade to both high schools three years ago. Our teachers have visited those labs and are already prepared to use the new equipment, changing the way our students learn new languages.

Art and Photography Rooms
Here again, our program has outgrown the facility. Our current photography darkroom does not meet ADA and OSHA specifications; the upgraded facility will. The addition of a new art room will enable the program to expand as our enrollment increases.

Girls' Physical Education Locker Rooms
Currently our boys have four locker rooms, our girls only two. The law (Title IX) requires equity, and increased enrollment will make our need for two more girls' locker rooms urgent.

Physical Education, Health, and Driver Education Rooms
The physical education and health program has changed a great deal since 1965. Today the emphasis is on teaching students concepts and skills that will promote participation in wholesome physical activities throughout life. At the moment three classrooms in different areas of the building are dedicated to weight training and cardiovascular instruction. This reconfigured area will accommodate the larger classes customary in physical education . Dedicated health classrooms will also give us the space necessary to certify our students in CPR and in the use of an automated external defibrillator.

Family and Consumer Sciences Classrooms
Since the 2000-2001 school year our kitchen has operated eight out of eight periods, and we have had to turn students away from cooking classes. The addition of a second instructional kitchen will allow us to double the enrollment.

Music and Performing Arts Rooms
Our band outgrew their 1965 band room three years ago. In-house renovation of an old metal shop has provided additional space. But the combination of a successful program with growing enrollment has produced the need for still more floor space. Expansion into the room next door will allow the entire band to practice together in an appropriate and safe area.

Woodworking Room
Woodshop is alive and well. Since the 2000-2001 school year, we have been operating the woodshop eight out of eight periods, and turning some students away. This is one of our most popular and useful electives, giving students lifelong skills. Providing a larger space will enable us to accommodate more students.

Television Production Studio
The original design of the school allowed for a television studio, which we have upgraded through the years, adding new equipment when necessary. What we have not been able to provide is a room large enough for both filming and editing. A simple more to a larger space, requiring minimal renovation, will improve this program significantly.

Cost Impact

As discussed earlier, the original proposal has been broken down into two separate ballot questions. Question #1 is focused on the construction of the new science wing and renovations of the existing building. Question #2 is for the cafeteria expansion and additional parking. The State has approved a grant in the amount of $2,984,005 to offset the cost of question #1. The numbers presented below are a based on the total project, figuring an estimated 20 year mortgage-like repayment schedule and include the estimated annual cost to the taxpayer in Allendale and Upper Saddle River on the average home assessment of $520,000 and $670,000 respectively. Due to falling interest rates, the estimate is based on a 4.2% rate, as opposed to our original estimates of 4.75%. Additionally, we have presented two estimated costs - one without the impact of the new Ho-Ho-Kus agreement and one reflecting the lower cost due to monies we will be receiving from Ho-Ho-Kus.

	Proposal #1	Proposal #2	Total
	$17,418,000	$1,029,000	$18,447,000
Less: State share	- 2,984,005	- 0 -	2,984,005
Local share	$14,462,995	$1,029,000	$15,462,995

Estimated Annual Cost	Without HHK Monies	WITH HHK Monies
Allendale	$195	$156
Upper Saddle River	$234	$188

Northern Highlands Regional High School District
Hillside Avenue • Allendale, New Jersey 07401

Postal Patron
Upper Saddle River NJ 07458

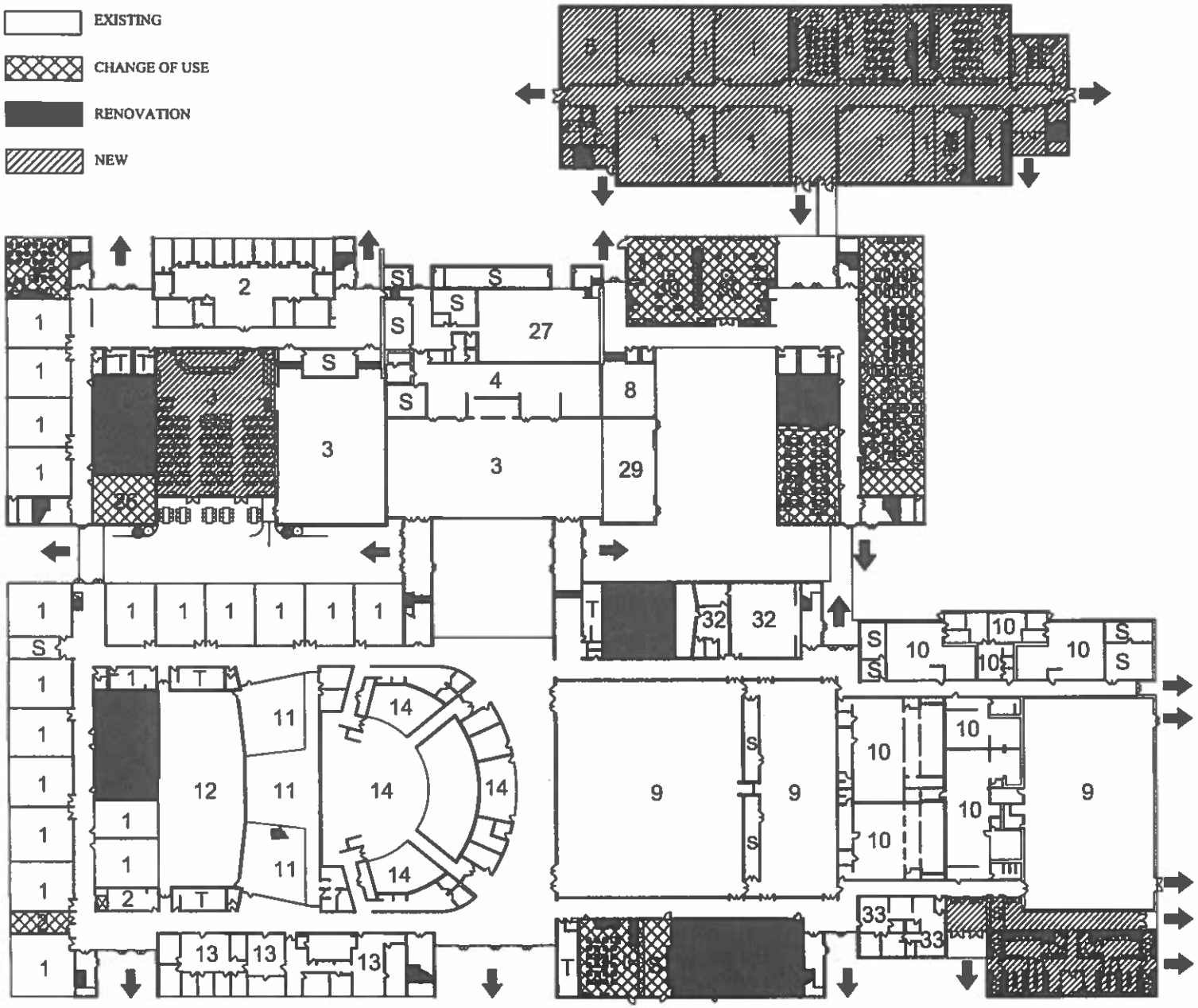
PROPOSED ADDITION AND RENOVATION FOR NORTHERN HIGHLANDS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT FIRST FLOOR PLAN

EXISTING

CHANGE OF USE

RENOVATION

NEW



LEGEND:

1. CLASSROOM
2. OFFICE
3. CAFETERIA
4. KITCHEN
5. MECHANICAL ROOM
6. CARDIOVASCULAR ROOM
7. WOOD SHOP
8. FACULTY DINING
9. GYMNASIUM
10. LOCKER ROOM
11. LIBRARY
12. COURT YARD
13. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
14. AUDITORIUM
15. PLANETARIUM
16. PROJECTION ROOM
17. MECHANICAL ROOM
18. MATERIAL RESEARCH
19. FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCE
20. ART & PHOTOGRAPHY
21. TV PRODUCTIONS
22. LEARNING CENTER
23. CHEMICAL CONTROL
24. FACULTY ROOM
26. BUILDINGS & GROUNDS
27. BOILER ROOM
29. SOUND MODES
30. WOOD SHOP
31. CAD LAB
32. MUSIC INSTRUCTION AREA
33. NURSE'S OFFICE

S. STORAGE

T. TOILET

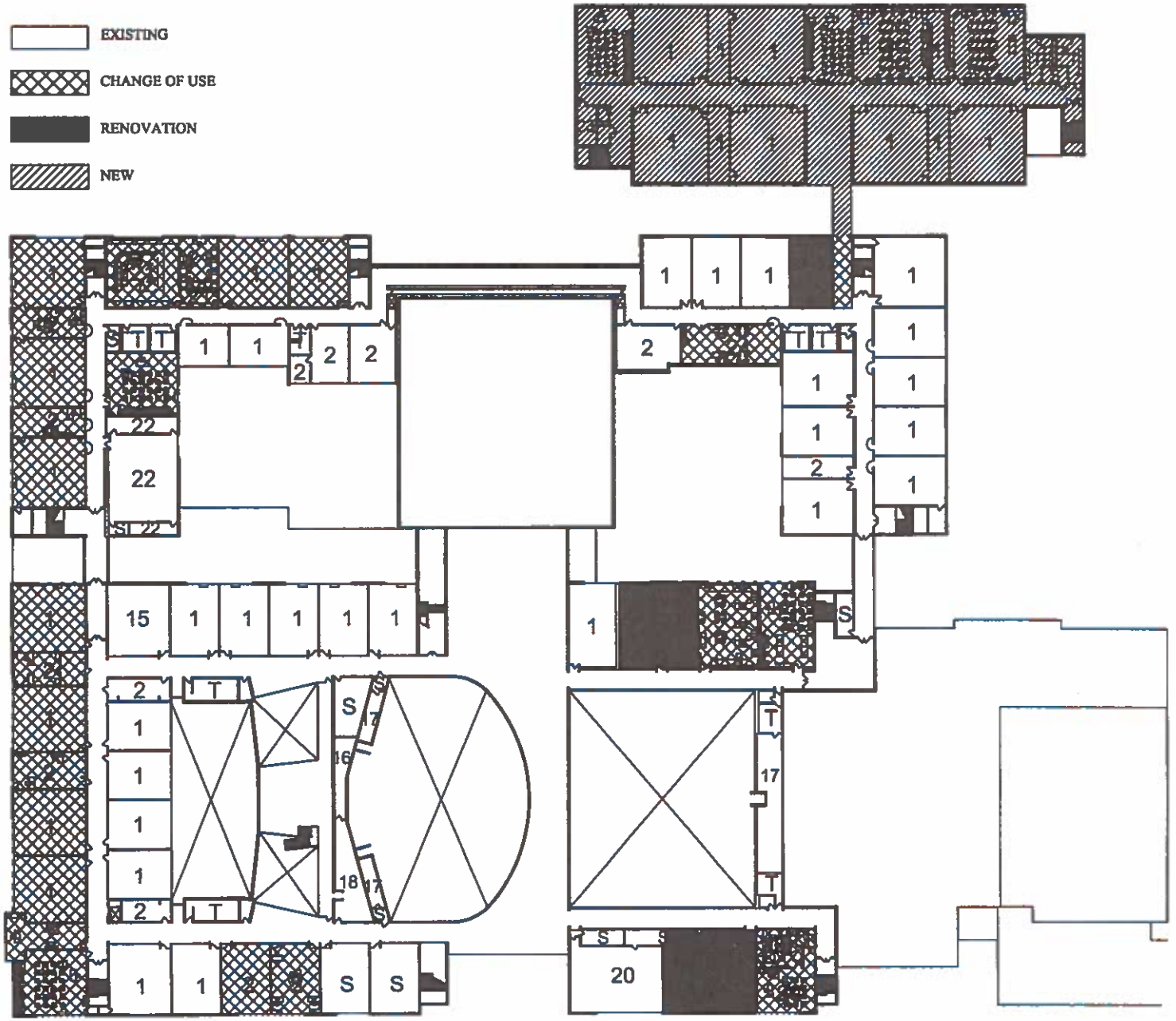
PROPOSED ADDITION AND RENOVATION FOR NORTHERN HIGHLANDS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT SECOND FLOOR PLAN

EXISTING

CHANGE OF USE

RENOVATION

NEW



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