Aitkin Public School District Listening Session Full Report

PRESENTED JANUARY 6, 2016

FOSTER JACOBS & JOHNSON, INC.

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Aitkin Public Schools

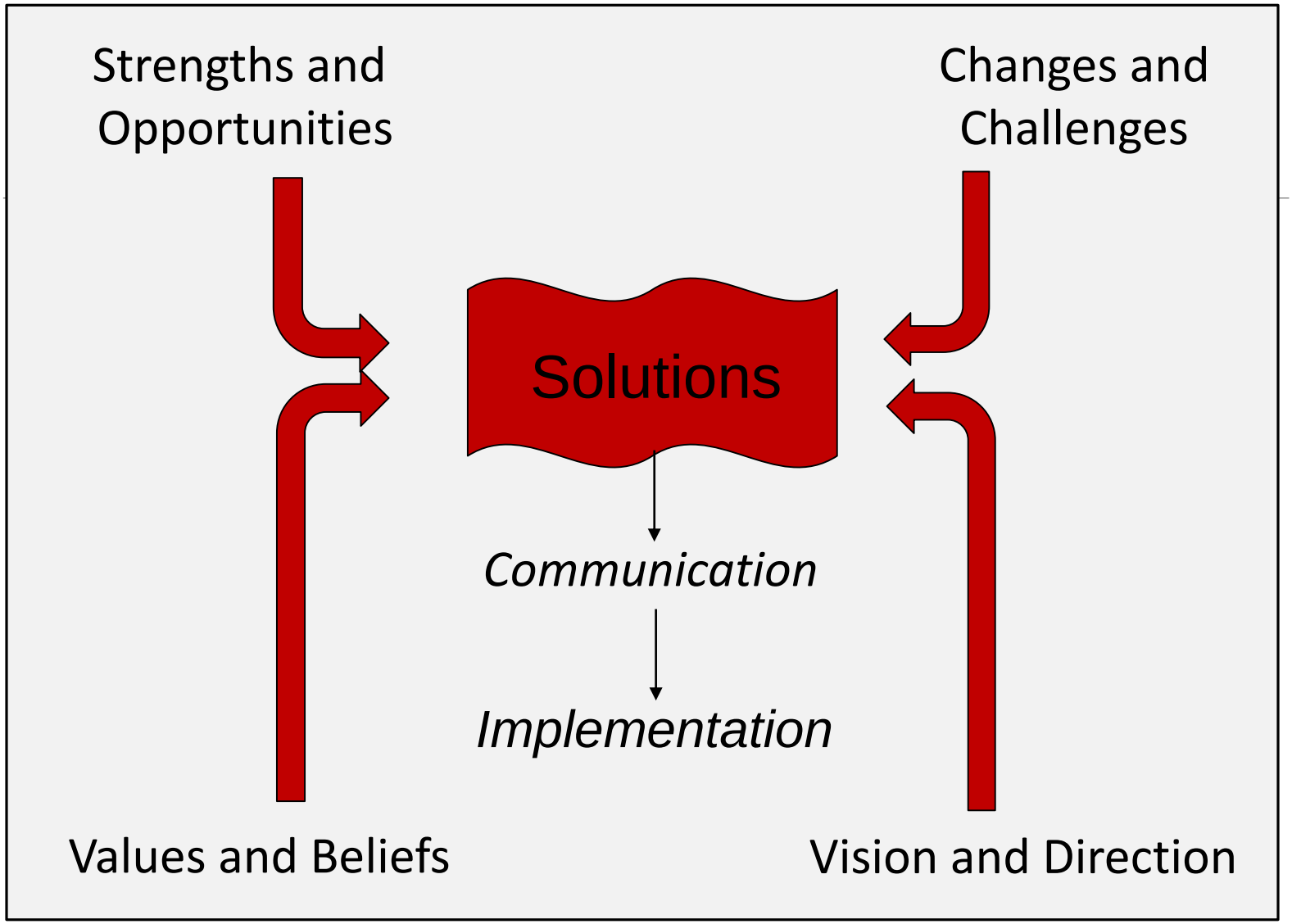
Stakeholder Groups
Over 20 Listening Sessions

- *School Board, Administration*
- *District Leadership*
- *Teachers*
- *Senior Students*
- *Paraprofessional Staff*
- *Parents and Community members*
- *Business Community*
- *Palisade Community*
- *Glen/Kimberly Community*
- *Local organizations*
- *Community Leaders*
- *Bus drivers, cooks, maintenance*

Listening Session Schedule

Date & Time	Group	Location
Wed. Oct. 7th @ 6:30 PM	Aitkin School Board and Administration	Aitkin High School
Wed. Nov. 4th @ 9:00 AM	Riverwood Community Auxiliary Members	High School Drafting Room
Wed. Nov. 4th @ 12:00 PM	Aitkin Lakes Area Rotary Club Members	40 Club
Wed. Nov. 4th @ 3:30 PM	Members of: PTO, ACC PAC, Rippleside PAC, Parent Advisory	Rippleside Media Center
Wed. Nov. 4th @ 5:30 PM	Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours	High School Media Center
Wed. Nov. 4th @ 7:00 PM	Women of Today	High School Media Center
Thur. Nov. 12th @ 2:00 PM	Aitkin Students	Aitkin High School
Thur. Nov. 12th @ 4:30 PM	Parent Teacher Conference Booth	Rippleside Elementary
Thur. Nov. 12th @ 5:00 PM	Open Public Listening Session I	Aitkin High School
Thur. Nov. 12th @ 6:30 PM	Open Public Listening Session II	Aitkin High School
Fri. Nov. 13th Morning	Aitkin High Schools Teachers and Staff Session I	Rippleside Elementary
Fri. Nov. 13th Morning	Aitkin High Schools Teachers and Staff Session II	Rippleside Elementary
Fri. Nov. 13th Afternoon	Aitkin Elementary School Teachers and Staff Sn. I	Aitkin High School
Fri. Nov. 13th Afternoon	Aitkin Elementary School Teachers and Staff Sn. II	Aitkin High School
Wed. Nov. 18th @ 8:00 PM	Riverwood Health Care	Meeting Room
Wed. Nov. 18th @ 10:00PM	City of Aitkin	Meeting Room
Wed. Nov. 18th @ 2:00 PM	Aitkin County Courthouse	Meeting Room
Wed. Nov. 18th @ 4:00 PM	Open Public Listening Session I	Aitkin High School
Wed. Nov. 18th @ 6:00 PM	Open Public Listening Session II	Aitkin High School
Thur. Nov. 19th @ 4:30 PM	Parent Teacher Conference Booth	Rippleside Elementary
Tues. Dec. 1st @ 10:30 AM	Open Public Listening Session	Glen/Kimberly Township Hall
Tues. Dec. 1st @ 12:30 PM	Open Public Listening Session	Palisade Community Center/Fire Hall

Stakeholder Listening Session Overall Agenda



Clarifying Roles:

STAKEHOLDER'S ROLE:

What is our project?

- What are our strengths/opportunities?
- What are our challenges?
- What do we value?
- What is our vision?

What resources will be used?

What timeline will be followed?

Engage and communicate

CONSULTANTS ROLE:

How to meet educational and code required standards.

How to access and maximize available resources.

How to engage people.

How to implement and complete the project.

How to meet stakeholder expectations.

Riverwood Community Auxiliary Listening Session November 4, 2015

Attendees

Pat Hodges – retired principal

Gail Hoffman – Grandma

Karen Holm – D.O.

Judy Anakkala – D.O.

Peg Lundberg – Community member and Auxiliary member

Julie Fallgren – Community member and school employee

What are our greatest strengths?

Small

Number of elementary volunteers

Family unity

Friendly

Teachers support each other – supportive staff

People are connected

Concerned

We want the best for the community

Support for each other

Everyone knows each other

Best for children

Close community

What are the greatest challenges for the District?

Low family income

Lack of jobs

Lack of internet access

Small

Not keeping informed

Lack of youth – missing opportunities (shopping, theater, fine dining)

No growth – businesses

Understanding of District – need communication

Older community

Businesses closing – not being replaced or purchased to keep them going

Sustained staff development in each curricular area

Justify something after last remodeling

What are the greatest challenges for the District?

Kids leaving the community

Outside trainings for teachers

Lack of people wanting to substitute

Parenting skills

People want opportunities, events, clubs, etc. , but don't want to volunteer

Lack of interest in community

Don't want to be involved

Higher taxes with improvements

At risk kids

Drug use/abuse

Limited resources for schools

What are the greatest challenges for the District?

Lack of trust

Long distance for some

More identified special education kids

Snowbirds

Parents' expectations of school to do for students things that they should do

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

Build new – in a different area **(12)**

Use our space more wisely **(7)**

Update technology **(7)**

Central air throughout **(6)**

Communication system – intercoms, phones, etc. **(6)**

Bigger classrooms **(6)**

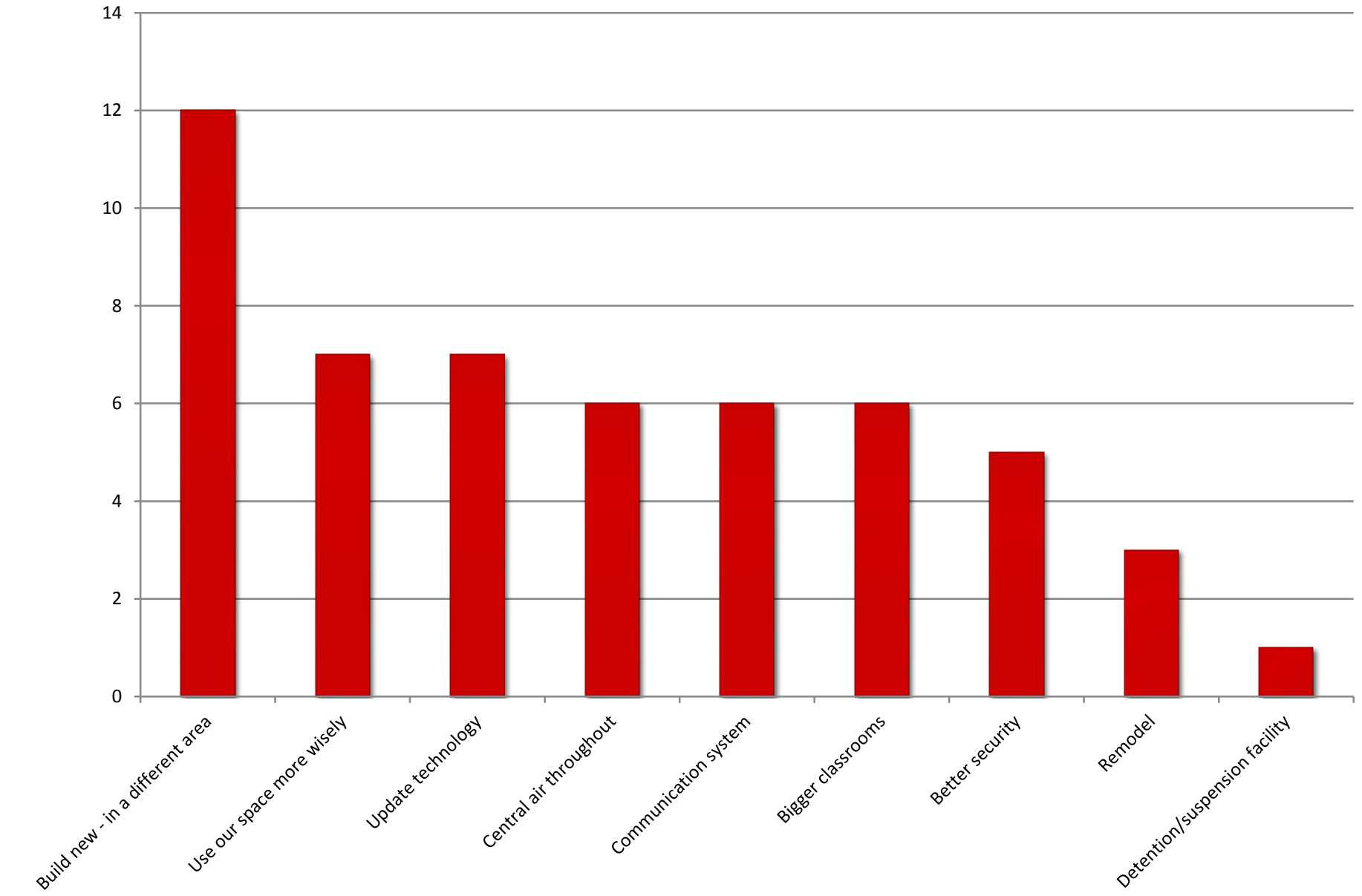
Better security **(5)**

Remodel **(3)**

Detention/suspension facility **(1)**

Community media center **(1)**

Riverwood Community Auxiliary - Needs



What did you like?

Nothing

Staff was involved

Effort was made to inform voters

Sample ballot – people thought was a ballot

What needs to change?

Community did not take responsibility to inform themselves

Focus on the benefits – not money and personal issues

Getting people involved

Fix apathy

Voters getting inaccurate info

Convincing public on improvements for our students – it's for them

Need more info to go out to the community

Lack of communication regarding need

Better marketing – advertise to have people "buy" the new school

I have no real connection to Aitkin – just retired here

Communicating that teaching/learning has changed dramatically – facilities need to change, as well

What needs to change?

I’m on a fixed income – can’t afford a tax increase

Didn’t like the timing – winter – snowbirds – sample ballot

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin School District Meets the Needs of ALL Students

Aitkin Welcomes New School With Swimming Pool

We Have More Community Involvement

Aitkin Graduates 100%

Aitkin Students Meet or Succeed State Standards

Aikin Schools Making the News Again…….. All Kids Are Graduating

Old Education Facility Still Up to Date

Community Backs Aitkin Schools to Provide Quality Education

Aitkin High School Expands – More Kids Enrolling!

New Alternative School Graduates 100% of Students. Program is a Huge Success!

Aitkin Area Students Have a High Rate of Higher Education

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Public Schools Ranked Highest in the State

Aitkin Public Schools Set Higher Goals

Aitkin Schools Provide Education/Recreation and Community Hub For Everyone

Aitkin Public Schools Known For Their Caring Attitude

Aitkin Schools Continue to Improve Facilities

Aitkin Infrastructure All Completed

The Aitkin Community Places Trust in the School Board

Another New Business Opens With an Aitkin Graduate Heading It

10 Year Old Referendum Proves to be a Success

Students Find Jobs in Aitkin Area

Aitkin Still a Leader in Education

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Addition of Vo-Tech Core to School Programming is Big Win For Students Not Interested in Typical College After Graduation

Last words of advice

Community needs to know safety issues – fire and police department input

Community needs to know needs beyond the price tag

It's like updating your car – need to bite the bullet

Our community growth depends on our schools

"What's in it for me" is an important factor

Realistic cost to tax payer – many on fixed incomes – low taxes but low income

Balance growth with income

Aitkin Rotary Club Listening Session
November 4, 2015

Attendees

Adam Hoogenakker – Newspaper

Tim Steffers – Rotary Club Business Owner

Bill F. – Rotary

Ryan Menzel – Rotary

Brian Orlowski – Business Owner

Kirk Peysar – Rotary – County Auditor

Sara Karr – Banker

Maria Orlowski – Banker – Rotary

Dave Sadlomsky – Guest

Chad Gross - Rotary

Bernie Novak – Rotary/Administration

Attendees

Jim Blakesley – Rotary

Joe Gans – Rotary/New York Life

Felicia Forder – Retired – Community Activist

Sherry McCunn – New

Cindi Hill – School Board/Rotary/Riverwood

Marje Spiel – Retired – Active Volunteer

Shari Tetrick – Retired Business Owner; Jack of all Trades

Gary Hippert – Building Materials

What are our greatest strengths?

Alot of art-related activities for our size

County seat

Community involvement

People like to come here – vacation

Small community – everybody knows everybody

Great hospital w/community support

Museum - music groups – plays - lessons on variety of topics at library & Riverwood

Small community – School that gives opportunities to many because it's not too large

Teachers that are involved in the community

Barter system in creative means

What are our greatest strengths?

One stoplight in the whole county

Inviting

Good people – talented, hard working, ethical and educated

Emotional and spiritual support – especially in time of need

What are our greatest challenges?

Very big District – acre-wise

Not enough young families

No rental housing

Many vacationers

Community lack of internet (high speed)

Too high of property taxes on businesses

Employment opportunities

Lack of city infrastructure

Age of buildings

Schools need repairs

Lack of community support to better our schools

What are our greatest challenges?

Many do not do well with change

Schools lack current computers and IT things

Lack of vision for community

Aging community – good people but not needing their schools

Growth – need new business & employment opportunities

Not open to change – empty store fronts

Education is often spread by word of mouth NOT from facts

Demographics

Greatest Facility Needs

A school environment set up for 21st century learning **(22)**

Up-to-date technology **(18)**

Community center **(9)**

Roofs that don't leak **(7)**

Security **(7)**

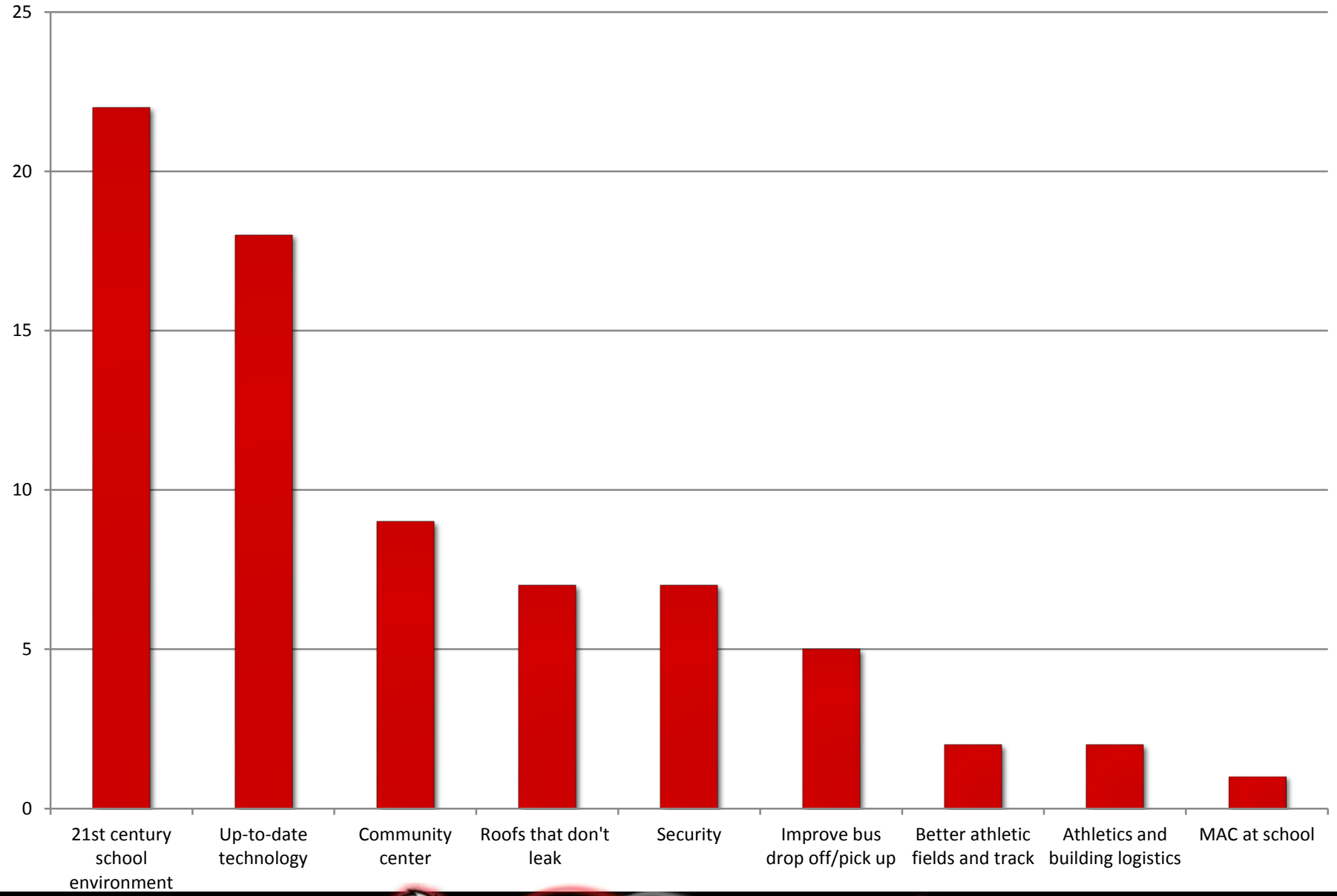
Better bus drop off and pick up @ both schools **(5)**

Need better football field, baseball fields and track **(2)**

Athletics and building logistics – need a campus **(2)**

MAC @ school **(1)**

Aitkin Rotary Club - Needs



What must we do to be successful?

Community understanding the needs of the school

Vote

Younger families & employment for them - If there is no growth, we will need more space or just updates

Get business owners to support the need for improvements

Promote “open to change”

Think of the needs of others – not just how it will affect ourselves

School board members who are involved with school activities or have children /grandchildren in the system

Unified school board

Educate the public – counter rumors

What must we do to be successful?

Educate and inform all people in the community of the reasons and importance of why we need changes

Make it affordable

Better public relations

Shared vision

Build community trust with school administration and board

Write the headlines 10 years from now

School Class Sizes Are Increasing

Students Do Well at Science Fair

All Generations Succeed!

The Seeds That Were Planted in 2015 Are Plentiful In Harvest

Aitkin Children and Teens Exceed in State Academics

Aitkin is Tops in 3 – R's

Aitkin School Rated #1 School in MN

After Years of Gridlock, Aitkin Has a Vision to Grow

Aitkin Schools Go 100% Online – No Buildings

The Community of Aitkin Has Prospered With Great School and Hospital

Aitkin Nominated Best MN Community To Live

Aitkin School District is Leading in Education for the State

Last Words of Advice

Remember that we are the oldest county – meet with senior citizens

Relate to people who don't have kids in school – property tax concerns

Birchwood round table

Community creates common vision together with the schools

Decide new vs. remodel

Importance of investment in schools as economic factor – make everyone understand

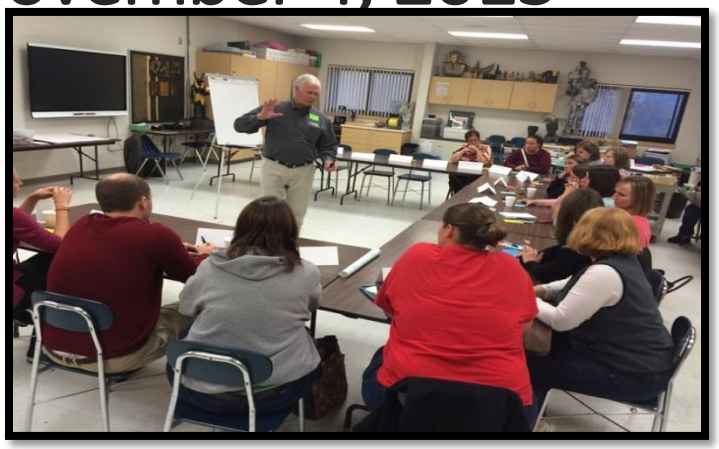
Infrastructure benefits all – doctors/services

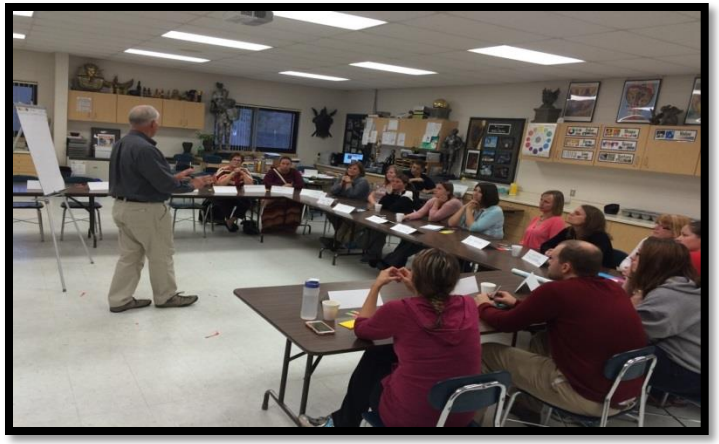
Educate fixed income demographic

Seek alternative funding sources

Look at lifetime education potential

Aitkin PTO & PAC Listening Session
November 4, 2015





Attendees

Beth Gaulke – PAC & PTO parent and staff

Dani Owen – PAC & PTO

Dawn Houser

Rebecca Peterson – parent

Melissa VanPortfliet – ACC Teacher

Juua Hendrickson – Rippleside staff/parent/PTO & PAC

Angie Hasskamp – parent & PTO

Julie Miller – Aitkin Children's Center Coordinator

Amanda Steffens – ACC, PAC & PTO parent

Colleen Krohn – ACC, PAC parent

Jenny McGuire

Austin Krohn – parent

Attendees

Austin Krohn – parent

Sarah Shereck – ECSE teacher

Ashley Beck – teacher-Children's Center

What are our greatest strengths?

Small but close

People support one another

Good leaders

Small classes

Staff

We care about the kids

Farm to school

College in the schools opportunities

Loyal

Community pride

Caring teachers

Small class size

What are our greatest strengths?

Great new tech. director

Always working on improving

Community support – local business

Grand friends

Personal

Good hearts/intentions

Caring people

4-star parent aware early education

People know each other

Catch a star

Passionate elementary principal

Active PTO and PAC members

What are our greatest strengths?

Volunteer program

Connected

Coaches dedicated to improving the character of athletes

Forest garden

Family fun nights

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Mental health issues

Too many second hand shops

Dying downtown

Communication

Disconnected sports facilities

Engaging the general public to care about education

Lack of long term vision

Transportation issues

Space

Poor broadband connectivity

Businesses are hit up to support all the time

City's infrastructure (sewer, roads)

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Average age of Aitkin's population

Disconnected elderly population

Poor broadband connectivity

Lack of professional job opportunities

What attracts professionals to Aitkin??

Parents working outside of Aitkin area

Actual square mileage size of school district

Children working in entryways

Overworked staff and teachers

Rural community

School money for materials and resources for our students

Because of size, offerings are limited

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Getting the older population to care about the younger generation

Safety

School is not the “anchor” institution

Behaviors

Poverty

Technology

New families moving into the community

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

Early childhood classrooms and space **(16)**

Gym space @ Rippleside **(10)**

Improved athletic facilities and fields **(10)**

Technology space/media center **(9)**

More gym space for 7-12 **(9)**

Improved parking/parent pick-up/drop off **(7)**

Safe room **(6)**

Technology infrastructure **(6)**

Kindergarten classroom needs a bathroom **(6)**

Office space to welcome parents **(6)**

Additional space for new programming **(6)**

Updated security **(5)**

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

Bigger Auditorium **(3)**

Space for center-based Head start **(3)**

Updated science rooms at the high school **(3)**

Community wellness center/gym/pool **(3)**

Big commons area for grades 7-12 **(3)**

Small group spaces for regular education classes **(3)**

Bathrooms @ athletic facilities to accommodate **(2)**

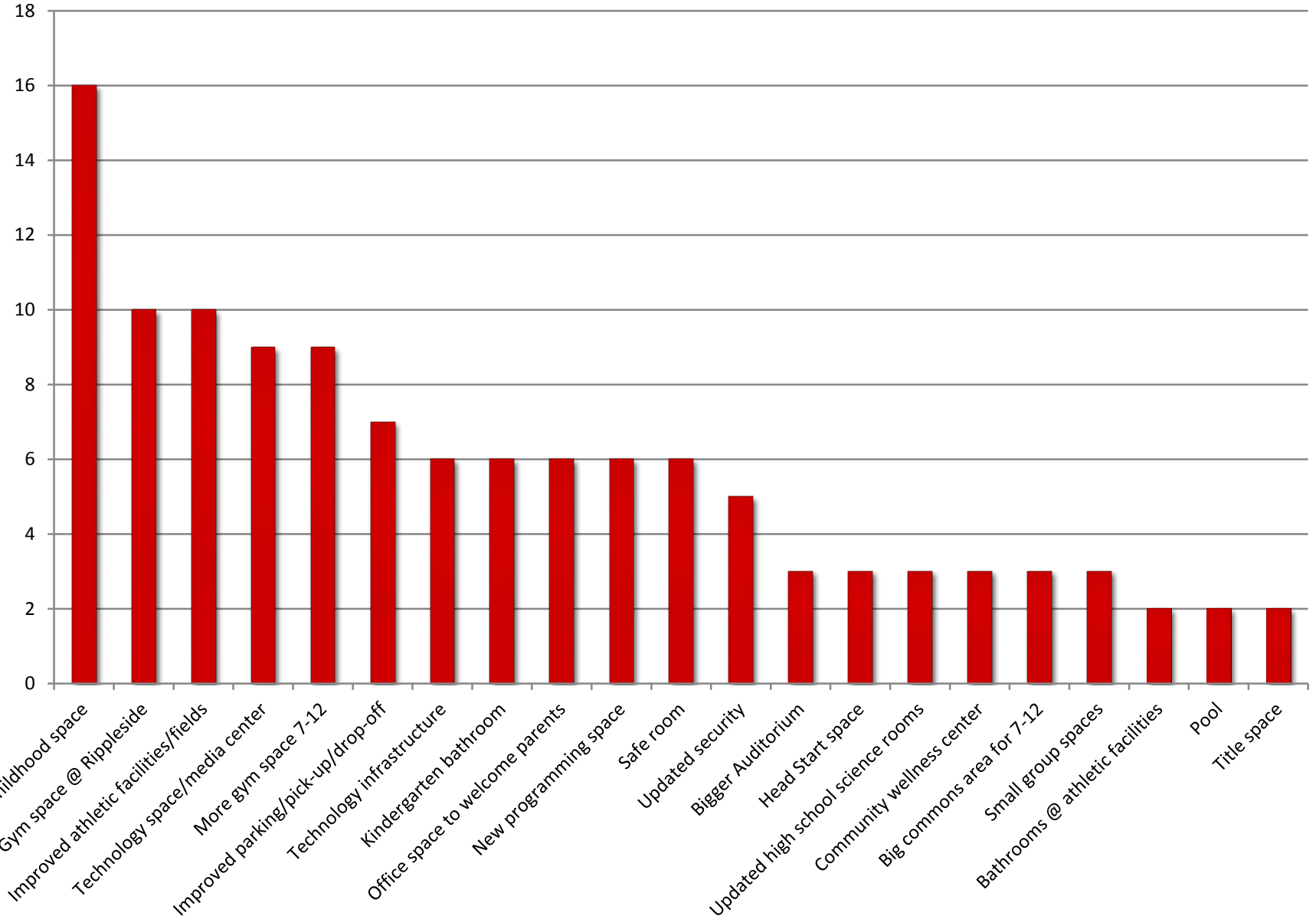
Pool – swimming teams – lessons **(2)**

Title space **(2)**

Need green space **(2)**

Air quality upgrade **(2)**

Aitkin PTO and PAC - Needs



Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Wins Tourney at Home Stadium

Top Schools in the Nation

Aitkin's Population Growing

Aitkin Baseball Repeats as State Champs

Poverty Level at its Lowest

More Students are College and Career Ready

Anniversary of Breaking Ground

Aitkin Valedictorian Gets Yale Scholarship – Full Ride!

Highest Enrollment in the Last 10 Years!

Highest Percentage Graduation Class in Aitkin History

Young Families Coming in Droves!

State of the Art School Prepares Students for Future Learning

Last words of advice

Make as many people as possible feel like they have had input

Be specific and have a plan

Know what the majority wants

Be intentional about educating the community

Use multiple ways of communication

Average person needs 8 reps to understand

Take advantage of conferences

Develop 5 talking points – key leaders and staff

Aitkin Chamber of Commerce Listening Session November 4, 2015

Attendees

Mike Hagen – Aitkin County Growth

Debbie Chute – Mille Lacs Energy Coop

Amanda MacDonald – Chamber of Commerce Business Owner

Jessica Janzen

Terry Butenhoff

What are our greatest strengths?

Medical facilities

Downtown

River – River City and many lakes

Tourism

Giving/supportive community

Law enforcement

County seat

Churches

Good businesses to work for

Transportation – Hwy 210-169

Arts and culture

Green space – ATV trails

What are our greatest strengths?

Complete recreation

Long Lake Conservation Center

Expanded library

Arts center – friends of the arts

Strong civic organization

Schools are strength

Assisted living – Range of senior services

Work force – values, work habits

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

School – space for programs

Snowbirds leave – retail in winter

Major businesses closed

Aging population

Providing services for aging population

Keep buying local

Educating the community on local buying

Declining enrollment

Collaboration between – city, county, townships, schools, hospitals/medical

Young people out – migration

Housing – rental shortage

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Income level – fixed income people

Need to travel because of poor facilities

Inability to host events

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

Space – elementary **(6)**

Building security **(5)**

Aesthetics – updating **(4)**

New high school **(4)**

Athletic fields **(4)**

Entrance to high school **(2)**

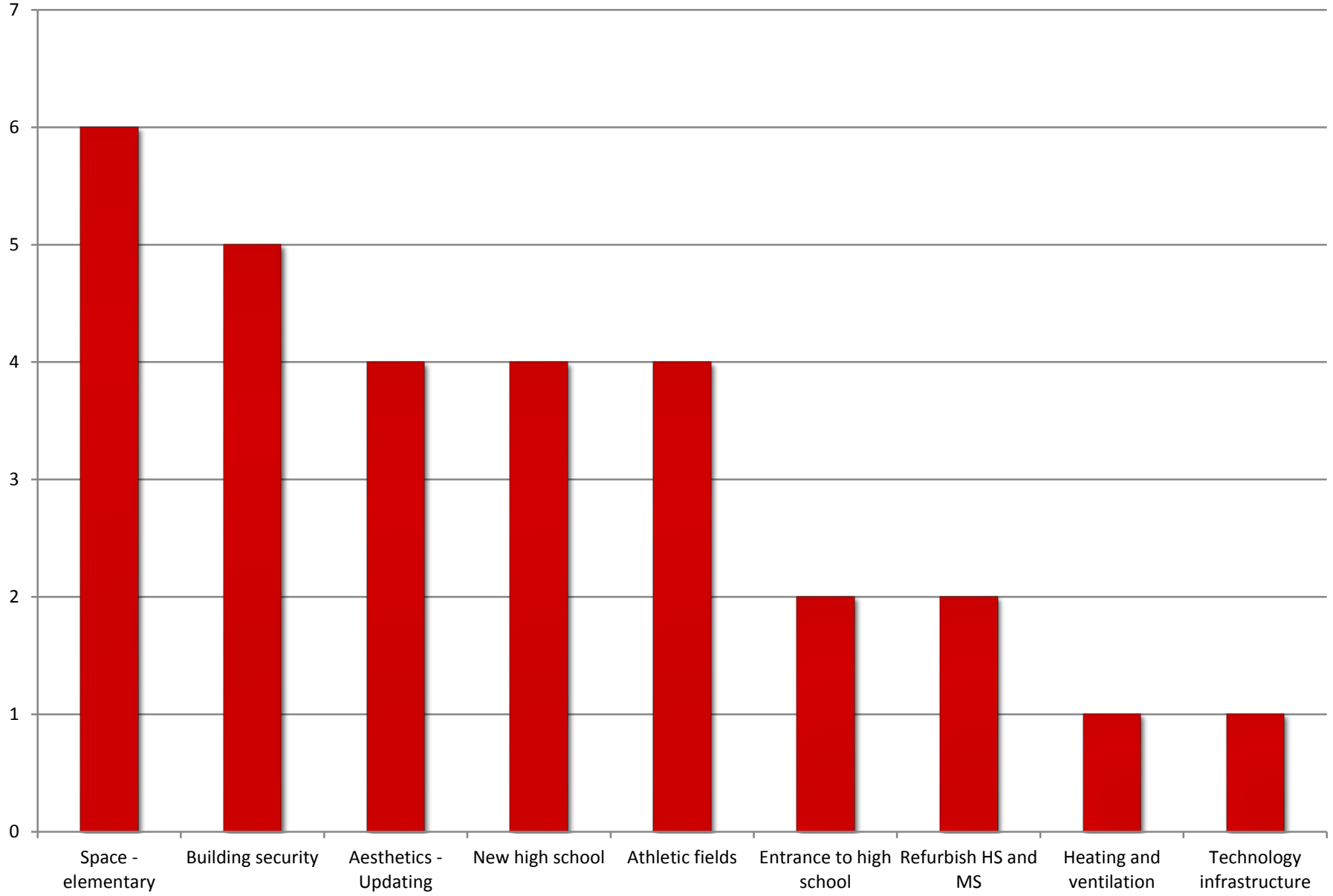
Refurbish high school and middle school **(2)**

Heating – ventilation **(1)**

Technology infrastructure **(1)**

New elementary school **(1)**

Aitkin Area Chamber of Commerce - Needs



Write the headlines 10 years from now

Thousands Move to Aitkin

Aitkin Rated One of the Top 10 Cities

Aitkin Business Climate Top in the State

Aitkin to Host State Little League Tournament

Aitkin Highest Enrollment in 10 Years

Bike Trail Connects Aitkin to Rapids and Brainerd

New Housing Development to Meet Needs

Aitkin Rated Tops in Providing Care to Aging Populations – Aitkin Retirement Village

Healthiest Place to Live in the State

Last words of advice

Listen

Communicate

Look at the big picture – long range plan

Board unified

Strong, simple message board support

Staff ownership and unified

Be aware of fixed income tax impact

Educate community about need

Keep this a desirable place to live

Women of Today Listening Session
November 4, 2015

Attendees

Suzanne – Member

Roxy Appel Wigton – Member

Leslie Goble – Member

Heather Simenstad – Member

Erin – Member

Dorothy Dotzler – Member

Shanna Pratt - Member

What are our greatest strengths?

Tight knit

Friendly

Bond together

Good activities – Balance in the community – Banking, movies, skate park, trails, clubs

Aesthetically appealing – Lakes

Safe community

Active chamber & other organizations

Good support for school activities

Culture opportunities – arts theater

Expanded public library

County seat

What are our greatest strengths?

Senior care facility

Medical care

Good school system

Strong faith community

Aesthetically appealing – downtown

Treated well by friendly businesses – small community

Friendly services

Good supportive newspaper

Strong community education program

Bars have activities – community

What are our greatest challenges?

Everybody knows everybody

Not friendly to “outsiders”

Cliques exist

Elderly community

Lack of diversity

Racial bias against minorities (American Indian)

Poverty – low income families

Lack of internet access – cell phone access

Everything closes at 5:00

Newer businesses struggle

Summer-only business snowbirds

Engaging Millennials

What are our greatest challenges?

Fluctuation of population – tourist

Apathy to community counts

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

Remodel and update H.S. **(7)**

Update technology **(7)**

Updated and expanded sports facilities **(5)**

More green space at the high school **(4)**

HVAC **(4)**

Build new high school **(4)**

Curriculum for technology **(3)**

Natural light in rooms **(3)**

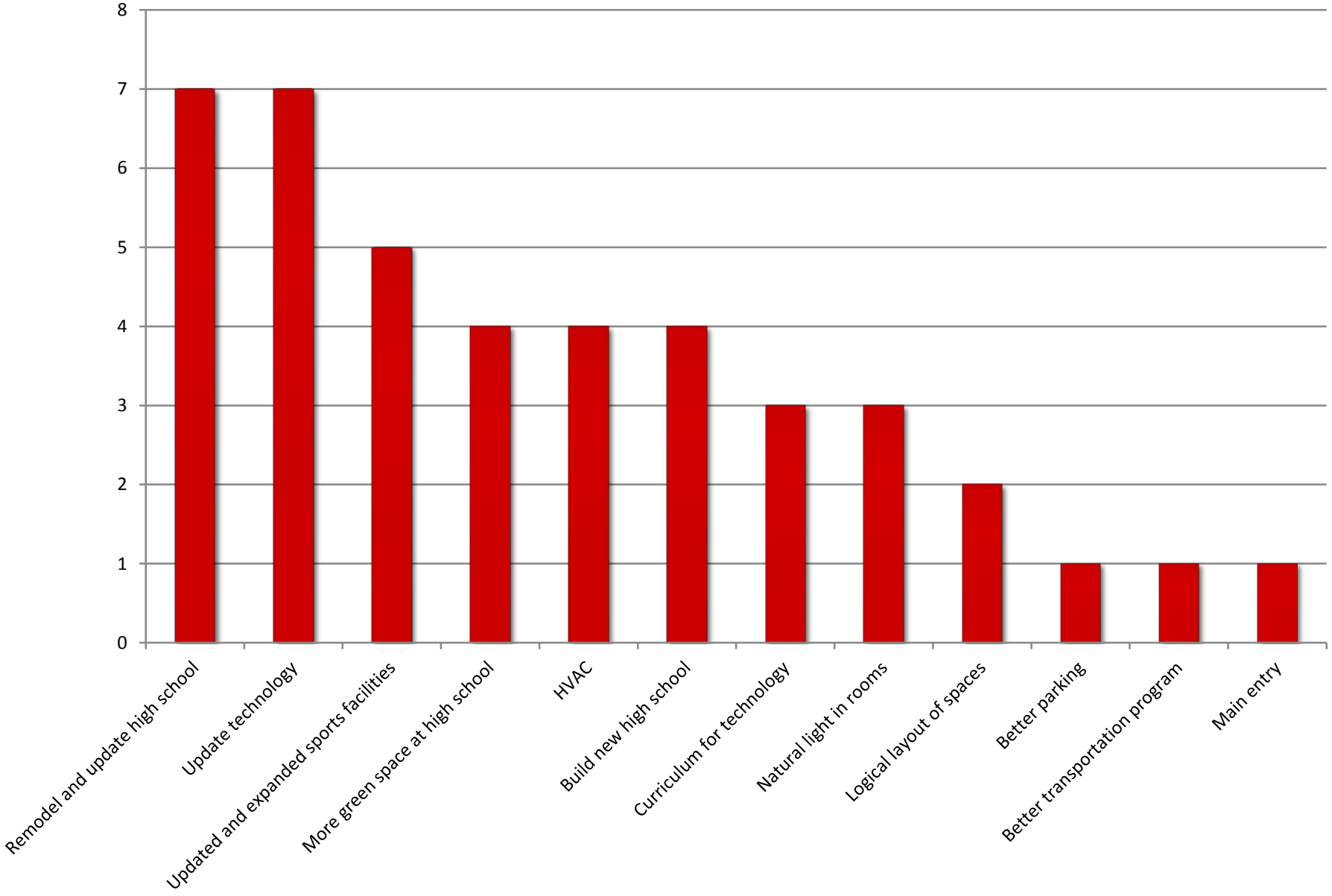
Logical layout of spaces **(2)**

Better parking **(1)**

Better transportation program **(1)**

Main entry **(1)**

Aitkin Women of Today - Needs



Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Hosts Major Sporting Event

High Graduation Rate 90%

90% Off To Finish College

Lowest Rate of Poverty in State

Aitkin Has Beautiful Schools

All Businesses Are Thriving

School Attendance Up – Population Growing

Graduates Returning in Record Numbers

Last words of advice

Get information out at school events

Show why this is important to our community

Show what is going to happen with the money

Allocate the money so everyone knows

Use social media to communicate

Do what the community wants

This was necessary

Target 30-50 age group

Community access channel

Aitkin Students Listening Session
November 12, 2015

Attendees

Hunter Sandford – Student Council

Colin Farnsworth

Kyle Kliewer

Brandon Lent

Jake Butler

Tony Stephani

Corri Sanbeck

Amber Kohlmann - Junior

Megan Host - Junior

Mya Conway - Junior

Sara Rose Herring - Senior

Megan Lawson

Attendees

Bowen Workman – Student Council – Senior

Kalvin Welle

Dylan Jindra

Logan Cluff

Sierra Hoss – Senior

Katie Teal – Senior

Spencer Jacobs – Junior

Noah Landrus

Trace Hodgman

Duncan MacGregor – Senior

Kyle J. Root – Senior

Michael Roth - Senior

Attendees

Thomas Nadeau

Nick Smith

Kyle James Lynn

What could be fixed in your facilities to better prepare you to graduate?

Better sports facilities **(39)**

Better food and lunchroom **(29)**

Better technology **(25)**

Sports elections (kickboxing) **(15)**

More funding for the Agricultural department **(12)**

Bigger shop and Tech Ed. Teacher **(11)**

New bathrooms **(10)**

Nap time **(10)**

Real walls **(7)**

Redo auditorium **(6)**

More classes that help you with real life (how to pay bills, buy a house, prepare your taxes **(6)**

What could be fixed in your facilities to better prepare you to graduate?

Gyms and sports fields **(5)**

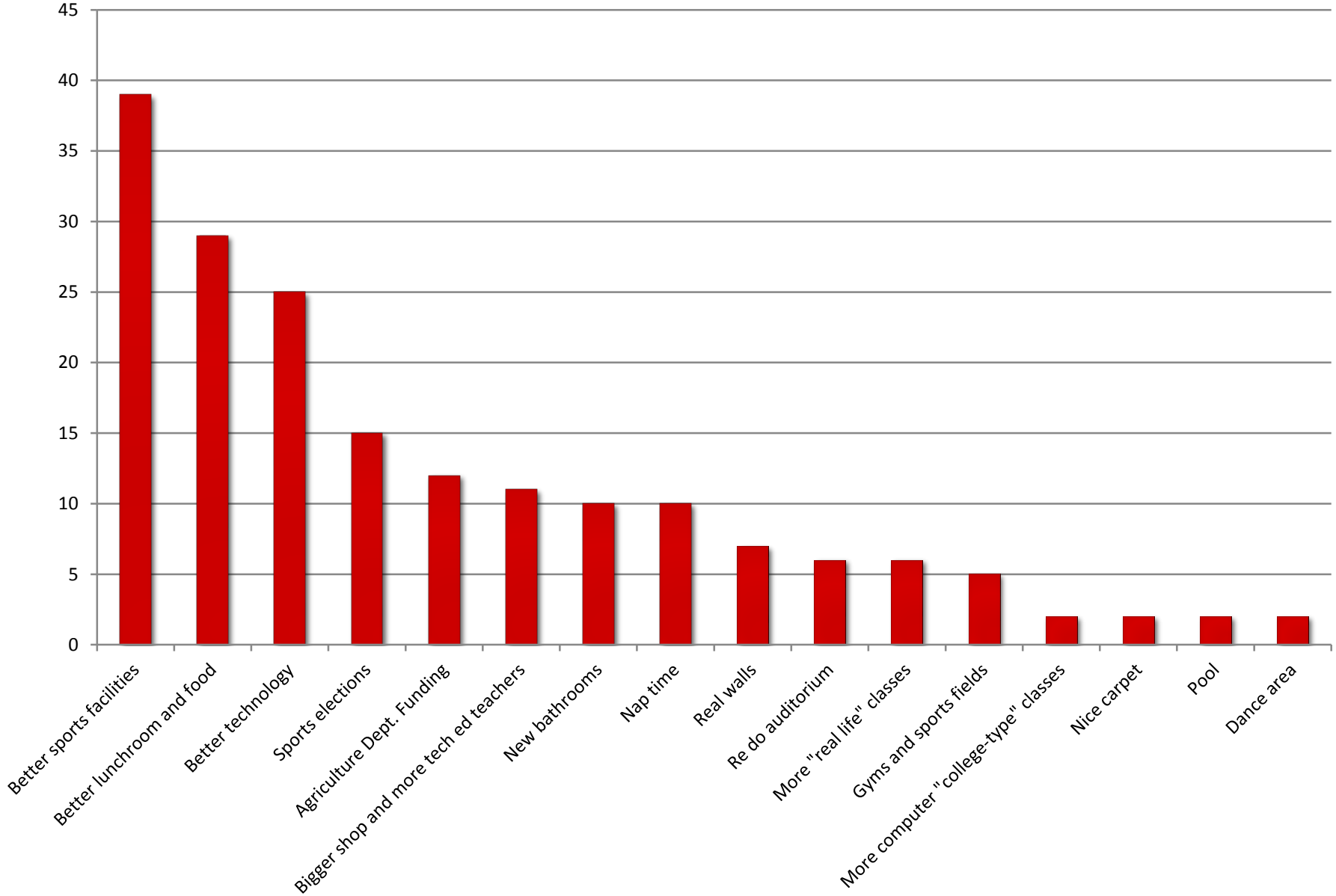
More classes – computer, college-type classes **(2)**

Nice carpet **(2)**

Pool **(2)**

Dance area **(2)**

Aitkin Students - Needs



Who are you competing against in the future?

People in general

The world

Everyone

Yourself

Other graduates

Police

Government & probation

The liberals

Life

Leaders (people in charge)

My Mother

Classmates

Who are you competing against in the future?

Men in suits

The taliban

Getting your life straight

New people

Everything – Donald Trump

Do you feel ready to graduate?

No. They didn't teach us how to face the real world.

Not ready because we are treated as children

After all of this school, you've GOT to know SOMETHING to make you ready

Don't know the steps to take

Not ready – weren't given many opportunities or options for what's out there

Not ready – need to know how to be organized

Living on your own class helps A LOT

I need more responsibilities

No – need technology

We don't act like adults because we are not treated like adults.

Do you feel ready to graduate?

Yes because I already have a job for after I graduate.

I found an interest that I have and got a good idea of what I want to do. We applied at school and took action.

Yes. I'm ready to study things that I actually WANT to learn about.

Yes. College classes are giving us a look at what they are like.

Kids that WANT to be ready ARE. BE that kid.

Home Economics classes and business management taught me a lot.

No. I was not given the opportunities.

Yes. I have my life planned out.

Yes. I am ready to be more responsible and organized.

Yes. Sports taught me about brotherhood and group dynamics.

Yes, got a good job for after high school to pay for my college.

Do you feel ready to graduate?

Wrestling taught me discipline.

Art class has gotten me ready & helped me get better at art.

Yes, I'm ready because sports gave me leadership, patience and discipline. Football made me a better person.

Yes. Sports and getting a job have taught me things I will use all my life. (responsibility, timeliness, respect, etc.)

Yes. School taught me to be outgoing and speak my mind.

What does graduation mean to you?

Money

Stuff

College

Freedom

Bills

Basic training

Family

A break

Boss

Work

Future

Art School

What does graduation mean to you?

Military

Grow up

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Sports Dominate!

The Community is United!

Aitkin County No Longer Poor

Aitkin No Longer Most Red Neck County

Water Park Opens

Population Increases!

Aitkin Wrestling Beats Peirce

Aitkin BB Beats Ogilvie

Beyoncé Comes to Tour

Most Educated School in Minnesota!

Words of Advice

Embrace new ideas

Think about the new generation

Let us prove we are responsible

Have an open mind to the future

Adapt to overcome

Help the kids and the community

Keep on keeping on

New technology gets us ready for the future

Try and try again

Aitkin Parent/Teacher Conferences
November 12, 2015

What are the greatest strengths of our community and schools?

Small community values

Smaller class sizes

The community is supportive of our students excelling

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Getting school test averages up to national standards

Involving more technology into classes

Students have limited access to technology

Lack of programming and web classes

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

Update technology **(15)**

Health and Wellness Center with a pool **(14)**

Update and add classrooms (Rippleside) **(14)**

Update science classrooms and labs **(13)**

Improve security **(11)**

Improve parking/bus drop-off **(9)**

Expand gym space (Rippleside) **(5)**

Update high school classrooms **(4)**

Expand/improve athletic facilities **(4)**

Provide community access to facilities **(4)**

Repair and update exterior walls/windows **(3)**

Expand early childhood center **(3)**

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

Provide break-out spaces **(3)**

Update auditorium **(3)**

Improve heating/ventilation/cooling **(3)**

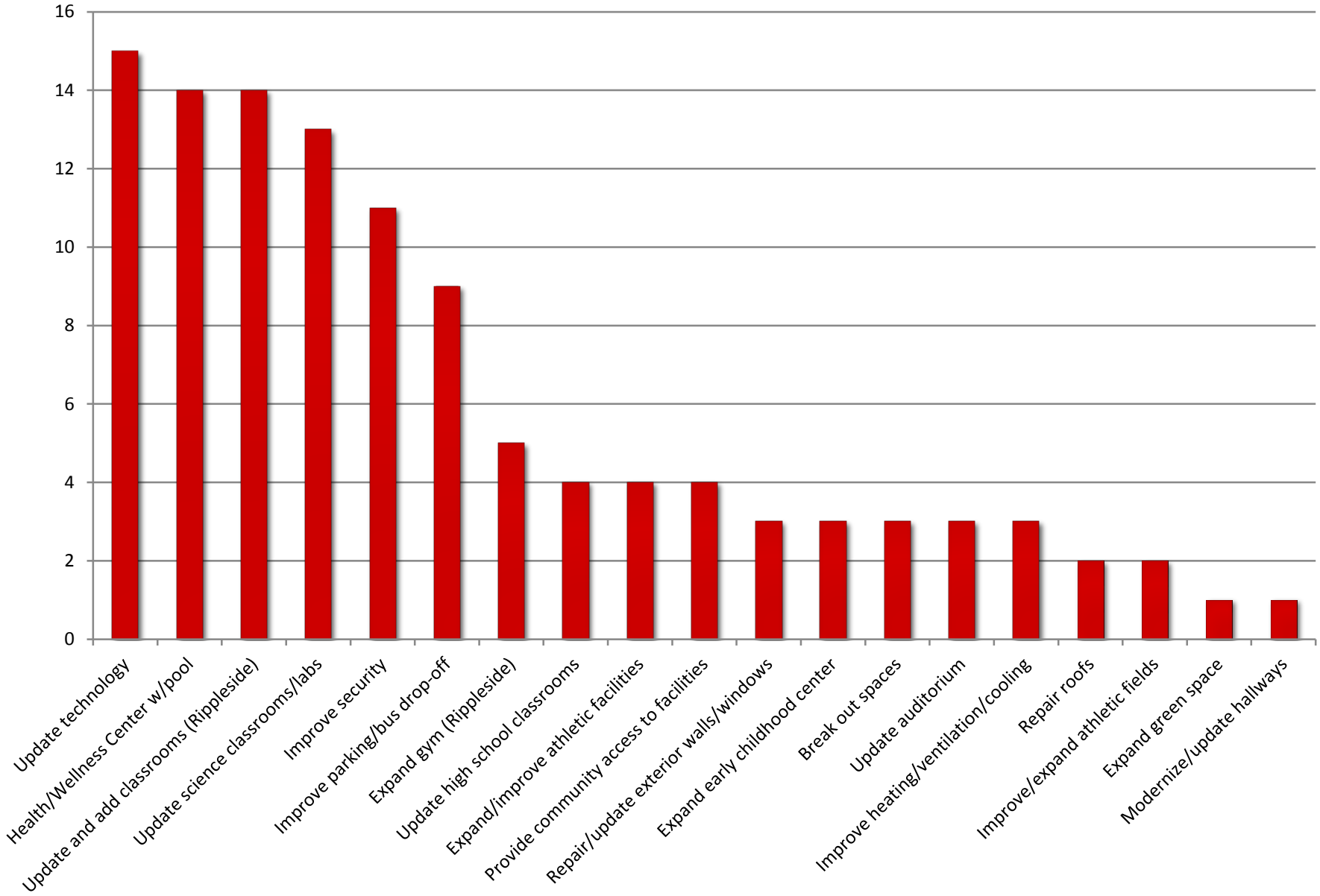
Repair roofs **(2)**

Improve/expand athletic fields **(2)**

Expand green space **(1)**

Modernize/update hallways **(1)**

Aitkin Parent/Teacher Conferences- Needs



Write a positive headline for the Aitkin Age 10 years from now about our schools or community

Converting AHS to a Senior & Community Center and Middle School is a Success! The New 9-12 High School and Expanded Sports Complex Brings Revenue and Economic Vitality to Aitkin – The Remodeled K-4 Rippleside is Wonderful!

Seniors and Newly Retired Community Members Agree That the New Community Center at the Former High School is the Best Investment of Taxpayer Money for an Overall Quality of Life in the Aitkin Lakes Area.

Aitkin School System is Teaching Progressive, Cutting-Edge, Technology-Based Learning

What advice can you give to leadership to help us be successful?

Expand project vision to a community project - Key leaders from every sector. It can't just be about the school. It needs to meet the needs of seniors and the retirement community to gain financial backing.

Build a new high school off the highway.

New school

More of a viewpoint towards technology and to prepare students for jobs and a world of the future

Keep "new school facilities" a priority – keep pushing it – community education a "must" with this topic

We don't want a "Band-Aid" solution

Make sure that our schools can be a place we can use for a long time in the future. We need a new school that can fit our growing community.

Need helpers in classrooms

Aitkin Community Group Listening Session
November 12, 2015

Attendees

Lowell Wegner – retired

Gwen – grandparent

Dave – retired

Richard Boyer – grandparent and taxpayer

Marie Harwarth – taxpayer/Spencer Township

Robert Harwarth – taxpayer/Spencer Township

What are our greatest strengths?

Small town

No smoke stacks

You're a person – everybody knows you – you have a name

Medical facility

County seat

One stop light

Round about coming

Know local businesses

Wrote about retirement – Aitkin wrote back!

Very welcoming Chamber person

Fish house parade

Lots of churches

What are our greatest strengths?

Good schools – good education

Kids support “Gobblers” tradition

Good farming area

Good hunting/fishing/recreation

Winter sports – ATV trails

People know where Aitkin is!

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

New School **(5)**

Security **(4)**

Gym space **(2)**

Roofs **(2)**

Space for tutors **(1)**

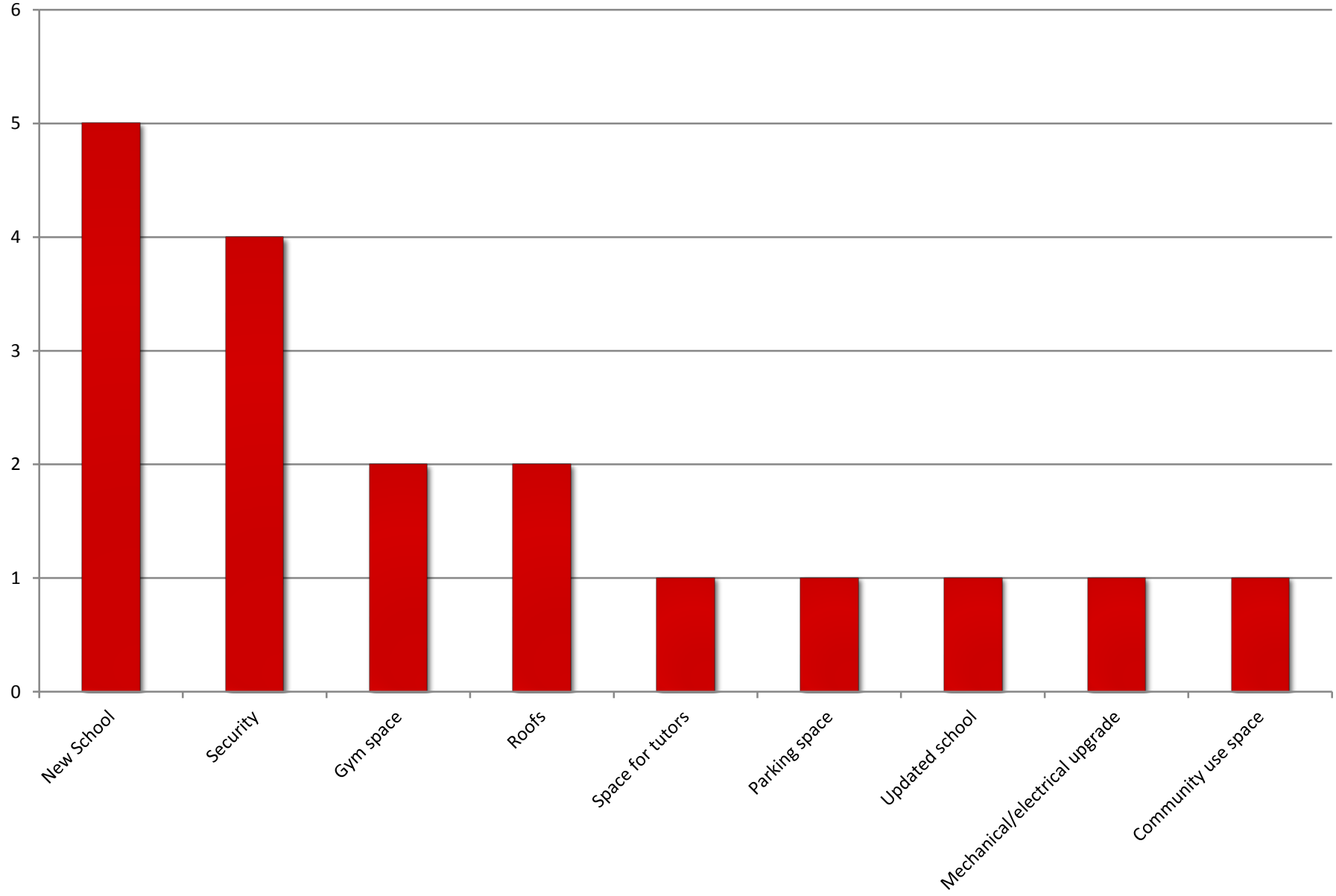
Parking space **(1)**

Updated school **(1)**

Mechanical/electrical upgrade **(1)**

Community use space **(1)**

Aitkin Community Group - Needs



What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Keeping store fronts full

Housing people can afford

Not a lot of good housing

Word of mouth communication – not always accurate

Infrastructure needs – roads, sewers

Big (geographic) area 1,100 square miles

Busing – kids ride long distances

Minimum wage jobs

Jobs

Encouraging HS kids to take college courses

More vocational classes needed

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Has an Affordable New School Right Outside of Town

Governor is a Student of Aitkin

New School Attracts Young Families

Kids Getting BS Degree Out of High School

Vocational Programs Expanded

Vocational School in Aitkin is Center for Whole Area

Last words of advice

Get it out to the retired people

Need community task force

Break it down – cost/household – city, county, schools

Voted no because need new school

What do you do with existing facility?

Vocational school is possible

Make it easier for people to vote – vote when people are here

Aitkin Community Group 2 Listening Session
November 12, 2015

Attendees

Neil Westerlund – parent

Michelle – parent

Brian – parent

Deb – parent

Jeff – parent

Dave Wilke – taxpayer

Mary – daycare provider/parent

Jennifer Peterson – parent

What are our greatest strengths?

Great teachers and faculty

Families

Medical facilities

Businesses come together to support

Community comes together

Have enough diversity of businesses to meet community needs

Smaller school but big enough for more opportunities

Shop & Agricultural Programs

A.P. Programs

Well-rounded education – sports all year

Support of veterans

Service organizations

What are our greatest strengths?

Extra-curricular opportunities

Community education

Community theater

Great river strings

Churches

Property taxes are low

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Keeping kids on the right track

School funding

Keeping kids involved in the right things

Lack of good paying jobs

Becoming a retirement community

What and who will be educating?

Both parents working – who's watching the kids?

"Fixed income" attitude

Resistance to change

Keep level up so our kids can compete with others to get into college

Brainerd – a blessing and a curse for college opportunity

Competition with higher education

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Changing rules from State – State mandates

Hiring teachers

Finding jobs for spouses (teachers)

People on public assistance

% of seasonal property – money staying in the community

Property taxes are low

Rumor mill can be negative

What are the greatest facility needs for the District?

More personal technology access **(6)**

Location – not enough parking **(4)**

Energy efficiency of buildings **(4)**

Modern athletic facilities **(3)**

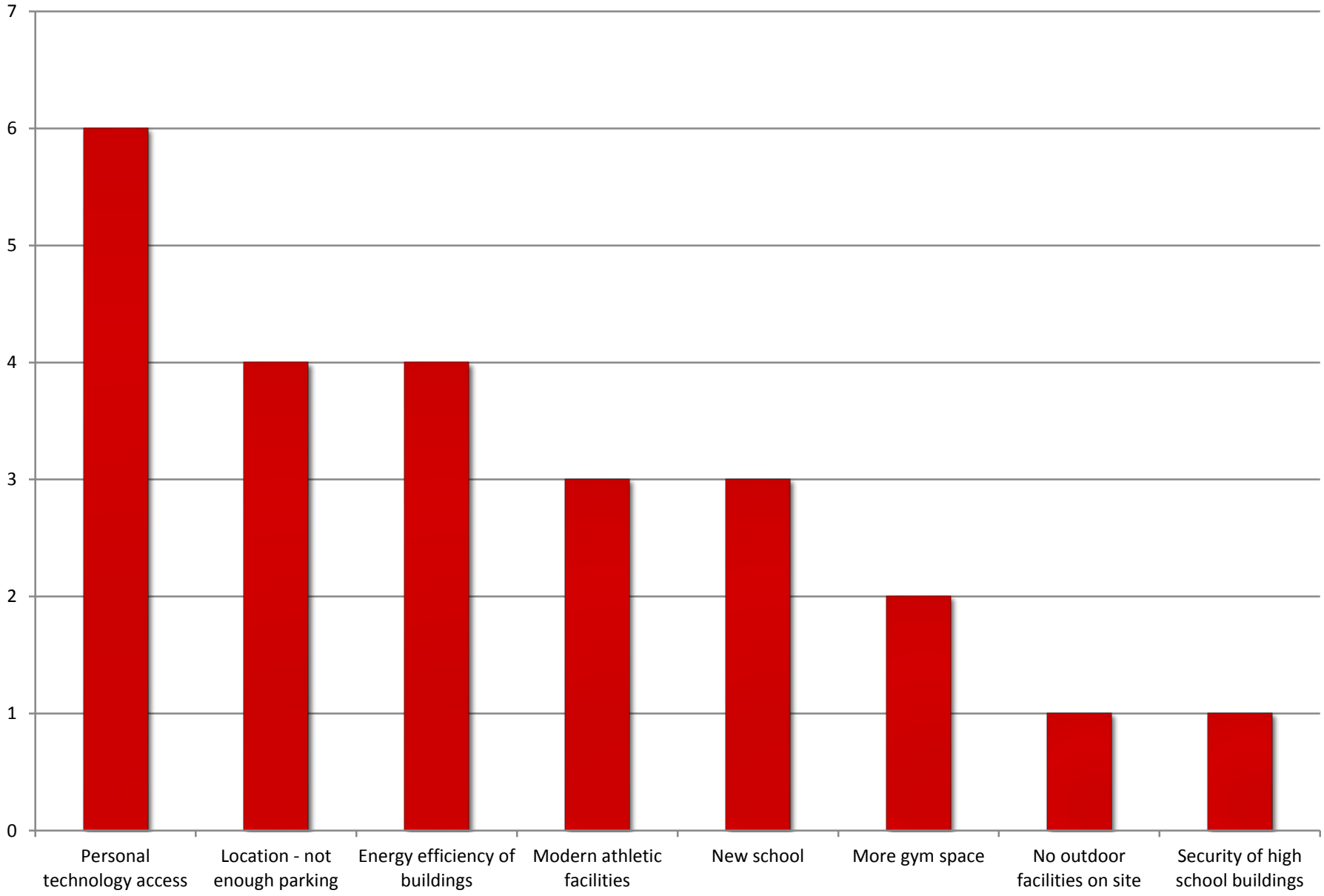
New school **(3)**

More gym space **(2)**

No outdoor facilities on site **(1)**

Security of H.S. buildings **(1)**

Aitkin Community Group 2- Needs



Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Opens New High School and Wellness Facility

Aitkin Schools Meet/Exceed Standards in All Grades

New Plant Employees – 350 People

More Aitkin Graduates Return to the Community

Largest Graduating Class in 45 Years!

Open Enrollment up 20%

Voted “Best Small Town To Live In” - MN

Advice For Leadership

$5 million – use for deferred maintenance – How much? What's the plan?

Build what we can maintain

Need partnership with retired members of the community

Partnership with business owners

Capital vs operating levy – cost comparison – Tax 101

We will get there but maybe not all at once

Consider utilities – infrastructure costs

What are the trade-off costs?

Tax impacts – homes, businesses

Bring it to the church level

More data in paper facts do not hide numbers

Stress – academic concerns

Aitkin High School Staff Listening Session November 13, 2015

What are our greatest strengths?

Great teaching staff

Caring and supportive staff and community

Farm to school

College credit opportunities

School garden

Restaurant (school)

Advocates

Actively involved students

Parent support

School pride

Class choices

Strong vocational programs – career/technical programs

What are our greatest strengths?

Easy access to outdoor activities

Community meal at First Lutheran

Hometown feel with many businesses

Butlers

Meat raffle

Spanish club

One act play – competition, performance, travel to show

Rialto

Lots of college in school classes

Quarterbacks club

Booster programs for extra curricular activities

Mental health provider in the school

What are our greatest strengths?

Community celebrations and festivals

Community and administration want our kids to be successful

Partners/businesses

Our community is proud of its history

One big family

Lots of things to participate in – students and adults

Art center classes for adults and children

Community band

Free college classes

Athletics

Tons of opportunities – community education, volunteer program

Healthy act for the community

What are our greatest strengths?

People genuinely care about the students and the community

Summer theater

Community theater

Connections with colleges (BSU math contest)

Traveling basketball

Musicals

Safe, protective community

Band/choir

Community – Love Thine Town

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Segment of population that doesn't feel importance of school education

Large population that feels no connection to the school

Communication issues between community and school

Status quo

Mental health disorders in students/families

Educator bashing

Lack of parent involvement/parenting

Attitude that our schools "don't need to lead in certain areas".

High population of people living in poverty

Being cheap

"Good enough" attitude

How to update/renew facilities/equipment – CTE areas

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Aging population – demographic challenges

Many people live out of the community due to limited housing development and other accessible items

No bussing for preschoolers

Large non-college working class feel teachers are overpaid elite

High speed internet access for all

Business closings – empty buildings

Fluctuating schedule hurts curriculum

Limited facilities for sports

Substance abuse

Extensive rent

People not being on the same page about what successful programs are

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Families moving to Aitkin

Higher learning commission college – in-the-schools decision

Too much testing

Replacement of old equipment

Distance to school for some students

Limited public transportation

Tech support needs “own” support

Poverty

More tech stuff

Outdated everything

Connection between vocational area and community business

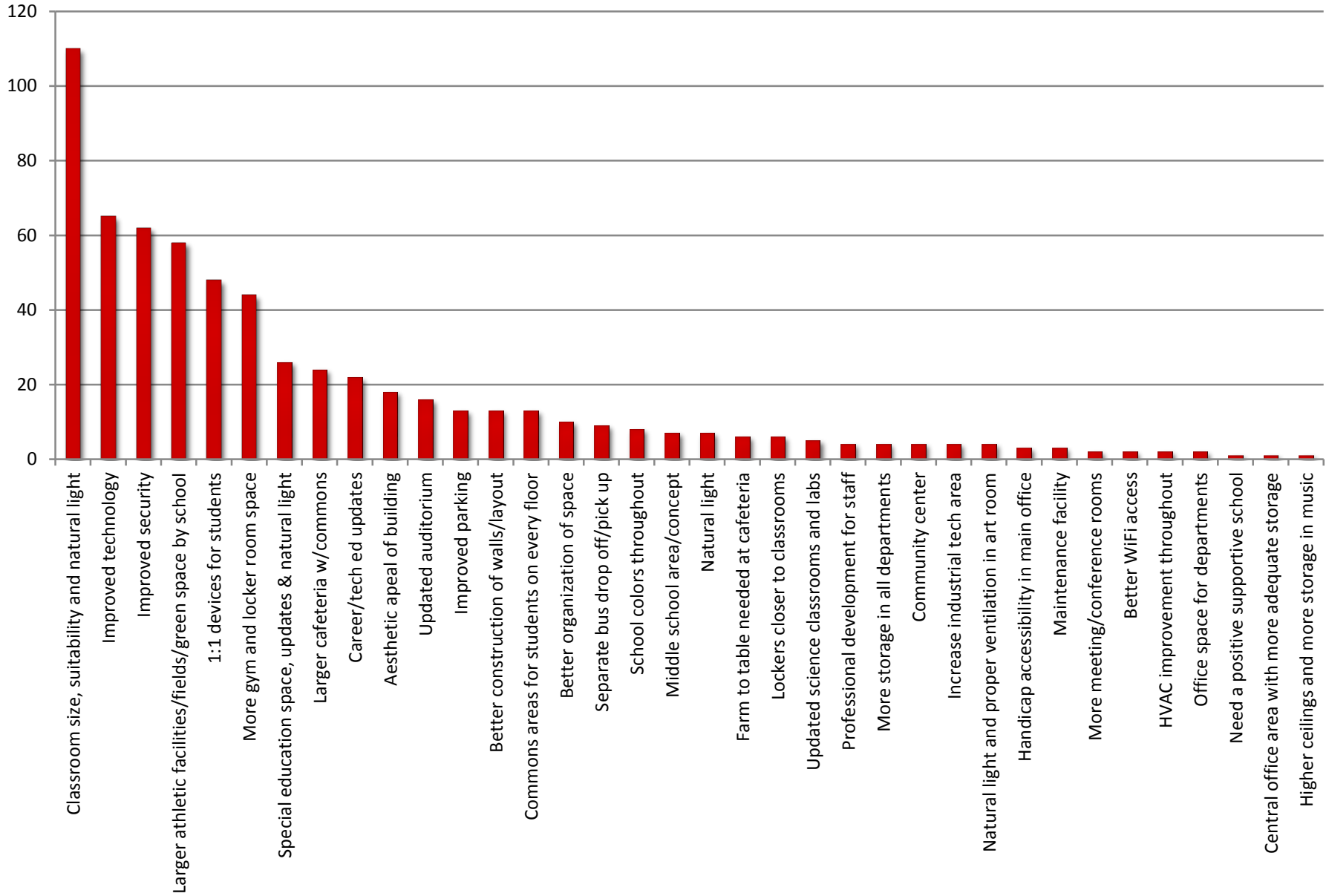
Large retired community and growing – don’t want to increase taxes

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Nowhere for kids to go after school to hang out

Testing culture

Aitkin High School Staff - Needs



Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin HS Offers Associates Degrees!

New Feature: Aitkin Graduates Around the World

All School Reunion Attendance Hits Record High

Aitkin Grad Wins Presidency of U.S.A.

Looking Back 10 Years: Look How Far We've Come

100 % of Aitkin Students Graduate College and Career Ready

Aitkin Voted Best Town to Raise a Family

Aitkin's New Facility Hosting Section Tournament!

New Amazon Drone Delivery Repair Center

Aitkin – Minnesota's Healthiest Small Town

Aitkin Graduate Opens New Business in Town

Aitkin Students Build Community Housing Project

Write the headlines 10 years from now

AHS Student Art Exhibit to be Hosted by the Guggenheim Museum

AHS Offers Foreign Languages to Students K-12

Aitkin Student's book top NY Times Best Seller List

Aitkin High Schoolers Create an Award Winning Science/Technology Project

#1 City in the United States

Applebees Coming To Aitkin

Graduate Retention Ranks Best in State

Aitkin Student Wins Nobel Peace Prize

Aitkin Student Finds Cure for Cancer

Aitkin Has National Winning Robotics Team

Aitkin Opens Transitional or Workplace For People With Disabilities

Advice

Costs – financial benefit – costs of doing nothing

Specific costs – on my taxes

Steps taken 15 years ago

Effective communication

Welcome and value teacher input

Talking points we can use to counter opposition – show unified front

Internet and video to show community the needs

Attitude – school will always exist

Need to pull families in

Unified school board

Engage students

Be bold! Go for it!

Advice

Be a trend setter

Can’t continue to operate the same way and expect different results

Can we improve efficient use of the facility?

How do we maintain any additional facilities?

Aitkin High School Teachers Listening Session November 13, 2015

What are our greatest strengths?

Caring staff

Small business support

Recreational activities – hunting, fishing, biking, water sports, snowmobiling

Staff unity

Great library

Volunteers

Personalized

Lots of lakes

We live where TC people go for weekends

Low crime

Solid academics

Supportive community

What are our greatest strengths?

Up-to-date hospital

Little league program field

Excellent education and caring teachers

Musicals

Disc golf

Nice kids

Fish House parade

Vacation land

College in the classrooms offerings

Centrally located – 2 hrs to the cities and 1 ½ hrs to Duluth

Multiple 5K races

Aitkin Fit City events

What are our greatest strengths?

Students are able to be involved in many activities

Athletics on the rise

Family values/parental support

Wonderful student body

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Communication

Location

Lack of athletic facilities – money

Doesn't want to grow – happy being small – not trendsetters

Technology/internet

Having "fixed income" community members to see personal benefit "If it isn't broke, don't fix it"

Don't want change

Low income

"Good enough" mentality – AHS – we were great in the 80's

Few professional jobs

School facilities not open to the community

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Keeping small businesses here

“Dirty Deeds” not soon forgotten – Rumor mill is strong here

Sports over academics

Few highly educated people

Full time jobs other than hospital or school

Older population that doesn’t care about technology needs

Infrastructure to attract new businesses and employees

Bad internet and cell phone reception

Teachers work “only 9 months”

2 school board members graduated from college

Updates in auditorium needed now

Young adults move away

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Poverty

Drug/alcohol abuse

Residents' low opinion of teachers

Need for fitness/community center

Many students come from broken/abusive homes

Divide between school and community

Jobs that pay living wage

Write the headlines 10 years from now

"_____" Relocates Business to Aitkin

Aitkin – Top 5 Towns to Live & Work In

Annual Technology Seminar @ AHS Set For …….. Date

Aitkin County No Longer Oldest in the State

Community Network to Meet the Needs of Low Income, Elderly, Those at Risk

Aitkin's School Rated in the Top 10 For Technology

Aitkin High School to Provide More College Classes

Aitkin Open Enrolls 200 Students From Outside District

Gobbler Basketball Relevant Again

State Tri-fecta For The Boys! (Football, Basketball and Baseball)

Aitkin Schools Leading the Area in Student and Parent Support

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Schools Awarded School of Excellence and Students From All Over the Country Want to be Here

Aitkin Teachers Are Now The Highest Paid In The State

STEM Programs Partner With Local Businesses

Aitkin Graduates 100% of Seniors

Aitkin Leads All Schools in MCAs

President Donald Trump to Visit the Brand New Aitkin High School He Funded in His Radical Education Reform Plan

Industry is Booming in Aitkin

Aitkin's New Center For The Arts – Season Tickets Available

Aitkin Pilot City for Fastest Internet

Mark Mehr Agrees to 15 More Years in the Classroom

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Airport Expansion Needed Because of new Businesses

New School Will Be Ready For 2025-26 School Year!

Aitkin Robotics Team Go To Nationals

State Trifecta For The Girls – Volleyball, Basketball & Softball

New Indoor Tennis Facility For Area

Teachers Settle Contract!

Words of Advice

No more mixed messages

Too many options

What's in it for me? - Answer the question

Take time to process and talk

Consider holding vote in November – perception – reality

Build trust

Show plan for taking care of facility

Words of Advice

Community sees lack of maintenance – commitment/security/cleanliness

Textbooks

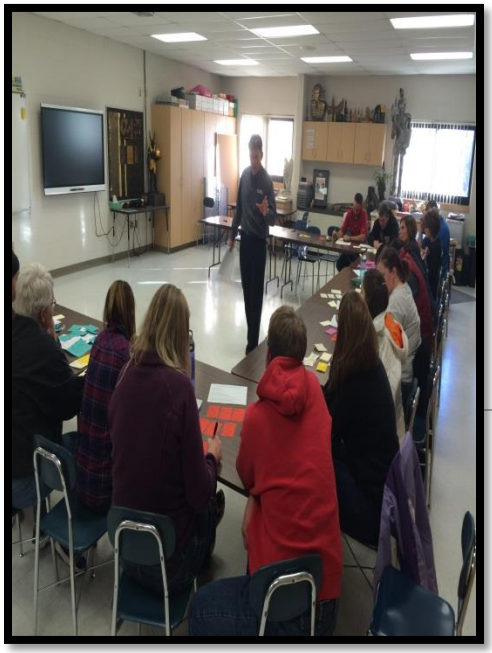
Us vs. them with community

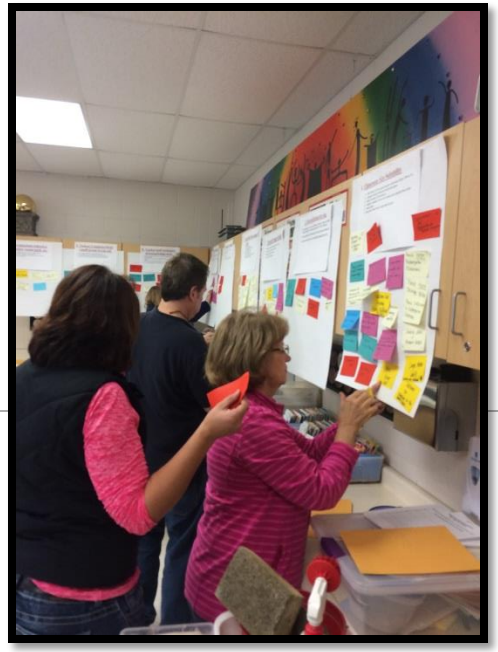
Aging population – who will care for them? - Quality

PEER pressure – positive

Board needs to care about the teachers – stop badmouthing them

Aitkin Elementary Teachers and Staff Listening Session
November 13, 2015





What are our greatest strengths?

Supportive

Great teachers & staff

Teachers' commitment

Drive for improvement

We have innovative programs e.g. Farm to school

Fabulous arts programs & concerts

Lakes & other natural resources

Strong PTO and PAC

Wide variety of good churches

Aitkin all stars

Supportive law enforcement

College in the schools

What are our greatest strengths?

Performing arts

Supportive administration

Supportive staff

Different programs

HS speech team to prep for leadership

BEST teachers

Small-town feel/compassion

Rural, but not far from large cities

Generous community

Technology

PBIS – Positive Behavior Intervention Systems

High graduation rates

What are our greatest strengths?

Volunteers – schools, churches, hospital, etc.

Teachers/staff that put in lots of extra time to plan for students

Good medical facilities

Beautiful school gardens!

Longevity of SPED staff @ Rippleside

Elementary teaching staff longevity

Support for athletic teams

Community programs to help people (Operation Christmas, Coats for kids, money to support families)

Constant student population

Open relationships and friendliness

During a tragedy, people pull together

What are our greatest strengths?

Close Knit

Music programs

Sports programs

Opportunity for special Olympics for disabled students

Community events

School forest

Excellent coffee shop

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Gym space

Lack of shopping

Keeping small businesses

Small businesses only – jobs/incomes/etc. affected

Parents not invested in their children's education

Lack of tourist attractions

No place for kids to go after school (besides the streets)

Aging population of lakeshore property owners *taxpayers*

Classroom rumors

Lack of affordable housing

Large number of low SES

Job opportunities

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Tax base

Poverty

Small business

Behavioral challenges

Lack of respect from youth

Large school district creates transportation issues and kids on the bus very early

That teachers only work 9 months out of the year – false! Many hours spent above the 9 months

Technology

Drug abuse

Lots of single parent families

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Increase in younger criminal offenders

Large school District - Parents can't/won't become involved

Limited employment opportunities

Lack of school board members in our school

Teacher, parent and sub shortages

Low income/poverty

County is populated by older individuals

Disconnect between community and realities of education today

Transportation for early childhood kids

School has money in the bank, but it's not spent on staff salaries or facility updates

Finding time for all of the state demands

What are the greatest challenges facing the District?

Lack of longevity/consistency in performing music ensembles

Businesses are stressed – everyone is asking businesses for financial donations

Lack of non-sport extra curricular activities

People feel that teachers are overpaid

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Aitkin Has State-of-the-Art Facilities – Students Flourishing

Aitkin Schools Exceed State Standards

New Industry Moves In

Aitkin – Lowest Crime Rate in the State

Aitkin Teacher Voted Teacher of the Year!

Aitkin Adds Second Stoplight

Aitkin Finally Taken Off The Top 10 Minnesota Redneck Cities

School and Community Working Together to Build Aitkin's Future Growth

Record Amount of Students Participate in All-State Music

Enrollment reaches an All Time High

Innovative Programs Make National Spotlight

"New" School Adding on Again

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Community Center Bursting With Activities

New Gymnasium Packed For Section Title Game!

Rippleside Elementary Named Model School

Aitkin: One of the Top 10 Best Places to Live

Rippleside Begins Orchestra Program

Aitkin Public Schools Are Still the Care in the Community

Small Town With Big Education

Highest Volunteer Rates in the State

Former Aitkin Student Invents _____.

AHS Sports Complex to Host MN Special Olympics

Kindergarten Teachers to Present Motor Lab Programs at National Kindergarten Conference

Words of Advice

Invite people into facilities

Present one proposal

In depth research into proposal

Clear communication – transparency

Think of many ways of communicating

Get people to vote

Township meetings

More unanswered than answered questions

Talking point sheet

Consider all options presented

Present proposal to every group – club, church etc. available all over

District – serve some food to get people there!

Convey the consequences if we don't pass this

Aitkin Elementary II Teachers and Staff Listening Session
November 13, 2015

What are our greatest strengths?

Friendly

Bike trail

Family – school – community partnership

Excellent community education program

Public library

Public health is committed to improving community health

Expanding preschool program

Parent volunteers helpful

School forest

Great health care access

Several churches

Strong leadership

What are our greatest strengths?

- Devoted staff
- Community backs the school
- Farm to school
- Promethean boards
- School garden
- Lakes and recreation
- Small town living – everyone cares
- Community pulls together
- We're flexible
- Great quality Pre-K programs
- Parent volunteers
- PTO

What are our greatest strengths?

Outdoor classroom

Staff cares about the students

Foster grandparent program at Rippleside

High quality education

Collaboration w/public service dept. (police dept./fire dept.)

What are the greatest challenges for the District?

Communication between the school and community

Elderly community

Keep local businesses open and profitable

“Good enough” attitude

Unity between the entire school district

Negativity spreads too easily

Lower educated community members/parents

Broadband

Wanting to do things how they’ve always been done

Reality of how Aitkin compares to other schools or community

Aitkin county known for high drug use

Educating parents

What are the greatest challenges for the District?

100 % attendance at parent/teacher conferences

Good ole' boy network

The need for college level courses and financial impact for district

Weekend visitors (cabins)

The same businesses are asked for donations all of the time

Some people don't like change

"What's in it for me?"

Clear communication

Older generations feel changes don't need to be made when they don't have kids in school

Misconception that teachers have it easy – summers off

Tax expectations

Write the headlines 10 years from now

#1 Graduation Rate of Public Schools

Aitkin Schools Looking Into Expanding Due to Student Growth

Students Exceed Expectations

Crime Rate Down Due to Fabulous Schools

Aitkin Public Schools Are the Areas Model for Success

Aitkin School in the First Time in the School's History Had 100% of Students Meet Expectations on MCAs

#1 MN School Leads in Technology

Aitkin County Above Poverty Line 5 Years in a Row

Aitkin School Board Seeks Teacher's Input on School Decisions

Aitkin No Longer Oldest County MN!

Aitkin School District Flooded With Teacher Applications

Write the headlines 10 years from now

Students from ISD #1 Use 3D Printer to Design New Medical Equipment

Local Businesses Working With Schools to Create Intern Programs For College Credits

Aitkin Says Goodbye to 100 Year Old High School Building

Main Street Businesses Thriving

Industry Grows in Aitkin. Rippleside to Add Second Addition to New Building

STEM Class Develops First Apple Approved Engineering Application

Rippleside Celebrates Principal of the Year, Jess Peterson, 2 Years in a Row

Families Moving To Aitkin Because of Quality School System

Words of Advice

Look beyond needs of today and share with community

Make sure everyone has same accurate information

Make a big deal to separate myth from fact

Be transparent

Sell what “it” becomes

Get students and children behind this

Get pictures of issues out to community

All Union support

Unity from school board

Retired teachers need to be heard and behind this

Make sure staff has the facts

Words of Advice

Why an early election?

Tap into professional partnerships

Riverwood Health Care
November 18, 2015

Vision

New tech company lands hundreds of jobs

Community center with pool serves all ages

Therapy groups fill pool at community center

Healthiest community in Aitkin

Population growth – No declines in grade levels

Young people moving in!

Aitkin county no longer has highest age in the state

More housing available

Aitkin graduates come back to work at Riverwood as doctors!

What are our greatest strengths?

Engaged community

School leadership

Medical facility

Outdoors

Proximity to other cities

County seat

Vibrant downtown

One stop light

Site of school – big enough – opportunities but

AP courses

Overall good education

Athletic programs

Better teachers – SPED – amazing

What are our greatest challenges?

Older population

Bringing new business and industry

Fixed and lower income families

Age of school facility

Large geographic area – travel to school

Vacation mind set – destination not “their community”

Lack of jobs to attract younger families

Lack of community center

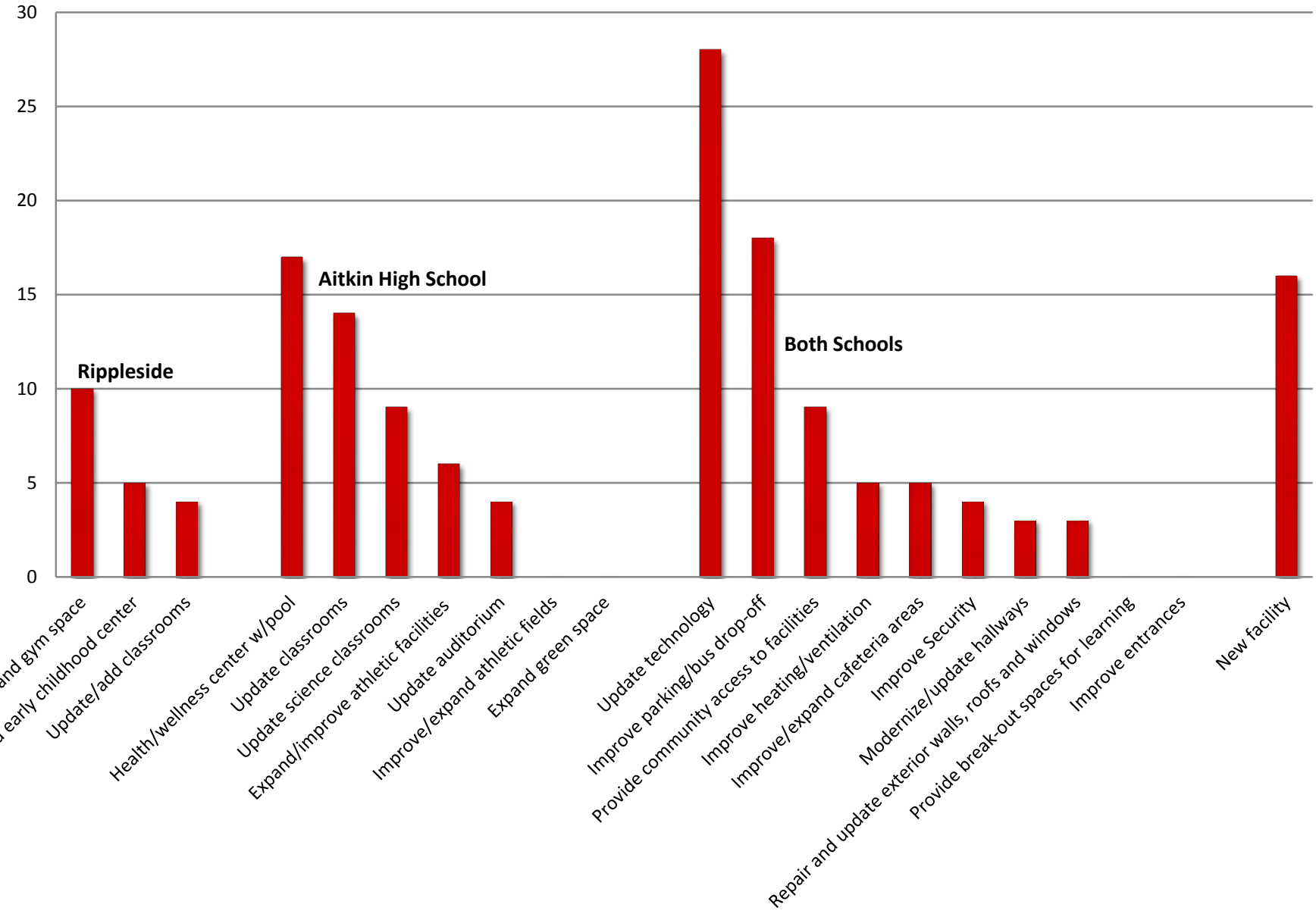
Land to expand/build/Infrastructure

People resources (20% do all the work)

Lack of technology focus in schools

Taxes

Riverwood Health Care - Needs



Words of Advice

Educate people to get them excited

Talk about the positives

Manage information that is going out

Consistently communicate through social media and other sources – E-mail, automated phone - newspaper has less impact

Continue going out

Unified message from board and faculty

New administration with new vision

Need to leverage knowledge of retired

Senior citizens need to know how they benefit

“Who are we trying to keep up with” mentality

Leverage community members not in the schools

Words of Advice

"Message good for everybody"

Benefits to everyone – fact sheet – generations

Come back to major employers

Consider churches

More community education activities for retired

Get younger parents engaged – future students – Go beyond ECFE

Engage the people on the fence in a positive way

Aitkin City Hall Listening Session
November 18, 2015

What are our greatest strengths?

County seat

Medical facility

Three major highways

New development – Family Dollar, credit union, dental office, round-about, housing development

Great recreational areas – parks, bike trails, cross country trails

New car dealership – GM and Ford

Airport, new Jet A fuel brings in bigger planes

Aitkin Iron Works

Security State Bank and Neighborhood State Bank

Armory Assisted Living Facility

172 recreational trails within city limits shift from county

What are our greatest strengths?

New bakery coming to town

Demo 3 homes and more homes from county land

Renovation of Beacon North (old Foley Hotel)

Taxi cab system potential

What are our greatest challenges?

Annexation concerns

Wetlands designations

Old housing stock

Traffic issues

Transportation need

Elderly community – change is difficult

Infrastructure needs

Poor internet infrastructure

Vision

City grows – attracts Walmart

Because of teamwork between government agencies, Aitkin is the number 1 place to live in Minnesota

Athletic facility attracts tournaments

Final words of advice

Get the older generation to understand the need

Show everyone the impact of schools on growth

Special education changes

Technology has changed how teachers teach

Concept “the less you have, the more it will cost you to live here”

Board has to be 100% behind the plan and have to stay the course when things get rough

Plan out, in advance, what is going to happen

Get city council and county commissioner behind it

Elected officials need to be at the table from the beginning

City needs to be invited to the table

Medical facility needs to be engaged

Final words of advice

Need a concentrated communication outreach to senior citizens

Aitkin County Care is a service organization

Aitkin County Government Listening Session
November 18, 2015

What are our greatest strengths?

County seat

Stoplight

Education staff

Quality committed staff

Good communication and collaboration between institutions

Community comes together in times of need

Professional, ethical and honest

Sense of identity – grounded in the community – history

Multi-disciplinary team public office holders to local service providers

Location – lakes, woods, trails – outdoor environment year-round

Community brings graduates back

Strong family connections

What are our greatest strengths?

Hanging on to traditional downtown

Quality care of seniors

Senior citizens are a strength

What are our greatest challenges?

Getting people off the merry-go-round of the past

Change is hard

Breaking free of “no change” mindset

Low income needs

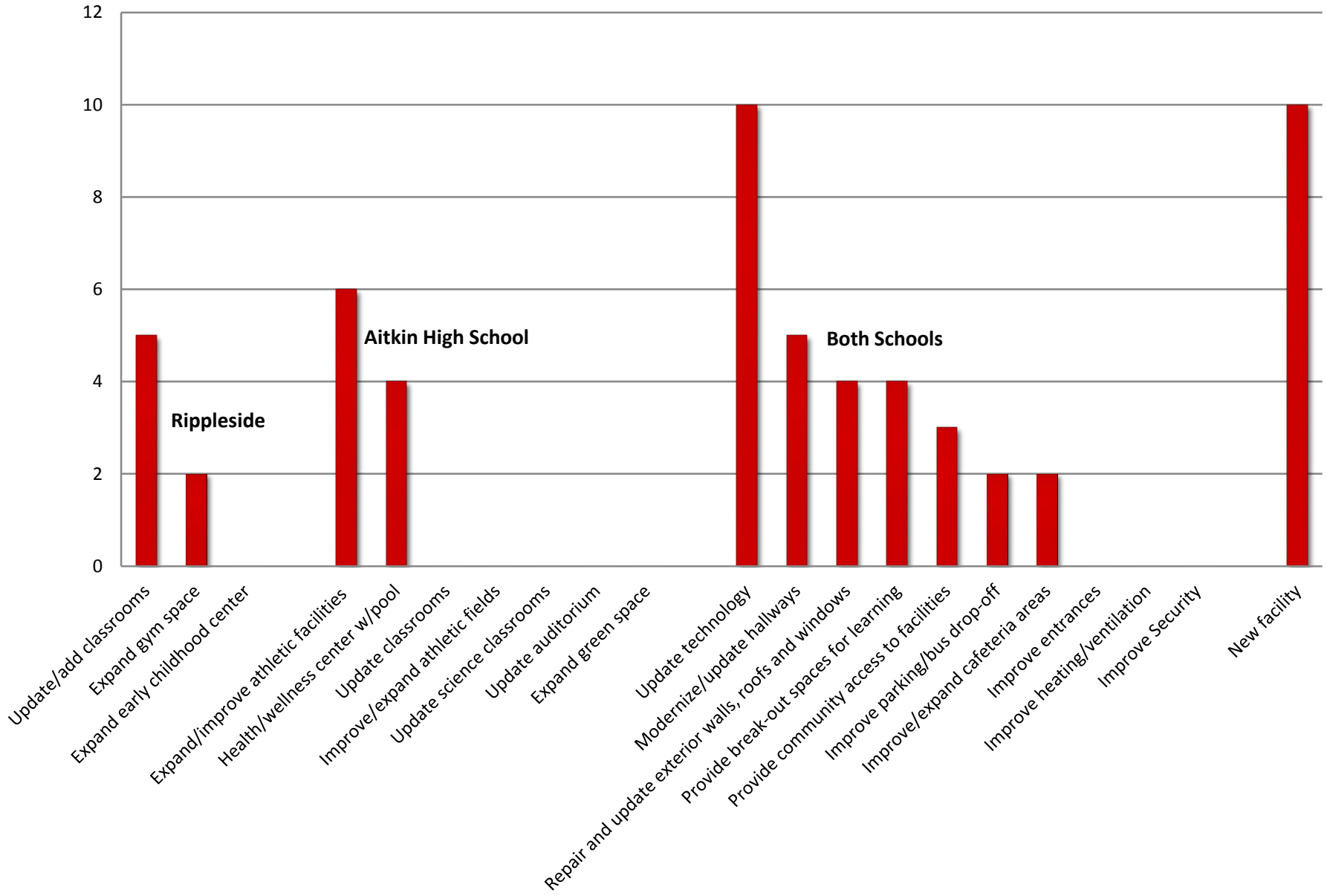
Concern about taxes

Concern that school leadership will not be visionary

Realization that things have changed in the world

Layout of our land - locations

Aitkin County Courthouse - Needs



Vision

We want to be a part of a better community

Aitkin is a place for everyone

Looking back, the project was comprehensive and provided

Health/wellness quality education for everyone

Facilities promote life-long learning

Facilities promote health/wellness learning

Mental health programming available in schools for everyone

Best sports/athletics complex in area that generates revenue

For community year-round

Sports complex is financially sustainable

Expanded complex provides greenhouse, high tunnel, school gardens best farm to school program in the state

Vision

Combination school and community center that is multi-purpose

Schools are LEAD certified

Local contractors involved in construction

Final words of advice

Get the older generation to understand the need

Has to be a stake for everyone in this game

How will any project be sustained over time?

Give all ideas an honest look, regardless of costs

Invite all partners to the table to explore options – state level – IRRB

Final words of advice

Need a concentrated communication outreach to senior citizens

Aitkin County Care is a service organization

Aitkin Community Group Listening Session
November 18, 2015

What are our greatest strengths?

Community involvement – people here to help

Education

Quality teachers

Tradition – carols, pledge

Support for sports – volunteers, fund raisers

Industry

Small school – kids get involved

Diverse citizenry

Generations in this area

Different groups – recreation people

Good superintendent

What are our greatest strengths?

Generosity of businesses

Overall good kids

Quality commercial offerings

Safe town and schools

Good law enforcement

Quality health care

Potential growth area (lakes)

Trade programs

What are our greatest challenges?

High concentration of retirees – may not be inclined to get engaged (lake people) or get engaged adversely

Impact of referendum differs

Lack of involvement

Shortage of suitable housing

Aging infrastructure

No community space

Lack of jobs – high paying

Lack of quality workers

County has great benefits – welfare base

People who pay no taxes

State and county land – tax impact

What are our greatest challenges?

High concentration of retirees – may not be inclined to get engaged (lake people) or get engaged adversely

Impact of referendum differs

Lack of involvement

Shortage of suitable housing

Aging infrastructure

No community space

Lack of jobs – high paying

Lack of quality workers

County has great benefits – welfare base

People who pay no taxes

State and county land – tax impact

What are our greatest challenges?

Getting new people – schools are a deciding factor

Very spread out community

Highways come together but everyone passes through

Not enough for families with young children to do

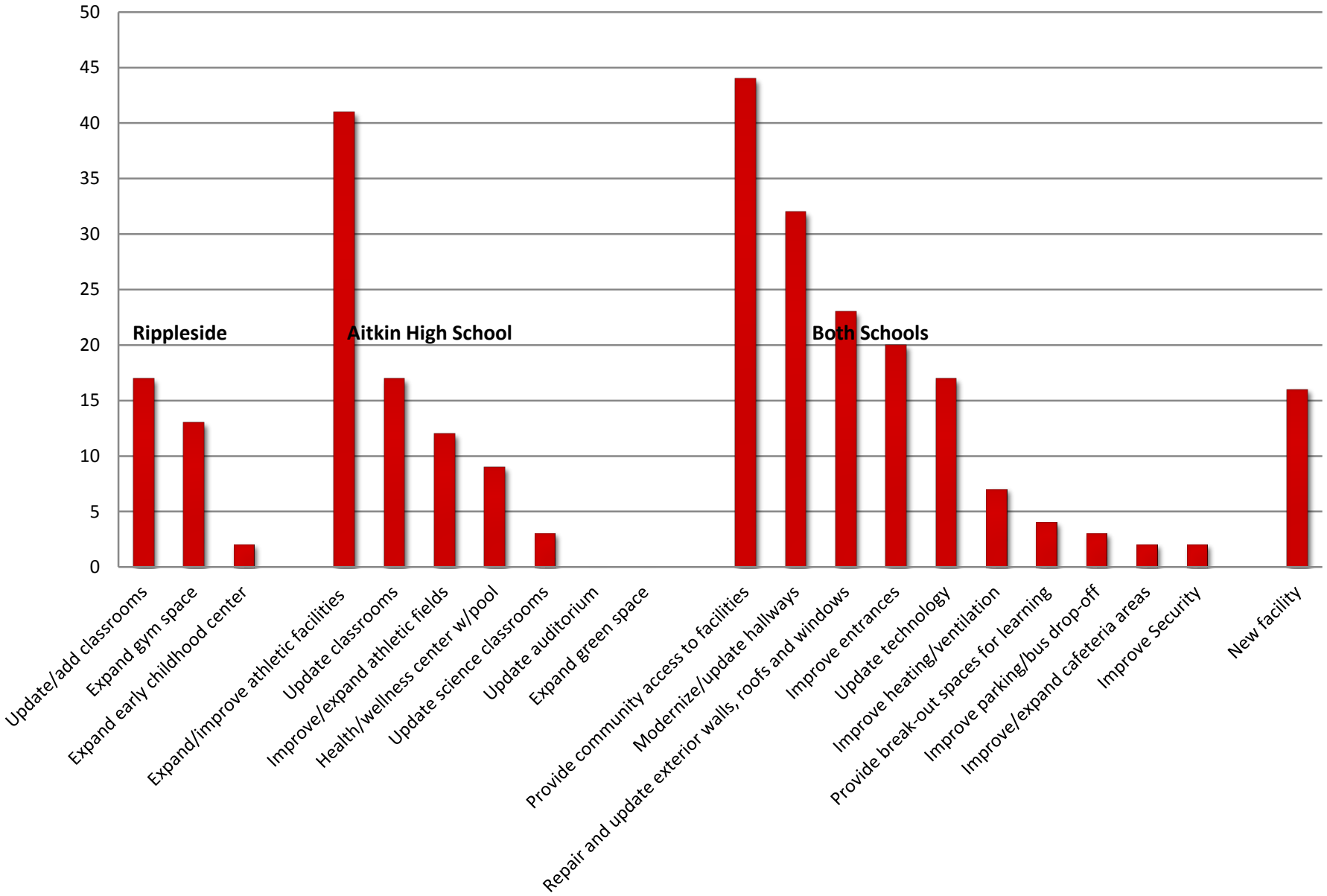
No place for senior citizens to gather

Travel time to events

Cost construction/vocational education classes

Location – potential site

Aitkin Community Group - Needs



Vision

Local tournament draws thousands!

One facility serves whole tourney

Non-stop growth

Aitkin keeps small town feel

New school attracts top professionals

Aitkin schools lead the way in technology

Community center celebrates anniversary

Swimming pool opens

Enrollment projections up!

Largest class in 30 years

More jobs

New H.S. expands after 3 years

Vision

Enbridge pays off debt

Words of Advice

Time for a new one

Don’t stick money in old buildings

Think long term

What’s best for kids – Portray that to community

Would people be happy to go to school here? – Facility – think about safety

Shoot for the stars, settle for less – think realistic

Bring out voice of reason

Get facts straight and get it out to the public

Get community involved so there is something in it for them

Have strong process – must rally around a plan

Don’t be afraid to think outside the box

Words of Advice

Consider dedication /memorial/??????

Aitkin Community Group 2 Listening Session
November 18, 2015

What are our greatest strengths?

- Close knit
- People are loyal
- Lakes environment – outdoors, woods
- Economy is decent
- Good school system
- Good sports
- Very good teachers
- People feel safe
- Rural setting
- Health care
- County seat
- Good roads and access

What are our greatest strengths?

Most amenities that you need

Less expensive gas

Strong volunteer base

People look out for each other

Good municipal services – Fire services

You can find jobs

People live within their means – financially responsible

Proud homeowners – well-kept town

Community pride

Diversity in ages

People come and stay

Resilience – ability to bounce back

What are our greatest strengths?

Destination for recreation

Good snowmobile/ATV trails

Red neck county

What are our greatest challenges?

Seasonal cabins – tax base

Jobs – professional

One of poorest counties – high poverty rate

Internet infrastructure

Schools as attractor

Close knit – not welcoming – Aitkin

Commuting distance

Diversity in ages – heavy retirement/fixed income

Too close knit on politics at times

Lack of restaurants, recreational activities, sports facilities

Lack of community center

Rural issues - transportation

What are our greatest challenges?

School location

Visions

K-12 facility in one location – NEW

Aitkin hosts section tournament

Aitkin charter school opens – reduces costs

Alternative truck route through town

New manufacturing plant creates 250 new jobs

Aitkin opens art magnet program

Aitkin leading the why in technology

Chinese buffet opens downtown

Community unites behind building levy

Aitkin leads state in test scores

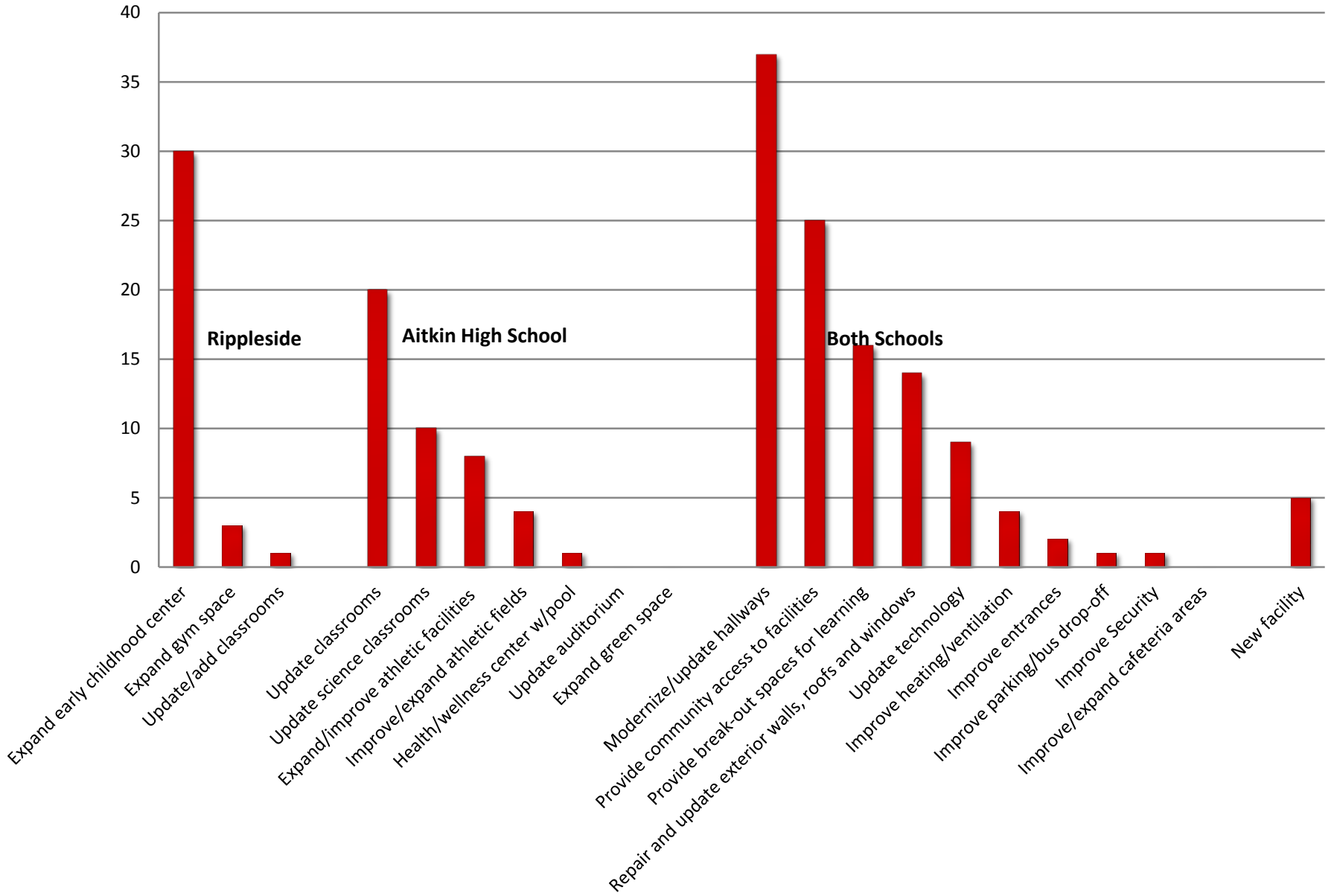
Aitkin establishes fisheries/bio center to replace DNR

Aitkin establishes science center

Visions

Multi-use center for all ages and abilities

Aitkin Community Group 2 - Needs



Words of Advice

Had to replace roof – another band-aid

People don't understand the state of the facility

Communicate and inform

Take advice – all community partners

Use communication tools

Sophisticated communication campaign

Strategic and targeted process

Engage the teachers

Concrete plan

Achieve broadest level of community investment

Build on Riverwood success – donations

Who carries burden of taxes?

Words of Advice

Property tax – businesses, land owners, seasonal/recreational

People need to know where the money is going

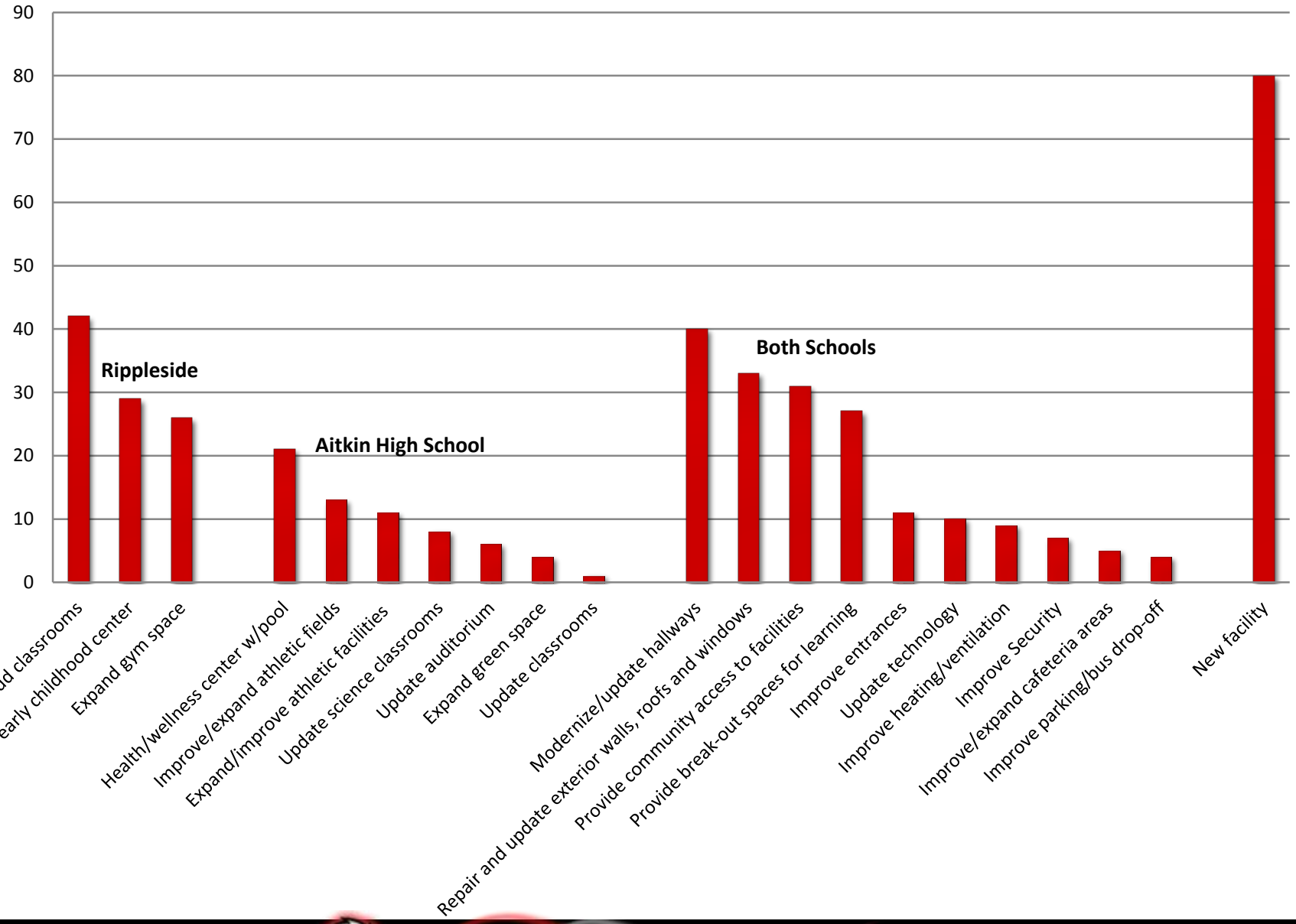
Look at creative financing

Don’t build what you can’t maintain

Costs of building now – later interest rates

More demographic discussion

Aitkin Parent Teacher Conference Booth - Needs



Glen Kimberly Listening Session
November 18, 2015

Words of Advice

Policy to business – “We don’t want you.” (business and manufacturing)

School policies must align with any facilities plan. (5, 10, 15 year maintenance)

Facilities plan needs to be reasonable – repair

No new construction – repair what you have – downsize to meet your needs

Aitkin does not want to change

Need to tell people what the impact will be

Check transportation costs – do we need a cop in the high school?

Need to look at all that is involved. – School budgets

Need to have good quality teachers

Kids need to learn basics = making change at gas stations

Words of Advice

Need to show accurate budget – justify costs of employees

Need to look at all needs – community, businesses, schools

Palisade Community Center Listening Session
November 18, 2015

Words of Advice

Legislature has placed bad mandates on schools

I want my child to learn every day life

Not all kids go to college

District has discounted kids not going on to school – 60% go on – no plan for the other 40%

Trade school programs – vocational programs

Voice of democracy – patriot pen – programs (consider in Aitkin)

Too much money for sports on the last referendum

Education facilities, not “entertainment”

Technology program in Hill City is better – 1:1 IPads – replacing books – virtual classrooms

Need to keep kids current

Words of Advice

Manage facilities properly

Aitkin County lacking industry – lack of leadership that supports local industry

Need to take care of our own

Need to share the costs – disparity tax concern

Palisade school was a quality school

Hill City and MacGregor got students when Palisade closed

Transportation is a concern for Palisade and other rural areas

How to manage resources better

Show actual numbers

Why did the Palisade school close? – Was it forced to close?

Should have held this in the evening

Words of Advice

Distrust of administration and school board

- Change public input to beginning
- Keep and get minutes out in timely manner – monthly
- Rolling calendar needs to include information on planning
- Facebook site would help
- Need to have face to face meetings

What revenue will schools get off pipeline? How will it be spent?

What is financial plan for District?

How will you maintain these facilities?

Has to be for-sight

How much surplus is the District holding?

Words of Advice

Transparency on the information - #’s can’t change weekly

Realistic #’s on the school population

Concern for health and viability of community

Public housing does not attract tax paying people

Listen to those who are paying the taxes

Simple link on District website

Need to support the school

If the community decides this – we need to support it