

# Experience

**Edina Public Schools | Fall 2019**

## **Construction project will keep ECC working for community, district**

Seventy years is a long time to be on the job but the Edina Community Center is nowhere near retirement. Over time, the building has been repurposed and renamed but has consistently remained a hub for education in the community. An 18-month construction project beginning in early 2020 will address issues presented by the age of the building, improve security and adapt spaces to better meet community and district needs.

In 1949, the building made its debut as Edina-Morningside High School -- the first high school in the Edina community. When East merged with the newer Edina West High School in 1981, the building was renamed Edina Community Center. The space quickly filled with growing community education and after school programming, district offices, and tenants.

Normandale French Immersion Elementary school opened on the second floor in 1992. Add to that the Welcome and Enrollment Centers, the Edina Resource Center, and in 2017 the consolidation of early childhood, preschool and early childhood special education programs under the umbrella of the Early Learning Center. Today, ECC is busy and full.

In all that time, through its many phases, the building's mechanical and plumbing systems have barely been touched and have become increasingly difficult to maintain. Norm Vanderlinde, ECC chief building engineer for six years, has spent considerable time putting "band aids" on problems as they occur, but that is getting harder and harder to do.

"A water pipe breaks and we put a clamp on it, then another leak happens a foot from the clamp and we clamp that," he said. At one point, Vanderlinde kept a "broken pipe diary" to try to trace problems and solve them before the next leak happened. But even then, he and others spent more than a few weekends, holidays and even vacation time dealing with flooded hallways and other malfunctions.

One area needing major attention is the locker room on the lower level, which is part of the project that will begin a year from now. "There is one floor drain for the whole space," Vanderlinde said. "When a four-inch pipe leaks it overtakes the drain very quickly and flows everywhere." In addition to plumbing upgrades, the space will be reimaged to include a larger weight room and improved locker room facilities.

The steam heat system will be updated and the project also includes the remodel of third floor space to make room for Community Education offices to move upstairs. Moving down from third floor to provide easier public access will be West Metro Schools Credit Union, Edina Education Fund, Edina Give and Go. The third floor Board Room will be reoriented for space

efficiency and technology upgrades. Tweaks to some office areas will accommodate staffing changes.

Not all of the ECC's issues can be addressed in the upcoming construction project. Needed roof and brick repair, along with window replacement throughout the building will come later as part of the district's Long-term Facilities Maintenance Plan. But Vanderlinde said the work over the next 18 months will go a long way toward keeping ECC on the job for another 30 years. *Watch the district website for information about temporary relocation of classes and meetings.*

