

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

## **WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

Papio-Missouri River NRD

Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

2021

## Local Planning Team

**Table WCS.1: Westside Community Schools Local Planning Team**

NAME	TITLE	JURISDICTION
<b>ROBERT ARANDA</b>	Director of Student Services	Westside Community Schools
<b>KAMI JESSOP</b>	Director of Special Services	Westside Community Schools
<b>RUSS OLSEN</b>	Director of Facilities	Westside Community Schools
<b>BRANDI PAUL</b>	Director Communications and Engagement	Westside Community Schools
<b>PAUL LINDGREN</b>	Director of Technology	Westside Community Schools

## Location and Services

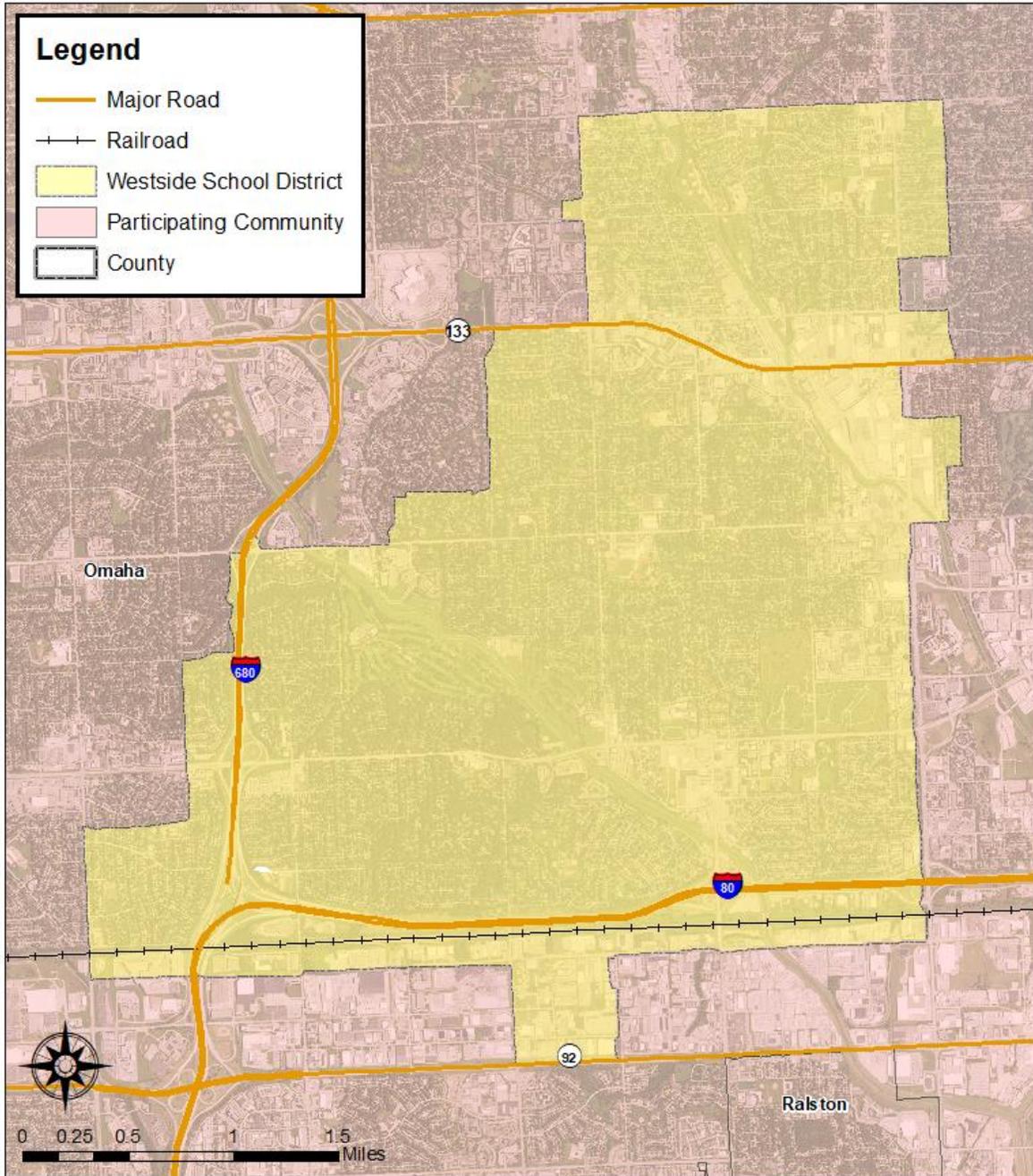
Westside Community Schools is an independent public school system located in the Omaha Metropolitan area. The district has an enrollment of 6,106 students across one high school (grades 9-12), one middle school (grades 7-8), one secondary Career Center (grades 10-12) and 10 elementary schools (grades PK-6). These schools serve the residents living in central Omaha. Ten facilities operate a before and after school age program, which ends by 6pm. Six of those ten facilities operate preschool and extended learning, full-day care for children three to five years old. Two of the six full-day care facilities operate toddler programs for ages 18 months to three years old. Almost 800 students are enrolled in the school-age child care program and nearly 400 children are enrolled in the early childhood program.

While the primary language in the district is English, students also speak Spanish, Mandarin, Nepali, and Somali. English Language Learners make up approximately 2.53% of the student population according to the local planning team. The district provides services to the surrounding Nebraskan and western Iowa areas, including from the Omaha Metropolitan area. Primarily, these students are served through option enrollment and contracted services for students residing at Ambassador pediatric care facility.

## Demographics

The following figure displays the historical student population trend starting with the 2004-05 school year and ending with the 2018-19 year. It indicates that the student population has grown and declined in periods over the past several decades. There are approximately 5,942 students enrolled in Westside Community Schools as of 2019.<sup>i</sup> The local planning team noted the district anticipates a slight increase in student enrollment in the coming years due to growth in the surrounding communities. It is the goal of the district to maintain a student enrollment of 6,100 students.

Figure WCS.1: Westside Community Schools



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Revised: X/X/2020  
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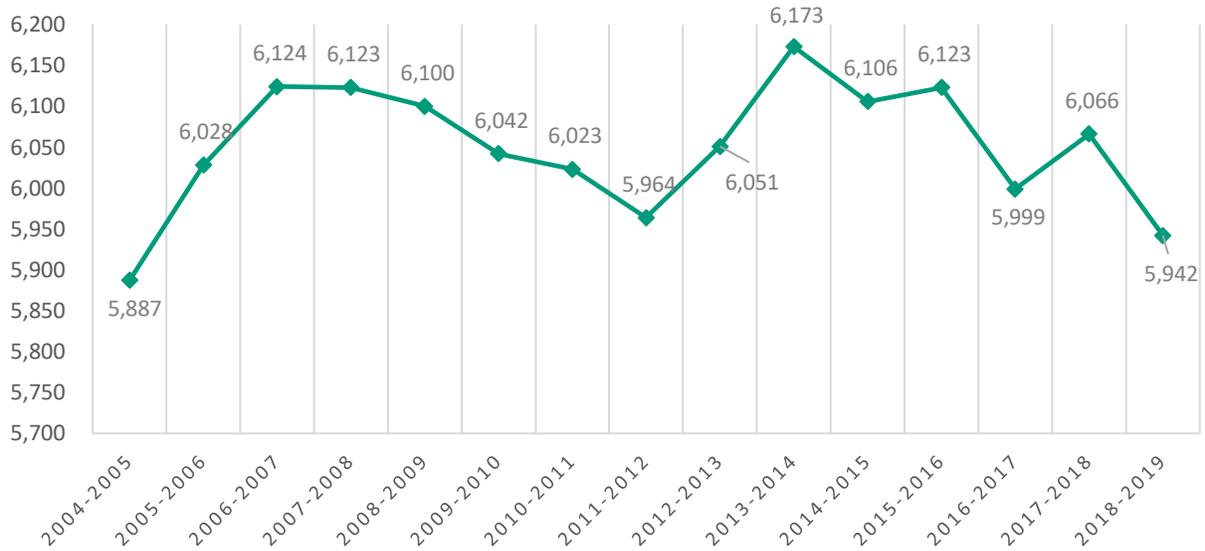
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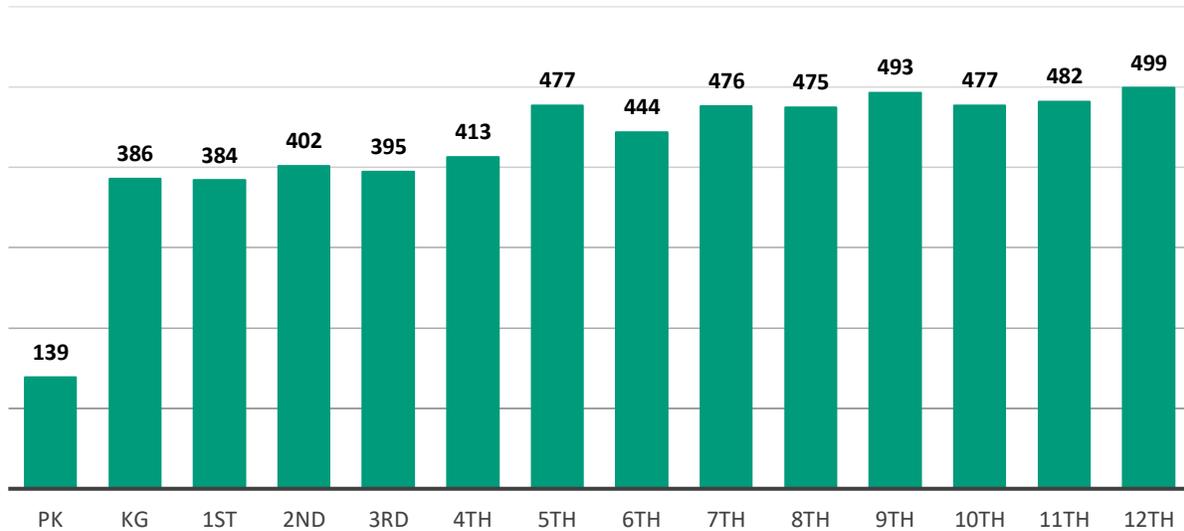
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**Figure WCS.2: Student Population, 2004-2019**



Source: Nebraska Department of Education

**Figure WCS.3: Students by Grade, 2018-2019**



Source: Nebraska Department of Education

The figure above indicates that students are relatively homogenous across grades, with the lowest number of students enrolled in Pre-kindergarten. Lower Pre-K values may be attributed to many young children either not being enrolled in studies or enrolled at other private facilities. According to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), 35% of students receive either free or reduced priced meals at school in the 2018-19 year. This is lower than the state average of 45.21%. Additionally, about 16% of students are in the Special Education Program. These students may be more vulnerable during a hazardous event than the rest of the student population.

**Table WCS.2: Student Statistics, 2018-2019**

	DISTRICT	STATE OF NEBRASKA
Free/Reduced Priced Meals	35.01%	45.21%
School Mobility Rate	3.4%	4.61%
English Language Learners	2.29%	7.16%
Special Education Students	15.68%	15.48%

## Future Development Trends

Numerous changes have occurred in the district over the past several years. In May 2013 the Westside Community Board of Education commissioned DLR to assess the physical condition and functional adequacy of each building based on current design codes and criteria. Concurrently RSP was commissioned to provide a demographics and growth study for the district. In May 2014 DLR issued the final assessment report to Westside Community Schools. The District created a community Task Force in June 2014 and retained Project Advocates to help guide the Task Force through the evaluation process and prepare the final Facilities Master Plan. The original document was meant to be a fluid guiding document helping guide the Facilities Task Force. The proposed three phase plan will move the District's facilities forward into the next several decades and ensure that they will provide the learning environment necessary to achieve the District's vision.

On May 12, 2015, voters in the Westside Community Schools District approved a \$79.9 million bond issue. The bonds are being spent on physical and functional upgrades at all of the elementary schools and Westside Middle School. Oakdale Elementary, Sunset Hills Elementary, Swanson Elementary were completely demolished and built new. Prairie Lane Elementary was 20% renovated and 80% demolished and replaced with a new building. Lastly, Westside Middle School received \$16.7M in upgrades.

A high percentage of district residents do not have school aged children and are considered empty nesters. As a result, much of the existing student population consists of option enrollment students from districts in and around the Omaha Metropolitan area. The option enrollment subset is more volatile than resident students.

Over the past five years, Westside Community Schools has secured many new pieces of equipment with the renovations and new builds at Oakdale Elementary, Sunset Hills Elementary, Swanson Elementary, Prairie Lane Elementary, and Westside Middle School. Additionally, the Facilities Department will continue to make capital improvements at several buildings.

## Critical Infrastructure/Key Resources

### Chemical Storage Fixed Sites

According to the Tier II System reports submitted to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, there are 277 chemical storage sites that house hazardous materials in Omaha, which are likely located near Westside Community School facilities.<sup>1</sup>

The Westside Community School District has a small geographical footprint located in the middle of Omaha. There are 26 fixed chemical storage sites located within the District's boundaries in close proximity to seven facilities. Additionally, there are many chemical storage facilities located just outside the District's boundaries. Facilities at highest risk would be:

- Prairie Lane Elementary

<sup>1</sup> Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy. "Search Tier II Data." Accessed November 2018. <https://deq-iis.ne.gov/tier2/search.faces>.

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- Rockbrook Elementary
- Westside West Campus
- Paddock Road Elementary
- Swanson Elementary
- Underwood Hills Early Learning Center
- WCS Service Center

While no major chemical spills have occurred locally, there are 42 chemical storage sites located in an industrial area between I680 and 72nd Street and from I80 and L Street. Those storage sites are within a couple of miles of Westside West Campus, Paddock Road, Westgate Elementary, and the WCS Service Center. Given the proximity to those locations, potential spills could have a significant impact on school facilities, resources, or transportation corridors used to evacuate.

**Critical Facilities**

The school district operates fifteen facilities. School facilities are listed below, along with information indicating the school’s address, number of students and staff, if the facility is used as a shelter during emergencies (i.e. Red Cross Shelter), if the facility is located in the floodplain, and the presence of a tornado safe room and backup power generator. Critical facilities were identified during the original planning process and updated by the local planning team as a part of this plan update. The following table and figure provide a summary of the critical facilities for the jurisdiction.

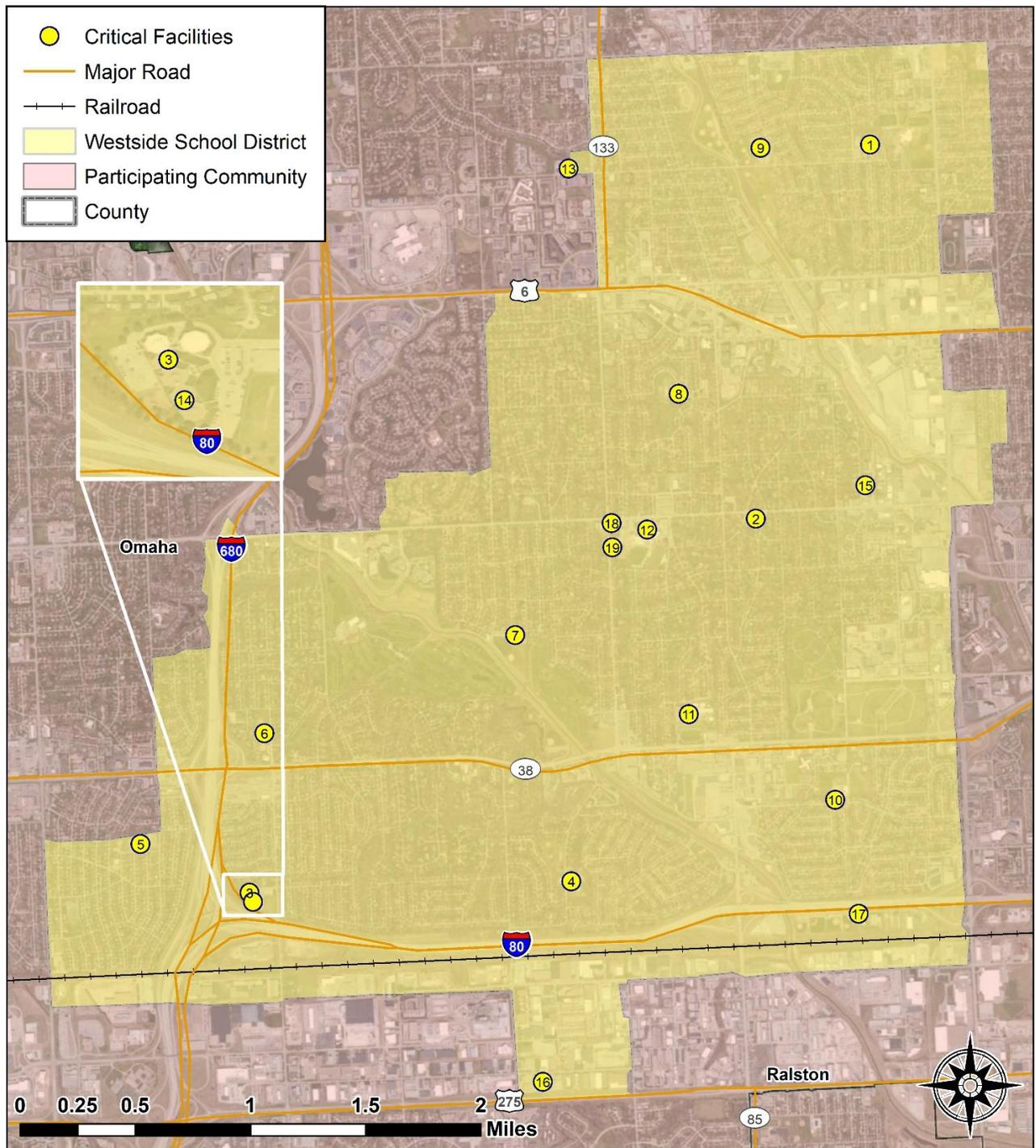
**Table WCS.4: Critical Facilities**

CF #	NAME	# OF STUDENTS	# OF STAFF	SHORT-TERM SHELTER (Y/N)	BACK-UP POWER GENERATORS (Y/N)	LOCATED IN FLOODPLAIN (Y/N)
1	Hillside Elementary School	374	65	N	N	N
2	Loveland Elementary School	284	41	Y	N	N
3	Oakdale Elementary School	290	49	Y	Y	N
4	Paddock Road Elementary School	272	42	Y	N	N
5	Prairie Lane Elementary School	264	42	Y	Y	N
6	Rockbrook Elementary School	272	49	Y	N	N
7	Sunset Hills Elementary School	243	43	Y	Y	N
8	Swanson Elementary School	302	43	Y	Y	N
9	Westbrook Elementary School	397	90	N	N	N
10	Westgate Elementary School	264	60	Y	N	N
11	Westside Middle School	970	142	Y	Y	N
12	Westside High School	1974	340	N	Y	N

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CF #	NAME	# OF STUDENTS	# OF STAFF	SHORT-TERM SHELTER (Y/N)	BACK-UP POWER GENERATORS (Y/N)	LOCATED IN FLOODPLAIN (Y/N)
13	Underwood Hills Early Childhood Learning Center	137	32	N	N	N
14	Westside Career Center	49	18	N	N	N
15	Administration Building	NA	54	N	Y	N
16	Service Center/Equipment Warehouse	NA	28	N/A	N	N
17	Central Kitchen Facility	NA	19	N/A	N	N
18	Alumni House	NA	6	N	N	N
19	1305 House	NA	3	N	N	N

Figure WCS.3: Critical Facilities





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### **School Drills and Staff Training**

The school district conducts the drills and safety procedures according to SRP regulations. The district conducts the following drills:

- Fire – ten annually
- Evacuation – twice annually
- Tornado – twice annually
- Lockdown/Lockout – twice annually

Westside Community Schools requires each school building to have a safety team. The team includes teachers, educational assistants, and administrators. The safety team must attend a yearly District safety meeting. During the yearly meeting all school building teams must review and update school safety plans. Teams also review the SRP and develop building staff development ideas for each building. All buildings are required to provide yearly staff development on the SRP guidelines, fire drills, and tornado drills.

The district shares information with the public through handbooks, newsletters, and website updates. Training with students and staff include lessons, drills, and guest speakers/consultants as available. If hazard events occur, Westside Community Schools initially notifies families and staff with a text message and follows up with additional information and details with an email. WCS will post critical information on social media platforms and all of the building websites. Lastly, WCS has developed an app for the district, allowing for push notifications for all subscribers.

### **Historical Occurrences**

See the Douglas County or City of Omaha community profile for historical hazard events.

### **Hazard Prioritization**

For an in-depth discussion regarding area wide hazards, please see Section Four: Risk Assessment. The hazards discussed in detail below were either identified in the previous HMP and determined to still be of top concern or were added by the local planning team based on the identification of hazards of greatest concern, hazard history, and the jurisdiction's capabilities.

#### **High Winds and Tornadoes**

The local planning team identified high winds and tornadoes as a top concern for the district. On May 6, 1975 an F-4 tornado tore through the Westside Community Schools District, heavily damaging the Westgate Elementary School. Fortunately, classes had dismissed for the day so there were no fatalities or injuries. The school has since been rebuilt. The school district used an independent service to identify the safest storm shelter areas in each school. With the passage of the bond referendum in 2015, all four of the elementary buildings identified in Phase I of the Facilities Master Plan and Westside Middle School have a storm shelter. None of the schools currently have a FEMA certified safe room, however, as the school district builds new facilities, storm shelters will be included in the construction.

The remaining facilities without a storm shelter will need an area (or multiple areas) of refuge installed. This includes: Hillside Elementary, Westbrook Elementary, Underwood Hills Elementary, Westside High School, and. Westside High School - West Campus.

#### **Severe Thunderstorms (includes Hail)**

Severe thunderstorms was identified as a top concern for the district by the local planning team. The combination of high winds, heavy rain, lightning, and hail can and have caused significant damages to district property. Damaging hail is a real threat to the school district. Hail can range

in size from under an inch to over four inches in diameter, and when combined with gusting winds, can do significant damage to buildings, roofs, windows, lighting, HVAC systems, and vehicles. Roofs have been replaced in the past.

On the morning of August 18, 2015, a round of severe thunderstorms brought heavy rain to Omaha, which impacted Westside High School. A roof leak allowed the heavy rain to enter the building damaging ceiling tiles, baseboards, and soaking the carpet. Classes were cancelled for two days due to the damage. Many of the other buildings across the district have newer roofs, although none of them were built using hail resistant materials. In late May of 2018, WCS received \$2.4M in hail damage over all of the existing facilities. The replacement roofing material selected are more hail resistant than previous materials selected. During FY2021, Westside Community Schools has scheduled for three roofs to be completely replaced with hail resistant roofing materials.

The District would be less likely to be impacted by severe thunderstorms if the remaining roof structures were replaced with hail resistant roofing materials. The 10 year facility plan developed by the District for ongoing maintenance needs calls for multiple roofs to be replaced every year.

### **Severe Winter Storms**

Due to previous occurrences, the local planning team identified severe winter storms as a hazard of top concern for the school district. Winter storms can include impacts from heavy snow, ice accumulation, extreme cold, blizzards and winter storms. The winter of 2009-2010 was especially harsh for the region with snowfall totals for the season between 40 and 50 inches. The Christmas Winter Storm of 2009 brought up to a foot of snow or more in many places across the district as well as high winds gusting well over 40 mph. These winds in combination with the heavy snow produced widespread visibilities below a quarter mile and dangerous low wind chills. The school buildings across the district experienced power outages, and a roof caved in from the heavy snow on the Westside High School gym.

Similar to thunderstorms, excess amounts of snow on a roof with poor drainage or snow build up around roof penetrations can cause leaking, roof damage, or roof collapse. In October of 2018, an early fall ice storm caused significant damage to trees and power lines in the Westside District. Some of the buildings have emergency backup generators to help maintain critical operations. Rockbrook Elementary was particularly impacted as the neighborhood was without power for over 24 hours and without an emergency backup generator, mechanical systems began to freeze. Additionally, the winter of 2018-2019 produced over 50 inches of snow. Although the high snow total was 30" above normal, the potential for excessive snow remain every year.

With the successful passing of the Phase I bond referendum in 2015, each of the new elementary schools built have an emergency backup generator to help maintain the critical systems within the building. Future construction projects will include emergency backup generators.

### **Terrorism**

The local planning team identified terrorism as a hazard of concern. For the district, incidents tend to manifest itself in vandalism to schools. Loveland Elementary and West High Schools were both spray painted with obscenities, racial slurs, and swastikas in February 2012. The district estimates that the damages amounted to thousands of dollars with staff spending weekend hours cleaning the vandalism. The following September brought another round of vandalism to Hillside Elementary School. Three rooftop air conditioning units were tipped over and destroyed as well as a classroom window and outside lights were broken. Damages were estimated at \$15,000. While there have not been previous school shooters in the district, a student shot and killed an

assistant principal at a neighboring school district. The district has multiple ways of communicating with parents of students in the event of a lockdown, including voice recorded calls, texts, and emails. Radios and other communication devices have been identified as an ongoing mitigation project as they are replaced or upgraded on a regular basis.

As part of the passage of the bond referendum in 2015, the school district addressed some security concerns. Each of the 10 elementary schools have a secure entrance, utilizing a video intercom system and electronic card readers. Additionally, Westside Middle School and Westside High School each have secure entrances. Westside High School, Hillside Elementary, Sunset Hills Elementary, Paddock Road Elementary, and Westgate Elementary all have mobile security monitoring services from a hired security contractor. These buildings have previously been the target of increased vandalism and as a result of the contracted monitoring, there has been a reduction in vandalism incidents.

Each of the facilities in the District except Westside High School - West Campus have a security monitoring system in place. WCS has contracted with an outside security company to provide the infrastructure to monitor the campus on a 24/7 basis. Additionally, security cameras will be installed.

### **Administration/Capability Assessment**

The school district has a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, 13 principals, two assistant principals, and numerous supportive staff at each facility. The school board is made up of a six-member panel.<sup>ii</sup> The district also has a number of additional departments and staff that may be available to implement hazard mitigation initiatives.

- Director of Student Services
- Crisis Response Team
- Special Education Director
- Staff Development
- Program Coordinator
- Technology Coordinator
- Nutrition Services
- Human Resources
- Communications Director
- Chief Financial Officer
- Director of Facilities
- Supervisor of Custodial Services

The district's Building Services Director would oversee and delegate the implementation of mitigation projects in school facilities, and the district does have the authority to levy taxes and school bonds for specific purposes that maybe involve mitigation projects. Westside Community Schools currently does a number of education and outreach programs. These programs include natural disaster and safety related programs as well as ongoing public education and information programs.

OVERALL CAPABILITY	LIMITED/MODERATE/HIGH
FINANCIAL RESOURCES NEED TO IMPLEMENT MITIGATION PROJECTS	Moderate
STAFF/EXPERTISE TO IMPLEMENT PROJECTS	Limited
COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENT PROJECTS	High
TIME TO DEVOTE TO HAZARD MITIGATION	Moderate

## Plan Integration

Westside Community Schools maintains and reviews their emergency operations plan annually. The plan outlines the chain of command for crisis situations, communication procedures during an emergency, crisis management procedures, safety and emergency precautions and preparedness, and building security. As discussed earlier, the district utilizes the SRP model for training and responding to hazards. The plan discusses topics including medical emergencies, evacuation drills, reunification drills, lock out and lock in drills.

A Facilities Master Plan was completed in March 2015, which outlines and recommends the three phases for renovation and new construction to address facility needs across the district over the next 15 years. Many of the needs identified will improve the safety and security of staff and students for many hazards including: tornados, high wind, severe thunderstorms and winter storms, civil disorder, and terrorism. It is anticipated that work will commence during the summer of 2016.

The Omaha Police Department conducts an annual safety audit. The Director of Student Services will meet with the School Resource Officers four times a year. Additionally, each facility has preventative maintenance checks of the physical infrastructure of buildings, playgrounds, grounds, and drives/sidewalks.

## Mitigation Strategy

### Completed Mitigation Actions

MITIGATION ACTION	WEATHER RADIOS
DESCRIPTION	Conduct an inventory of weather radios at schools and facilities and provide new radios as needed.
HAZARD(S)	Flood, Thunderstorm, High Wind, Hail, Tornado, Severe Winter Storm
STATUS	Weather radios have been purchased and are located in each of the districts facilities.

**Continued Mitigation Actions**

<b>MITIGATION ACTION</b>		<b>BACK-UP POWER GENERATOR</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Provide a portable or stationary source of backup power to redundant power supplies, municipal wells, lift stations, and other critical facilities and shelters.	
<b>HAZARD(S)</b>	All hazards	
<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	\$50,000+	
<b>FUNDING</b>	General budget, HMGP, BRIC	
<b>TIMELINE</b>	2-5 years	
<b>PRIORITY</b>	Medium	
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	Building Services	
<b>STATUS</b>	WCS has installed stationary generators at the following elementary buildings: Oakdale, Sunset Hills, Swanson, Prairie Lane. WCS still has seven facilities needing stationary generators	

<b>MITIGATION ACTION</b>		<b>EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Establish an action plan to improve communication between schools and other government agencies to better assist students and staff during and following emergencies. Establish inner-operable communications.	
<b>HAZARD(S)</b>	All hazards	
<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	Varies	
<b>FUNDING</b>	General budget, Homeland Security	
<b>TIMELINE</b>	2-5 years	
<b>PRIORITY</b>	High	
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	Building Services	
<b>STATUS</b>	WCS has invested into two-way radio communication and has a radio tower allowing for intra-district communication as a redundant option in addition to mobile devices and communicative apps. Additionally, WCS and other metro school districts are working with the Douglas County Threat Assessment Team (DCTAT) to implement Safe2HelpNE, an anonymous reporting helpline for students.	

<b>MITIGATION ACTION</b>		<b>HAZARDOUS TREE REMOVAL</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Identify and remove hazardous limbs and/or trees.	
<b>HAZARD(S)</b>	Severe Thunderstorms, High Winds, Tornados	
<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	\$5,000+	
<b>FUNDING</b>	General budget, Arbor Day Foundation	
<b>TIMELINE</b>	2-5 years	
<b>PRIORITY</b>	High	
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	Building Services	
<b>STATUS</b>	WCS has removed several hazardous limbs and trees at all facilities across the District. Several areas remain needing attention that can only be addressed through a licensed arborist with commercial equipment.	

MITIGATION ACTION		PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Educate staff, students, and parents about hazard vulnerability and mitigation measures.	
<b>HAZARD(S)</b>	All hazards	
<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	\$1,000+	
<b>FUNDING</b>	General budget	
<b>TIMELINE</b>	5+ years	
<b>PRIORITY</b>	Medium	
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	Communications	
<b>STATUS</b>	Each year, WCS communicates to stakeholders about the mitigation strategies. Training with students and staff include lessons, drills, and guest speakers. Training is ongoing throughout the year and will remain as long as there are students and staff in our care.	

MITIGATION ACTION		SCHOOL CONTINUITY PLAN
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Develop continuity plans for critical services including business and IT services in order to increase resiliency after a hazardous event.	
<b>HAZARD(S)</b>	All hazards	
<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	\$10,000	
<b>FUNDING</b>	General budget	
<b>TIMELINE</b>	2-5 years	
<b>PRIORITY</b>	Medium	
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	CFO, IT	
<b>STATUS</b>	WCS has migrated many essential communications services (email, document storage) to offsite redundant cloud storage that would not be impacted by a local hazardous event. The District implemented the GETS (Government Emergency Telecommunications Service) system to provide priority cell phone service. WCS now has a mobile phone bank set that may be deployed anywhere in the district for hazardous event communications. We have demonstrated the ability to safely and effectively transfer essential HR and payroll services to individual home settings in response to COVID-19.	

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MITIGATION ACTION	STORM SHELTERS/SAFE ROOMS
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Design and construct fully supplied safe rooms in school facilities
<b>HAZARD(S)</b>	Tornado
<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	\$200-\$300/sqft stand alone; \$150-\$200/sqft addition/retrofit
<b>FUNDING</b>	Bonds, HMGP, BRIC
<b>TIMELINE</b>	5+ years
<b>PRIORITY</b>	High
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	CFO
<b>STATUS</b>	<p>With the passage of the bond referendum in 2015, all four of the elementary buildings identified in Phase I of the Facilities Master Plan and Westside Middle School have a storm shelter. Although the storm shelter areas are not FEMA rated shelters, they are much improved areas of refuge. However, the lack of shelter areas will remain a concern until all of the buildings have a constructed storm shelter.</p> <p>The remaining facilities without a storm shelter will need an area (or multiple areas) of refuge installed. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hillside Elementary</li> <li>● Westbrook Elementary</li> <li>● Underwood Hills Elementary</li> <li>● Westside High School</li> <li>● Westside High School - West Campus</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Nebraska Department of Education. December 2019. "2018-2019 Education Profile for District: Westside Community Schools." <https://nep.education.ne.gov/Districts/Index/28-0066-000?DataYears=20182019>.

<sup>2</sup> Westside Community Schools. Accessed January 2020. <https://westside66.org/>.