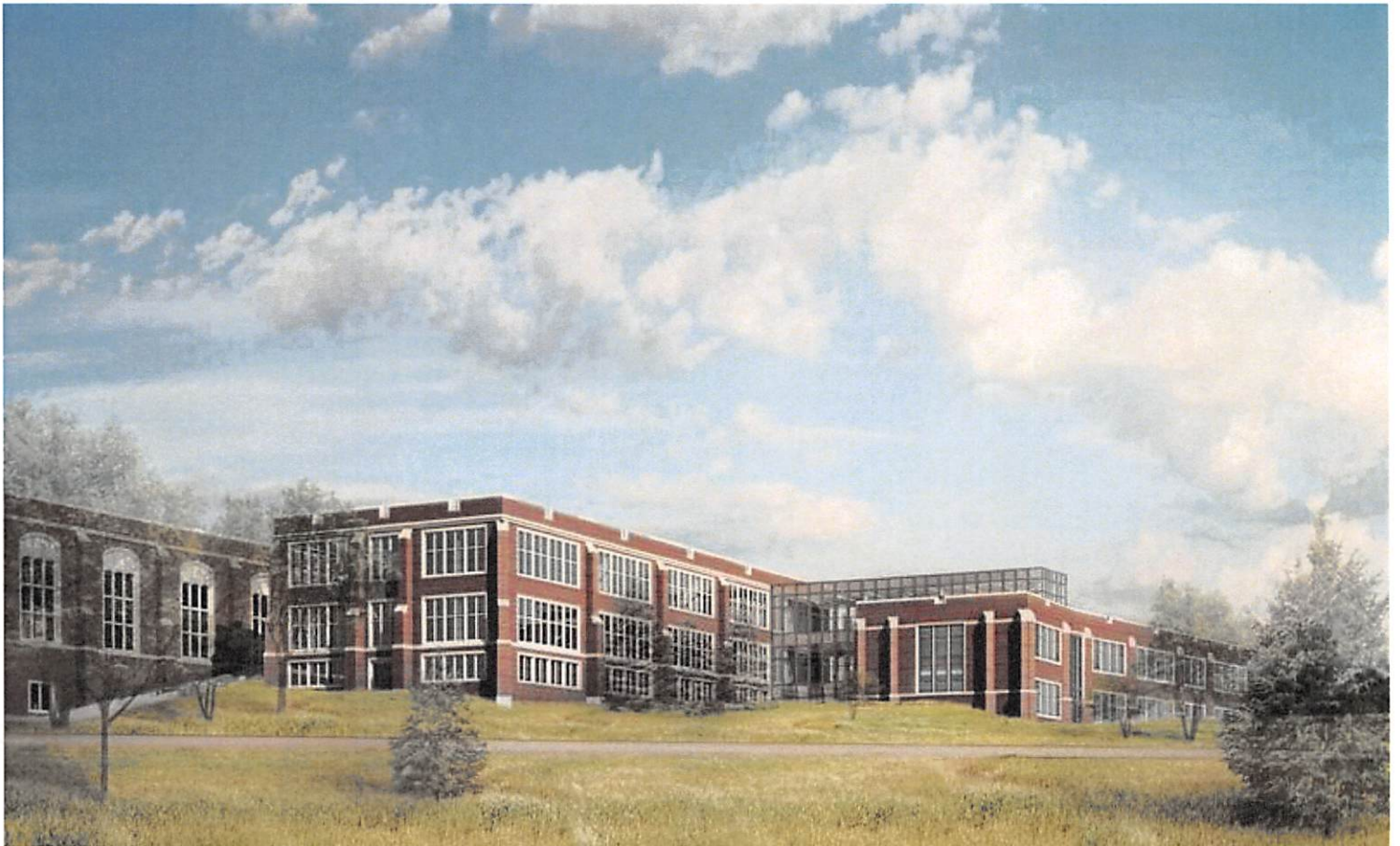


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# Glenbard West addition proceeds despite neighbors' concerns



**A rendering shows plans for a three-story addition to Glenbard West, connected to the main building via a glass walkway.**

*Courtesy of LEGAT ARCHITECTS*



**Katlyn Smith**

Construction of a \$12.2 million addition to Glenbard West High School could begin in August, a long-awaited project for educators but a controversial one for neighbors and alumni who say it will destroy a rare ecosystem.

In a marathon meeting that ended just before midnight, Glen Ellyn trustees approved plans for the addition's

exterior and granted some exemptions to village code despite outcry from more than two dozen people -- all critical of the new science wing.

Through petitions ([https://www.change.org/p/glenbard-west-hs-construction-project-save-honey-hill-build-up-not-out-george-zahrobsky-botanical-garden?source\\_location=petition\\_footer&algorithm=promoted](https://www.change.org/p/glenbard-west-hs-construction-project-save-honey-hill-build-up-not-out-george-zahrobsky-botanical-garden?source_location=petition_footer&algorithm=promoted)) and a bit of theatrics, neighbors urged Glenbard High School District 87 to "build up, not out" into parts of the George Zahrobsky Botanical Garden.

Opponents are particularly upset that a new delivery area with Dumpsters and loading docks would encroach into the garden, named after the former science department chairman who fought to secure the nearly one-acre, wooded site for the school.

They also raised complaints about noise from new utilities. Neighbor Tom Condon even brought along a pancake compressor, jolting the audience when he

turned it on to replicate the noise from a proposed cooling tower. Coupled with two chillers inside, the outdoor tower will provide air conditioning for the entire school and be enclosed on three sides with a retaining wall to minimize noise, architects say.

District officials say the project calls for removing more than 230 trees and shrubs and planting 43 others.

The village did not require a tree preservation plan, but if it did, the total number of fallen trees would be 47 because the village wouldn't count those that are small, dead or diseased.

"It's really almost laughable that we would obliterate that which we can't replace," said Gerould Wilhelm, a botanist who lives in Glen Ellyn.

District architects, however, say the school's northeast side is the most feasible spot for an addition on a campus constrained by a shortage of space and a steep hill. The project will disturb less than half the horticulture garden, which will be re-established with the new plantings, Legat Architects President Patrick Brosnan said in an email Tuesday.

Plans call for a three-story, 28,000-square-foot, wedge-shaped addition on the north side of Crescent Boulevard between Ellyn Avenue and Lake Road. It would include classrooms, labs and a "green" roof, designed with the school's STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) initiatives in mind.

It would mark the first addition to the original, 1920s-era, Gothic-style building since 1963. A glass walkway will connect it to the main building.

Principal Peter Monaghan said the extra space will help relieve overcrowding, with about 2,300 students in a building meant for 1,900.

"This addition is primarily about a learning environment," he said.

Trustees admitted they had mixed feelings about the addition.

"You're getting rid of something you can't replace, and that's not a good thing when it comes to the environment," Trustee John Kenwood said.

Trustee Timothy Elliott, a former Zahrobsky student, said critics had "very, very legitimate concerns" about the

impact on the garden's habitat and legacy, calling his science teacher a "role model."

"On the other hand, District 87 and Glenbard West have brought to us a very, very legitimate concern (that) they need to expand their space," he said.

Despite their misgivings, he and several other trustees said they had limited authority over the project.

"It's not our job to second-guess District 87," Elliott said. "It's not our job to tell them they could have pursued other alternatives. It really is just our job to look at the (zoning) variances."

One of those variances lets the addition stand about 58 feet tall, or 13 feet higher than the maximum allowed.

Trustees Timothy O'Shea and Peter Ladesic urged the district to add more landscaping to buffer utilities and deliveries.

"It needs to operate as a business, to facilitate the safety and this tremendous educational opportunity that it brings us," Village President Alex Demos said. " ... We have an opportunity to put the garbage Dumpsters where the pickups won't involve or will more minimally involve the students."

The project will cost an estimated \$12.2 million, plus \$1.4 million for renovations to convert six old science labs into eight classrooms in the main building. The district will pay for the work through a \$35 million tax-backed loan approved by voters in March 2014.

The district now has to secure a building permit from the regional superintendent and hopes to break ground in August. Construction will take about a year, with students moving into the science labs in August 2016.

Demos, another Zahrobsky student, said the new wing should be named after the former teacher.

"There's no greater mentor that I had at Glenbard West," he said.