



ARKANSAS SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

PROTECTING THE INVESTMENT

Leadership, stewardship, and the financial future of our schools

Jerrold Williams | ASBA Finance Consultant

EVERY SCHOOL BOARD INHERITS BUILDINGS...

Great school boards leave a legacy.

Ribbon Cutting vs. Roof Replacement

THE EASY PHOTO

**Ribbon
cutting**

THE HARD VOTE

**Roof
replacement**

Which gets the quicker “yes”?

Audience Engagement

If a major building system failed Monday, could your board explain the plan by Tuesday?

Raise your hand for “yes.”

Your Largest Investment

\$365,000,000.00

What would it cost to replace every district building today?

Write your best estimate. Do not ask the superintendent.

Deferred Maintenance Compounds

Waiting is a financing decision.



At which stage does your board usually first hear about a problem?

THE ROOF STORY

A stain appeared. The question was never whether the roof would speak again.



What started as water pooling
and then small leaks-



Parents Judge Schools Before They Enter



Before families ask about programs, the campus has already answered a question.

your boards facility Journey



INHERIT (stop?)



PLAN (work plan)

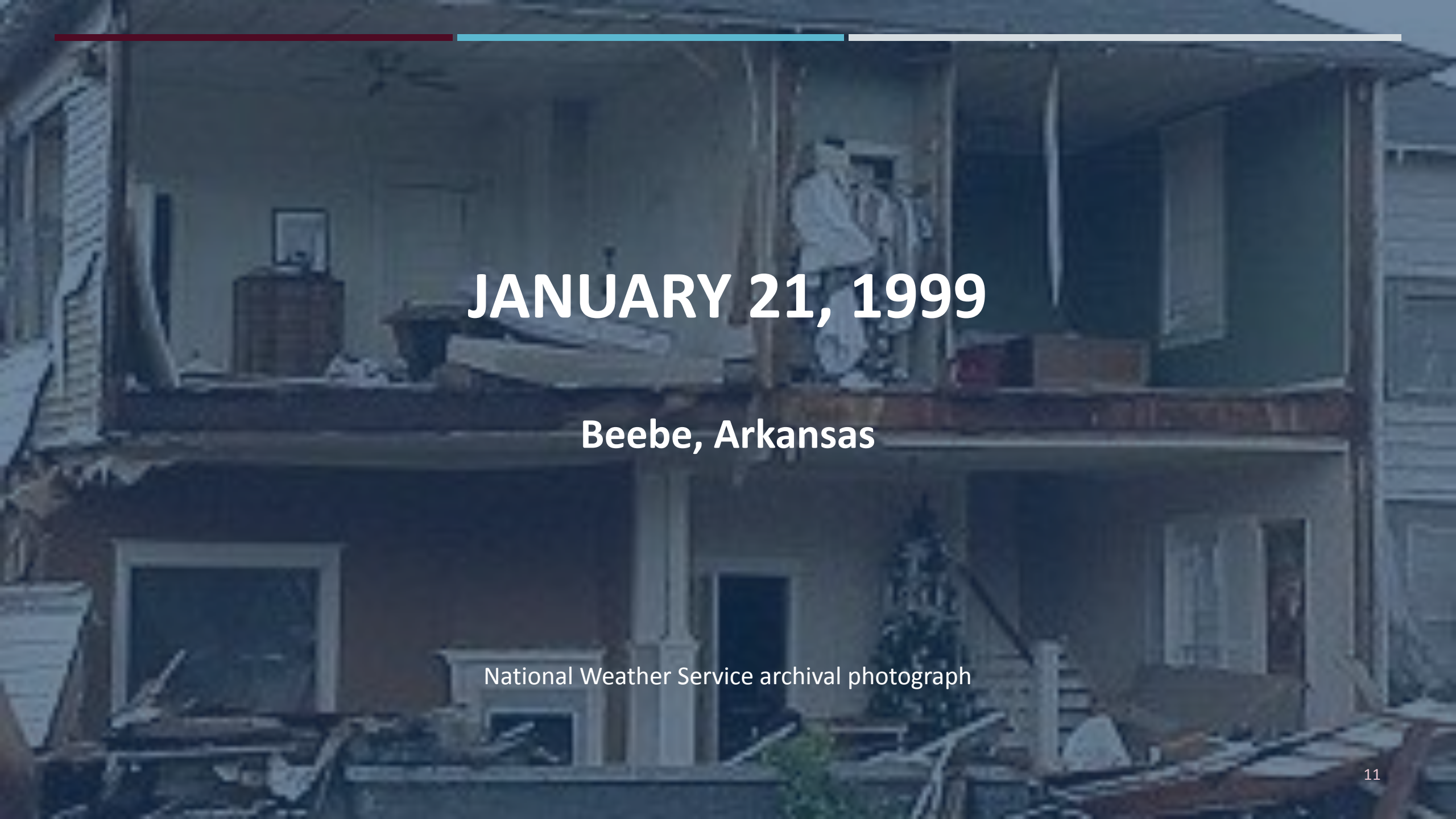


PROTECT (investment)



LEAVE (better)

Four leadership options, does your district make it to #4



JANUARY 21, 1999

Beebe, Arkansas

National Weather Service archival photograph



THE TORNADO DESTROYED BUILDINGS.

It didn't destroy the vision.

Beebe high school gym • National Weather Service archive

THE DISTRICT ALREADY HAD A PLAN

The storm changed the timetable—not the direction.

Planning Didn't Prevent Disaster

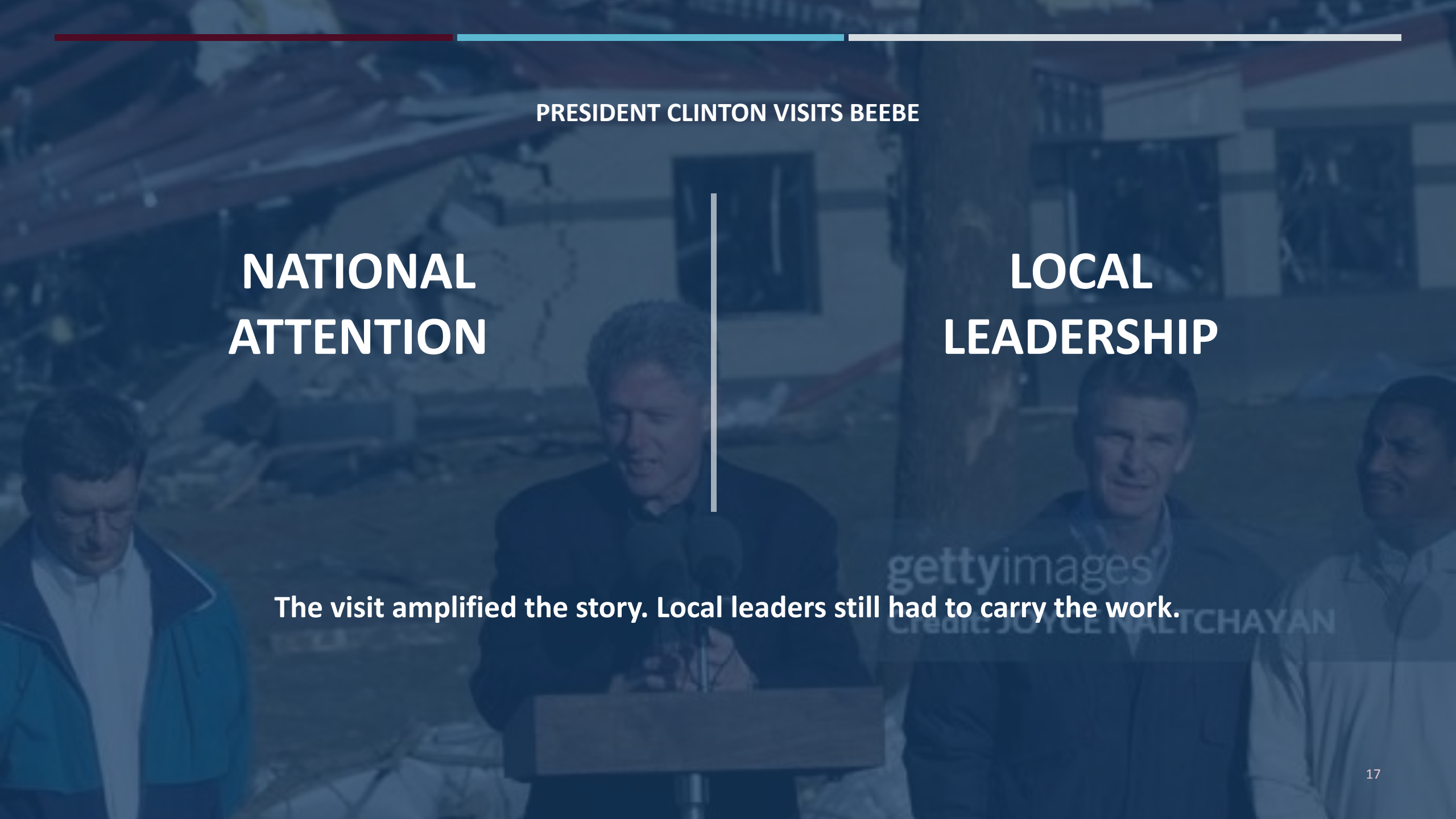
DISASTER

**Still
happened**

PLANNING

**Prevented
confusion**

The plan did not remove hard choices. It organized them.

A photograph of President Bill Clinton speaking at a wooden podium. He is wearing a dark jacket and is looking down at his hands. Behind him is a large, damaged building with a collapsed roof and exposed wooden beams. To his left, another man in a blue jacket is partially visible. To his right, two other men are standing, one in a blue jacket and one in a light-colored jacket. The image has a blue tint and a vertical white line separating the left and right sides.

PRESIDENT CLINTON VISITS BEEBE

**NATIONAL
ATTENTION**

**LOCAL
LEADERSHIP**

The visit amplified the story. Local leaders still had to carry the work.

TEN YEARS OF PLANNING COMPLETED IN THREE

A plan allowed recovery work and long-range progress to move together.

Board Reflection

If a crisis accelerated your facilities plan tomorrow, would everyone know what comes first?

YES, NO, or MAYBE.

Portable Classrooms



TEMPORARY

can quietly become

PERMANENT

What is your district still calling “temporary”?

From Experience...

HOPE

is not a maintenance plan.

PLAN • PROVE • FUND • FOLLOW



TRANSITION INTO FINANCE

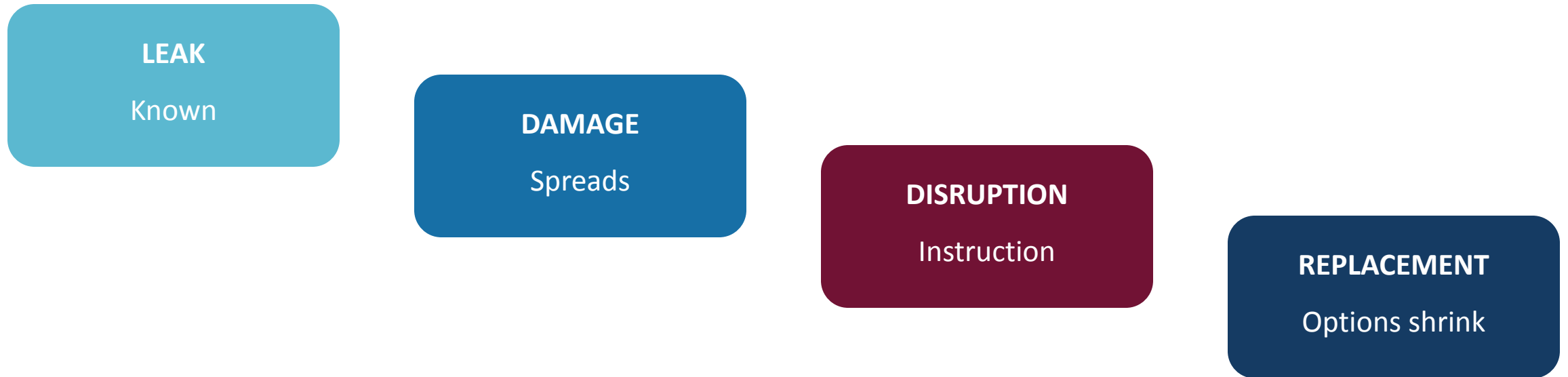
The leadership story explains why planning matters. Next: what waiting costs.



THE FINANCIAL REALITY

Every delayed decision changes the next price.

Deferred Maintenance Is a Chain Reaction



Gym roof, three point line, 2nd quarter

Facilities Communicate Before We Do



The condition is visible before the budget explanation begins.

School Identity Begins on the Campus



Bentonville West High School, Arkansas — authentic school image

First Impressions Become Enrollment Decisions

DRIVE BY



STOP



TOUR

A cared-for exterior earns the next conversation.

What would a family notice after 6:00 p.m.?

Are We Student-Centered—or Employee-Centered?



Who gets the easiest arrival: employees, parents, or first-time visitors?

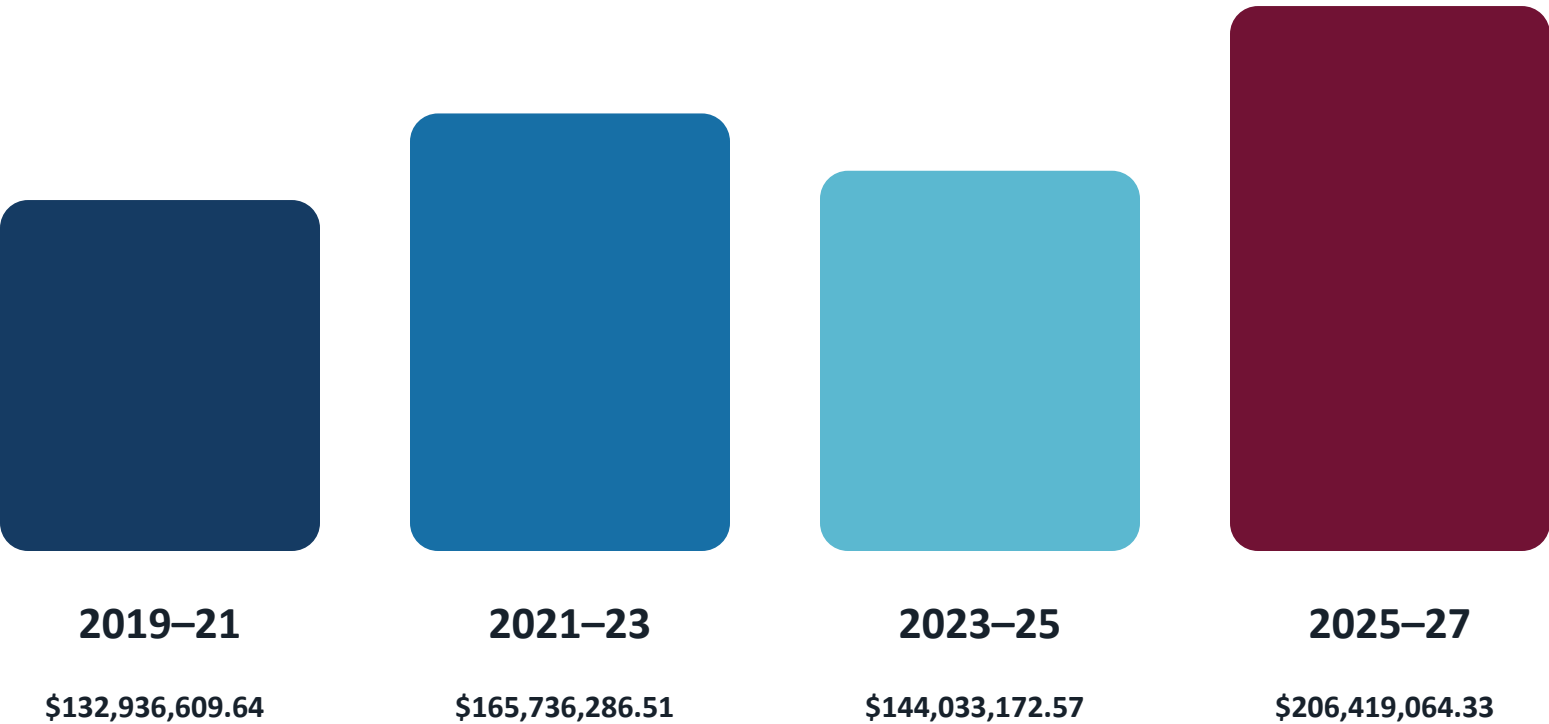
NEW SPACE CREATES OLD OBLIGATIONS

Every ribbon cutting approves decades of utilities, staffing, repair, and replacement.

Arkansas Partnership: More Than \$2 Billion Awarded

\$2B+

TOTAL PARTNERSHIP
FUNDS AWARDED



Four recent cycles shown at right; exact figures are in speaker notes.

Arkansas Projects Rescinded or Rescoped

\$225,502,799.24

Total to date as of July 15, 2026

25-27 Not Funded: The Work Orders Were Missing

29 OF 78

PROJECTS

38%

The need may be real. The work-order trail must prove it.

What Counts as Proof?

**WORK
ORDERS**

PHOTOS

**INDEPENDENT
REPORT**

**EARLY
REVIEW**

Proof is part of maintenance—not paperwork after maintenance.

Mississippi: When Deferred Maintenance Takes Its Toll

\$12.5M

INSURED VALUE

\$38,000

APPRAISAL

Jr. High School

MDE record: roof leaks, damaged electrical systems, moisture, mold, asbestos, and exposed wiring.

VALUE CAN COLLAPSE BEFORE THE BUILDING DOES

The ledger may show an asset. The condition may show a liability.

Louisiana Post-Katrina School Rebuilding

\$1.8B

FEMA reported a lump sum supporting construction of 88 state-of-the-art campuses.

Three States. Three Different Examples.

ARKANSAS

38%

Partnership projects
NOT FUNDED

MISSISSIPPI

\$38K

Appraisal in one
building case

LOUISIANA

\$1.8B

Post-Katrina school
rebuilding

Different systems. Same board obligation: protect the investment.

Board Reflection

Which is harder in your district:
finding the need, *proving* the need, or *funding* the need?

Choose one: FIND • PROVE • FUND

FINANCIAL PREPARATION PRESERVES OPTIONS

Next: thirty years, ten leadership lessons, and the board's own action plan.



Protecting the investment..

The buildings have changed. The leadership lessons did not.

Lesson 1

01

**Every school board inherits buildings.
Great school boards leave a legacy.**

The condition in which you leave your facilities tells future students what your leadership valued.

NO action, is a financial decision

What is your long term plan, maintenance, renovation, campus replacement?

Lesson 2

02

Deferred maintenance is borrowing from future students.

The bill always comes due—and it is almost always larger than expected.

Lesson 3

03

Hope is not a maintenance plan.

Hope does not fix roofs. Planning does.

Periodic campus walk throughs, is not interfering in the day to day operations

The Land That Preserved Options

The district bought land for a long-term project. Two years later, 25% of the property sold for the same amount originally paid for the entire tract, as well as increasing the assessment.

START WITH THE END IN MIND...

“Land, Never going to make more of it”, Otis Williams 1986

Lesson 4

04

Small problems never stay small.

One leak becomes mold. One crack becomes structural damage. One deferred repair becomes a capital project.



Lesson 5

05

Parents see your facilities before they see your test scores.

Your campus is often a family's first measure of district leadership—and its first invitation to return.

What impressions are you giving?



The Sewer and Entrance Built for What Came Next

A sewer system and major entrance were planned to serve multiple future campuses—not only the first project.

Build today so tomorrow does not have to start over.

Lesson 6

06

Master planning does not predict the future—it prepares you for it.

The Beebe story shows how planning, trust, and board–superintendent partnership make decisive recovery possible.

Lesson 7

07

Documentation builds trust.

Good records, inspections, and plans earn taxpayer confidence and strengthen the case for future investment.

Lesson 8

08

Leadership means making the right decision—not always the popular one.

Choose what is right for students and the district's long-term future, even when it is difficult today.

Lesson 9 • Data should inform decisions—and strengthen judgment.

09

**Study the facts. Listen with compassion. Decide with wisdom.
Then govern for the long-term success of every student.**

Lesson 10

10

Leadership is serving the entire community—not just the loudest voices.

The loudest voice does not always represent the greatest need. Serve the entire community—and the generations that follow.

One or two calls, does not a crisis make!

The \$100 Facilities Exercise

Your board has \$100 to protect a campus portfolio. Where does it go?

**Allocate every dollar: PREVENT • REPAIR • REPLACE •
RESERVE**

Make the Tradeoff

PREVENT

\$ _____

REPAIR

\$ _____

REPLACE

\$ _____

RESERVE

\$ _____

Your total must equal \$100.

Your Board's Next 90 Days

1

SEE

Complete one after-hours campus audit

***during the day: lunch and learn, learning walk, etc...**

2

PROVE

Review aging and repeat work orders

*** or lack of work orders**

3

DECIDE

Fund or schedule one postponed priority

*** what will make a difference for kids?**



PROTECT THE INVESTMENT

Plan it. Prove it. Fund it. Follow through.

Jerrold Williams (501) 454-0148 jwilli13@harding.edu

Selected Sources and Data

- **Arkansas Partnership Cycle State Financial Participation History — July 15, 2026**
- Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation — partnership materials
- Mississippi Department of Education — Old Yazoo City Jr. High sale materials, March 20, 2025
- FEMA — Louisiana’s Post-Katrina Recovery, six-year report
- National Weather Service — Beebe tornado archive; Getty Images / Joyce Naltchayan — President Clinton at Beebe after the 1999 tornado
- Personal leadership stories and Beebe tornado account supplied by Jerrod Williams