

School Dist. 127.5 approves HVAC system at Ridge School

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5 has partnered with Studio GC architects to replace the existing HVAC system into a geothermal system for the Ridge Lawn Elementary School in Chicago Ridge.

This work will be done over the summer. Ridge Lawn School, 5757 W. 105th St., is an all-electric building. The building is heated entirely by electric resistance heating. When the building was constructed, ComEd offered Rider 25, which was a lower rate for commercial buildings that were fully electric. Now that deregulation of gas and electric has occurred, this discount has been discontinued, and it is expensive to heat buildings with

electric resistance heating.

The air conditioning system is now over 16 years old. The refrigerant gas is no longer manufactured and is prohibited to use in refrigeration, heat pump and air conditioning systems by the Environmental Protection Agency. The District has until 2020 to replace the refrigerant being used in the older section of the building, on the north side classroom wing, according to officials.

The geothermal system offers several benefits given the current situation and timing. However, the significant one is the utility and electric savings. The utility saving is not intended to provide a fast payback for the

project cost of installation, but it does provide a payback for the cost difference between the two options. This is because replacing the system for a "like" system would yield no utility savings.

The District will realize a utility savings of nearly \$39,000 per year, according to administrators.

"The new geothermal system will allow the district to recapture real dollars annually in utility expenses to better use throughout the district," said Dr. Kevin Russell, superintendent of School District 127.5.

The project is scheduled for this summer and will be ready for the 2019-20 school year.