

Breaking Down the True Costs of New Space

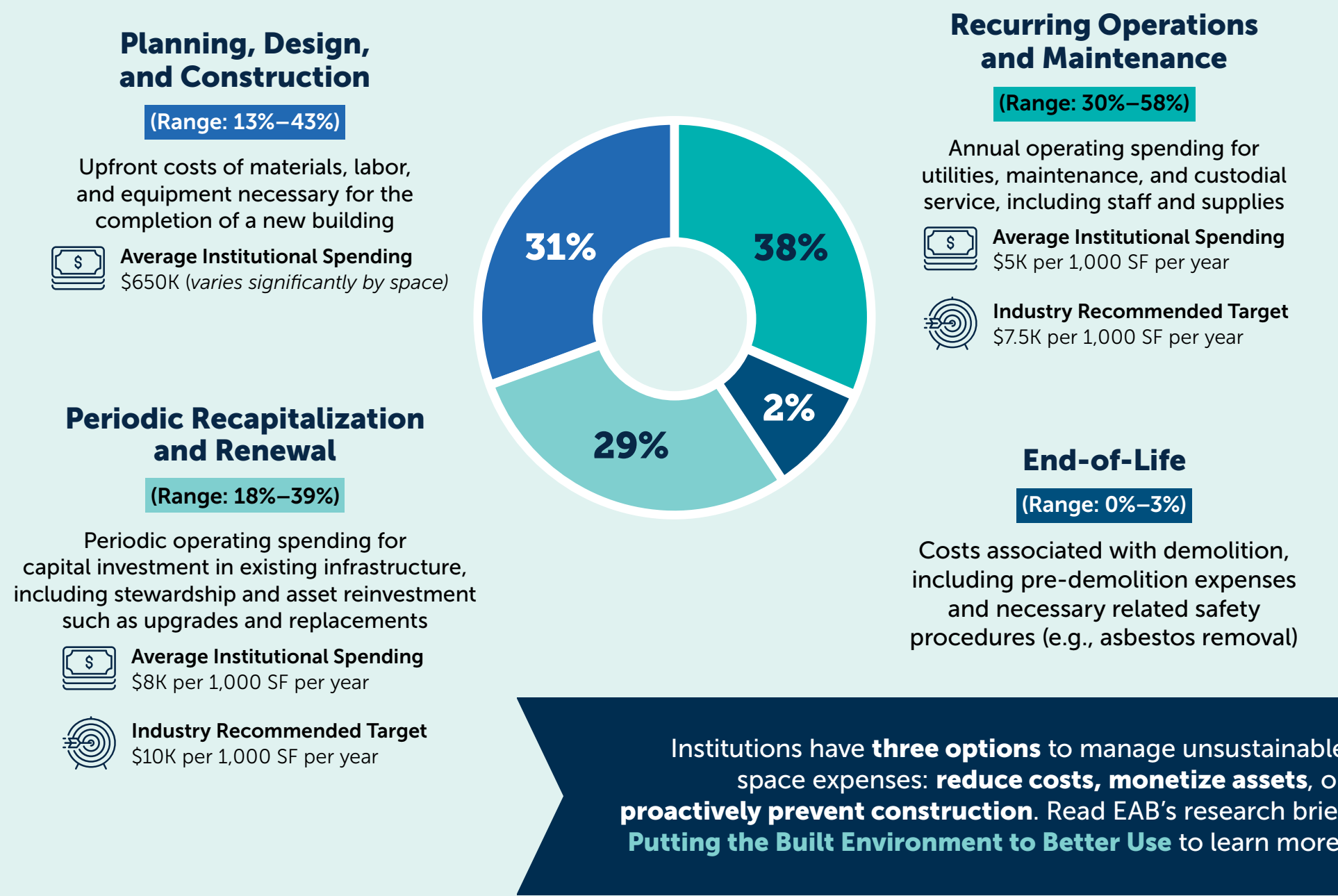
The Overall Cost of Ownership for Every Thousand Square Feet Added to Campus

Higher education is a space-hungry industry: Even accounting for enrollment growth, the average amount of institutional net assignable square feet per student has increased by 110% from 1973 to 2023. This growth has real impact on institutional financial health, not only during construction but over the entire lifetime of use. Below, EAB unpacks the total cost of ownership paid by colleges and universities for adding different types of spaces onto campus.

50-Year Expected Costs of Ownership for 1,000 SF of Space



Average Lifetime Costs of Ownership for 1,000 SF



Methodology: This infographic features EAB’s analysis of industry data on the expected costs for new construction. The average lifetime costs of ownership calculations are based on the average annual O&M and renewal costs per square foot from 2024 as provided by Gordian’s 2025 State of Facilities in Higher Education report, the average cost of new construction per 1K square feet by space type as tracked by EAB, and an assumption of a 50-year building lifespan. This analysis does not account for the expected but unpredictable increase of annual labor and material costs over time or cost variation due to regional markets, variable building materials, or variable building designs (e.g., sustainable buildings often have higher initial costs but lower annual costs).