

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

With November 8th just a few weeks away, the District continues to connect with our residents to inform voters about the proposed referendum questions. Here are common questions that we have been hearing from the community.

Why two questions?

Each question is distinct and requires its own yes or no vote. The spring community-wide survey indicated more than 65% of respondents would support the $17 million “base plan.” Additionally, the majority of respondents would support the Tech Ed expansion. The Board followed the survey results and placed two questions on the ballot. Both questions are important to the District and each requires a separate response. **The Board will only move forward with Question 2 if both questions are approved.**

Why Pursue a Referendum Now?

- The District’s educational and facilities needs are not going away and cannot be addressed out of the annual operating budget.
    - The District’s top priority is providing safe and accessible schools for our students and staff. Updates need to be made to better control visitor access and site circulation.
    - The District’s primary goal is to provide quality educational opportunities. Targeted spaces need to be updated to expand programming and provide hands-on learning opportunities.
- This referendum plan was founded on taxpayer feedback and priorities garnered through a community survey in the spring 2022. Approximately 2/3 of our respondents said now is the time to invest in our school facilities.
- The District’s careful financial planning allows the District to take advantage of a financial window of opportunity of retiring debt *(about $1.00 on the mill rate)*. If not approved, future investments would have a much greater impact on the mill rate.

What’s included in the plan?

The proposed plan will impact all school buildings and the improvements strategically address our most pressing needs while maximizing the use of our existing space.



QUESTION 1 - BASE PLAN

A. Create a two-stage secure entry to better control visitor access at both schools. At the Elementary School, add a secure entry next to the office by expanding the commons/ entry area. At the Middle/High School, add secure entry by renovating underutilized hallway space.

B. Improve ADA accessibility with ramps/elevators and updated restrooms.

C. Reconfigure traffic flow to be more efficient and safer by separating bus from student pick-up/drop-off area.

D. Renovate the original 50+-year-old Tech Ed area (agriculture, woods, metals, and automotive) to offer high-quality programs for high-demand jobs.

E. Create additional elementary classroom space by converting and relocating the existing District office.

F. Educational improvements at Elementary School:
- Add student and staff hallway storage.
- Renovate underutilized areas into learning spaces for both small and large group instruction.
- Add age-appropriate bathrooms.

G. Add two new classrooms at the Middle/High School to support growing programs.

H. Update drainage systems to improve stormwater management on site.

QUESTION 2 - TECH ED EXPANSION

* Expand the Tech Ed (agriculture, woods, metals, and automotive) area by 7,500 square feet to give adequate space for industry equipment and improve programming.

Does Q1 include improvements to the existing Tech Ed classrooms?

Yes, Question 1 includes 15,200 square feet of renovation within the existing tech ed space. The renovation will allow the district to create open and flexible spaces to provide enhanced areas for hands-on instruction and improved sight lines for supervision. If approved, Question 2 will expand the existing space by 7,500 square feet to give adequate space for industry equipment and improve programming. The Board will only move forward with Question 2 if both questions are approved. In that scenario, the tech ed space would be expanded and renovated.

How does enrollment impact the proposed referendum plan?

The improvements in the referendum question were strategically chosen to maximize the use of existing space, not to address enrollment. Demands of today's learners, who will become tomorrow's workers, require individual skill development and collaborative activities. This style of teaching and learning requires different spaces than previous generations of learning.

How is this referendum different from the 2018 referendum?

After the unsuccessful referendum in 2018, the District knew we had to approach the process differently. The district's goal when starting the facilities master planning process was to let community feedback guide the process. Our design and construction partners identified and estimated the cost of our needs. However, the scope of the work was determined by the community through a series of community input sessions and a community-wide survey mailed out to all residents. Additionally, the 2018 referendum asked voters for $36.8 million and increased the mill rate by $3.15.

The assessed value of my home went up this year. Isn't the school getting more taxpayer money?

In short, the amount of taxpayer money going to the School District isn't impacted by your increased assessment. The school portion of your taxes is only one component of your property taxes; others include municipality, county and technical college. The school district only has control over its portion of the overall tax levy.. The State of Wisconsin limits the amount of total taxes a school district can levy through its revenue limit formula, based primarily on enrollment. The only way the school will get additional local tax revenue is by approval of the referendum question(s). The mill rate is calculated by the total taxes levied divided by the total equalized value of the entire district. Each municipality is then allocated their share of the total levy based on their equalized value. This levy is then assessed to the individual property owner based on the assessed value. In summary, the amount levied isn't impacted by the assessment, but each property owner's share of the overall levy is. The District does not get additional funding because of higher property value.

How will the proposed referendum impact my taxes?

Below is the estimated tax increase for the school portion of your taxes associated with each question.

PROJECTED REFERENDUM TAX IMPACT

QUESTION 1: $17M | Mill Rate Impact: $0.63 **QUESTION 2:** $3.5M | Mill Rate Impact: $0.32

	QUESTION 1		QUESTION 2		TOTAL	
FAIR MARKET PROPERTY VALUE	ANNUAL TAX INCREASE *over current levels*	MONTHLY TAX INCREASE *over current levels*	ANNUAL TAX INCREASE *over current levels*	MONTHLY TAX INCREASE *over current levels*	ANNUAL TAX INCREASE *over current levels*	MONTHLY TAX INCREASE *over current levels*
$100,000	$63.00	$5.25	$32.00	$2.67	$95.00	$7.92
$150,000	$94.50	$7.88	$48.00	$4.00	$142.50	$11.88
$200,000	$126.00	$10.50	$64.00	$5.33	$190.00	$15.83

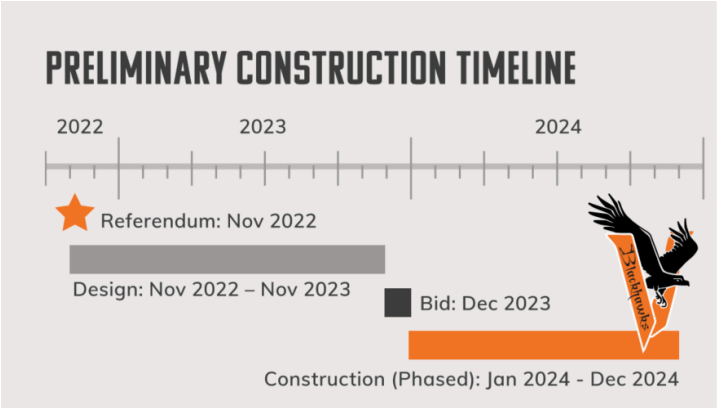
Mill rate based on 2021 equalized valuations; borrowings amortized over 20 years at a 4.75% interest rate. (Provided by Baird)

Why is the tax impact for Question 1 and Question 2 disproportionate?

The District will finish paying off debt from the 2004 referendum in 2024. The new debt payments will be structured around the existing debt payments to minimize the increase over the current mill rate. The impact of Question 2 is greater because there is no future debt retirement to offset the impact, as there is in Question 1.

If approved, when will the project be completed?

If approved, the district will move into design with their design and construction partners. Design will include feedback from staff and administration. The design process is anticipated to take about 12 months. The project will then be competitively bid and construction will start in January 2024 and will take approximately 11 months to complete. The project will be phased and is projected to be completed in December 2024.



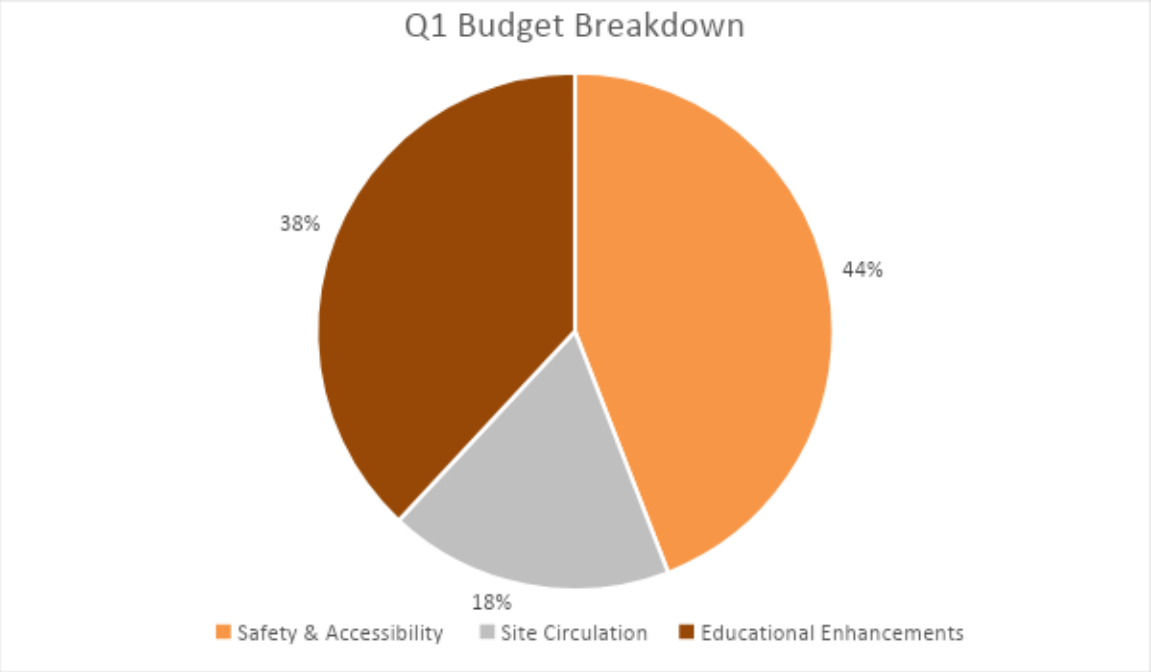
How will cost be controlled?

Funds are allotted within the referendum value for both inflation and contingency. Both are evaluated throughout the design process and adjusted as needed based on bid and market conditions. Detailed logs are kept during design which track changes in budget and scope. The district is then able to make decisions and scope adjustments as needed to remain within budget. Both cost control methods occur within the same timeline to ensure that budget is managed efficiently ahead of construction.

How was the Early Learning Center funded?

There is a vast need for daycare in the community and the District found an opportunity to help address this need. We were able to purchase a former assisted living building using existing district funds, one-time federal money assistance and available grants. The district anticipates being able to cover the renovation of the building without asking for additional taxpayer money through the referendum process. The total all-in-cost is approximately $2 million.

How is the cost broken down in Question 1?



Where can I get more information about voting?

Visit the myvote.wi.gov website to learn more about your voting options. In-person absentee voting starts in the state of Wisconsin on Tuesday, October 25 and closes Sunday, November 6. **However, each municipality has different in-person voting hours so please contact your municipality directly to confirm your options**.



How can I get more information about the referendum?

Check out our website, it is our referendum information center! – QR code

Attend our Referendum Open House. Tuesday, October 25 5:30-6:30 PM Middle/High Commons

Or contact District Administrator Tom Burkhalter. Call – 608.637.1186 or email tburkhalter@viroquablackhawk.org