

HUERFANO BOND INFORMATION AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Background:

A master plan was done in 2019-2020 to determine the needs of school buildings and a plan for future investment.

Huerfano School District applied for and is in line to receive a \$20.8 million Capital Construction BEST Grant to improve our school facilities.

John Mall HS Needs:

- John Mall classroom buildings were built in 1975 and 1976; they are 45 years old. There are many needs for repair and upgrade. The largest items of concern are structural and ventilation, but there are many other needs that are costly to address, including fire alarm, security, roof leaks, and asbestos.
- Wrestling (built 1964), Welding (built 1964) and Woodshop (built 1998) are in separate buildings.
- It is very challenging to provide a safe and secure environment for students when they have to walk outside to separate buildings throughout the day. Doors are left open and we do not have enough supervision to ensure safety.
- 2 separate assessments on the buildings were done, by the Colorado Department of Education and by Wold Architects and Engineers.
- We cannot afford to repair the serious deficiencies in the John Mall buildings without this important help from the State.

Peakview Needs:

- Peakview was built in 2004.
- 2 separate assessments on the buildings were done, by the Colorado Department of Education and by Wold Architects and Engineers.
- Specific needs include:
 - roof replacement
 - repair of floor slab cracking and flooring replacement
 - ADA accessibility sitework
 - security, access control and phone improvements
 - partial exterior door and window replacement
 - mechanical system improvements

Gardner Valley School Needs:

- Gardner's needs were also assessed by CDE and Wold
- There are facility needs throughout the building. The highest priorities are:
 - roofing
 - window replacement

Master Plan Guiding Principles:

- We commit to be visionary and innovative.
- We support an open and transparent process.
- We are community driven and informed.
- We are fiscally responsible.
- We are prudent with resources and facility decisions, and consider long-term financial impacts to the school and community.
- We appreciate operational and environmental sustainability.
- Huerfano School District graduates will be equipped with skills to enter the next phase of their life, whether it is toward a career or college.

- Our facilities should have appropriate physical and technology systems to support today's learning.
- We will prepare students for high-demand careers and relevant occupations.
- We will foster partnerships with organizations, businesses, industry and higher-ed in the area.
- Huerfano School District and Facilities are here to support students and their families.
- We strive to provide safe, healthy and secure environments for our students, staff and families.
- We shall support life-long multi-generational learning and adult education.
- We continue to support our culture of strong Academics, Athletics and all areas of the Arts.
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The Bond:

- Is a total of \$16,368,228
- John Mall:
 - The portion of the bond going toward the 7-12 school is \$11,742,728
 - Replace John Mall high school with a new building that will be for grades 7-12. Bringing 7th & 8th graders to the HS will give them better access to electives and CTE programs. This will bring all of the classes into one building for safety and security.
 - This is 36% of the cost of the school. This is a required match to the BEST grant.
- Peakview:
 - The portion of the bond going toward Peakview is \$3,625,000
 - This will address the highest priority needs identified
- Gardner Valley School:
 - The portion of the bond going toward Gardner Valley is \$1,000,000
 - Address the highest priority needs identified

The Cost to Taxpayers:

Residential tax impact:

\$50,000 market value home= \$48.32/year, or \$4.02/month, or \$1.00/week

\$75,000 market value home= \$72.47/year, or \$6.04/month, or \$1.51/week

\$100,000 market value home= \$96.63/year, or \$8.05/month, or \$2.01/week

Commercial tax impact :

\$100,000 of market value = \$391.34/year, or \$32.61/month

Agricultural tax impact:

Flood Irrigated= \$1.76/Acre

Meadow Hay Land= \$1.37/Acre

Grazing Land- \$0.08/Acre

7-12 and Peakview Proposed Site Diagram:



Q and A

What are the top reasons we need a new school?

- The health and safety of students is our primary concern
 - John Mall building structure is failing, leaning and cracking. In many places it has been reinforced through the years with plates or pins to hold it together. It is not safe.
 - The HVAC systems don't provide enough fresh air, which causes illnesses to spread from poor indoor air quality.
 - With so many separate buildings, it's very difficult to monitor security and control the entrances and exits of each building.
- John Mall has poor lighting, poor acoustics, and no fresh air circulation for most of the school year. Classrooms are outdated and not designed to incorporate current and future technologies necessary to prepare students for the workforce or college.
- Two recent assessments determined that we would need at least \$8 million in repairs to John Mall over the next three years, to address the most critical needs.
- Our staff have been doing an amazing job maintaining our facilities over the years, but we simply can't keep up with needed repairs.
- Due to these budget realities, every year we get further and further behind as building systems continue to age. Our limited funds force us to apply partial and short term fixes to ongoing issues that need to be resolved. The District cannot afford to continue maintaining and repairing the facilities.

Why now?

- We are in line to receive a massive grant from the CDE, and this is our chance to act! The State will pay for 64% of the cost of a new school! This State fund is running out. If we don't take this opportunity, another deserving school district will.
- We will never be able to make this type of investment in our facilities on our own.

If I don't have kids in school, how will I benefit?

Our schools are, and will remain, the center of the Walsenburg and Gardner communities. Many community members comment on how much they enjoy attending school activities although they no longer have children in school. A safe healthy school means a safe and healthy community.

Construction activity in the area will mean a significant boost to the local economy. Beyond construction, quality schools attract families to our area and improve the economic viability of the entire region. Long-term, this will benefit everybody in the community.

What will the new 7-12 school look like? Will the community have input in the design process?

The school has not been designed yet. We have a total square footage and a cost estimate that was reviewed by an architect, a school construction owner's representative, two different large general contractors, as well as the capital construction department at the Colorado Department of Education.

It is very important for the district to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the design of the new school. A Design Advisory Group will be formed to assist in the design of the new school and broad-based participation of the community will be encouraged. We expect the design process to be engaging, fun and help us develop a new school that we all can be proud of for generations to come.

Peakview and Gardner Valley will also ask community members to provide input on the work being done at their schools.

How long will it take to pay the bond off?

The bond will be paid in 25 years (a requirement of the BEST program), but the new building will be designed to meet industry standards of 60 years or more.

Why can't we just renovate our existing facilities? What would that cost be?

We began a Facilities Master Planning process in the fall of 2019. The facilities master planning committee consisted of parents, community members and staff. A community engagement meeting in January allowed residents to express their opinions about their desires concerning the various options for upgrading our facilities with a bond and through the BEST program.

The total estimated cost for repairing the urgent needs at John Mall was over \$8 million, and that would not fix everything- it would just be another band-aid. With the help of the BEST program, by building new we can comprehensively address all of our facility needs at John Mall- and make the most critical repairs at Peakview and Gardner.

Are there any operational savings with a new school building?

John Mall incurs in over \$200,000 a year on maintenance and repairs. Building an efficient and effective building will eliminate a big portion of utility and maintenance operating expenses that come with a failing 45 year old building; these savings could instead be used for direct educational purposes.

What is the BEST program? Where does BEST money come from?

BEST legislation was passed in 2007 for the express purpose of assisting school districts like ours in upgrading their school facilities up to a minimum standard of safety and functionality. Without this BEST funding, Huerfano would never be able to build modern school facilities like what is currently being proposed; all we could do is make repairs to our already aged schools.

BEST funding comes from a portion of the proceeds (50%) of rent and royalty income – mostly from minerals – collected by the State of Colorado on State Trust Lands. In addition, a portion of lottery and marijuana proceeds are allocated to the BEST program so the funds are not a tax. Our BEST Grant funds never have to be repaid.

There are 2 kinds of ways that school districts can ask for help from tax payers:

- 1- Mill Levy- for expenses like staff, teachers and classroom materials
- 2- Bond - for construction and facilities

As a taxpayer, am I paying taxes on Huerfano and La Veta Schools?

No. Taxes are only paid where you own property. Huerfano County has two school districts so you pay taxes depending on where you live.

Is enrollment declining or staying steady at Huerfano?

Over the last 10 years, Huerfano Re-1 has experienced stable enrollment.

Don't the tax revenues from marijuana cover this?

Marijuana taxes partially fund the BEST program. That means that if we are awarded the grant a portion of the funding will come from marijuana taxes. These however are capped and the State cannot pay for the full amount of school projects. A matching contribution is always required and this bond measure is to cover our local contribution.

What is the timeline for these projects?

The bond will only go into effect when we receive the BEST grant. Our project is on the list of projects to be funded by BEST this year and it is considered to be a back-up project. If enough projects ahead of ours fail to pass their bond election, our projects could be funded and completed by the fall of 2022.

If we receive BEST funds next year, the projects will be complete the fall of 2023.

Where will tax money go if we don't get the BEST grant?

If we don't get the BEST grant we won't use any tax dollars for any projects. Our taxes are contingent on getting the grant. We simply cannot build a new school and fix our current buildings on our own.

How will classes and faculty be impacted by the projects? Staff reductions?

To the contrary. If we are able to save on maintenance we could potentially have more teachers and more class offerings.

The district will own the same amount of schools and although it envisions a 7-12 grade configuration, administrative, kitchen and teaching staff will be the same.

Where will kids have class during construction?

The new school will be built next to the existing building, so kids will be able to continue to attend school throughout the construction period. Once the new school is built, the old one would be demolished and parking, play and outdoor learning areas will be built.

What is plan B?

If we are unable to pass the bond, we will continue what has been our only plan; repairs as needed. Band-Aid after Band-Aid. Our concern is the dire structural and ventilation deficiencies in our aging high school. We believe our kids and teachers deserve healthy, safe schools, especially during these times.