

VOTE

OCT 24

Dickinson PUBLIC SCHOOLS REFERENDUM

FAQs



1. What are the current challenges?

High School:

- Inadequate air quality
- Lacks adequate, secure, and controlled entrance
- Lack of mass notifications and security alarm systems
- Currently, there is not enough space to accommodate the number of students at lunch and to efficiently get them through the lunch line, causing some students to eat in other spaces such as their cars, or hallways, or not eat at all. According to DPI, the cafeteria is nearly 4,000 SF undersized.
- Learning spaces are outdated and lack collaborative spaces to accommodate today's learning programs
- Pod structure does not create the most efficient and modern classroom space
- Many interior finishes including flooring cabinetry, and fixtures are over 60 years old
- Several spaces do not comply with ADA compliances
- The heating system is past its life expectancy

Elementary Schools:

Lack of adequate, secure, and controlled entrances

2. What are the proposed projects in this referendum?

- Renovate the high school and build an addition to the high school
- Classrooms
- Cafeteria
- Main Entrance
- \$35M in capital maintenance upgrades to include:
 - Roofing Repairs/Replacement
 - Fire Protection Systems
 - HVAC Replacement
 - Electrical Upgrades and Improvements
 - Intercom and Clock/Bell Systems
 - ADA Accommodations
 - Safety and Security
- Enhance safety and security in the Elementary Schools

3. How is this referendum different from past votes in 2019?

- The October 24, 2023 referendum differs because it only includes instructional space, cafeteria, and secure entrances.
- Due to the scaled-down proposed project and the CTE Center, DPS was able to decrease the ask to taxpayers from the 2019 referendums in the amounts of \$115 million & \$89 million to the 2023 ask of \$69 million.

4. What has taken place since the 2019 referendums?

2019 - Voters rejected two facility referendums for Dickinson Public Schools

As District leaders, we acknowledge and respect this decision. Since that time, we worked with various community groups to better understand what options we should explore to address the following challenges.

2020 - Partnerships with DSU & Community

Utilized DSU, Virtual learning, CTE, School to Work, and the middle school to help with space constraints at high school.

This has moved 325 students off of the DHS campus.

2021 - Public Capital Maintenance Committee Formed

2022 - Southwest Area CTE Center

DPS worked with state and community partners to create a state-of-the-art CTE Center without raising taxes

2023 - Reconfigured Plan.

Due to the scaled-down proposed project and the CTE Center, DPS was able to decrease the ask to taxpayers from the 2019 referendums in the amounts of \$115 million & \$89 million to the 2023 ask of \$69 million.

2023 - Community-Wide Survey

Surveyed the community to inform on current needs and test if there is support for a \$69M bond.

2023 - District Calls for \$69M Referendum

The Dickinson Public School Board proposes a \$69 million bond on the October 24, 2023, special election ballot to fund a renovation and addition at Dickinson High School and enhance safety and security in the elementary schools.

5. Why did DPS build a Middle School versus a High School in 2017?

- DPS held three public forums where community members overwhelmingly supported, through a survey, a new middle school.
- The survey asked community members if they preferred a new elementary school, high school, or middle school.
- Remodeling the High School into a middle school would have been cost-inefficient due to H.S. spaces (gym, CTE spaces, weight room, science labs, etc.) not being needed in a middle school.

6. Was the community survey scientific?

A scientific survey run by a third party went out to every residential household in the district, with over 1,500 responses received. The turnout was high enough to determine results with a +/- 2.6% margin of error.

7. Is school enrollment growing?

- Incoming classes are larger than those graduating, furthering the classroom space challenges at the high school. An addition would allow for small immediate growth and help plan for long-term growth.
- Dickinson High School is at capacity and will continue to see growth. The Southwest Area Career and Technical Education Academy will provide some relief, but growing enrollment will continue to challenge the building.

8. How much would the proposed projects cost?

\$69 million to update and construct an addition to the high school and construct secure entrances at all of the elementary schools. The district is holding reserves for contingency needs due to the variability of the construction climate and any unforeseen immediate needs that could arise.

9. What is the tax impact?

The estimated tax impact on a residential value of \$100,000 would be \$11.59 monthly. You can find more information and a tax calculator on our website at

<https://www.dickinson.k12.nd.us/our-district/2023-bond-referendum>

10. How do I find my true and full value or taxable value?

- Please see the example tax statement for help finding the true and full value and/or taxable value on your tax statement.
- You can find your property's True and Full Value on your 2022 Real Estate Statement or by visiting the Dickinson City Assessor website, Stark County Assessor website, or Dunn County website.

11. When will the tax impact be reflected in my taxes?

The tax impact would be effective January 1, 2025. If the project is approved you will receive your first tax statement reflecting the change in the Fall of 2025.

12. How many years will it take to pay back the bonds?

School referendum bonds are typically financed for 20 years. The amount listed would be the tax impact in the first year. We cannot guarantee that the tax base will increase, but if the District continues to grow, it will cause the fixed tax burden of the referendum to be spread between more property owners, which would lower the tax impact for individuals.

13. What is the impact on the community if the bond referendum is not successful?

- 81% of DPS costs are personnel.
- \$60 million in deferred maintenance and system upgrades over the next ten years has been identified.
- The District receives \$1.6 million on the building fund levy, which would equal \$16 million over the next ten years.
- Programs and activities would be considered for elimination.
- The impact of the loss of the DPS programs is difficult to measure from an economic and household perspective.
- Strong educational systems have an impact on the growth and health of the communities they serve.

14. What do the security upgrades at the elementary schools entail?

- Constructing physical secure entrances that would include an updated push-to-talk system and utilize assigned electronic keys
- Relocating central offices to achieve a physical secure entrance
- Continued expansion of security cameras
- Improve the intercom system and identify mass notification communications options
- Install new fire panels

15. Once the bonds are paid off, does the levy drop off?

- Yes, the levied 30.92 mills will drop off and the debt will be retired, meaning it will no longer be owed.
- DPS will pay off the remaining bonds for the Dickinson Middle School in 2035. Currently, the levied amount for the DMS bonds is 27.7 mills for 2023-2024, which is around \$100 annually in property tax for a home valued at \$100,000.

16. Why not renovate Dickinson High School?

- Modernizing electrical and mechanical systems is expensive without improving the school's ability to deliver education. Old age and numerous additions have created vast accessibility and code compliance issues that are not remedied inexpensively. The cost to renovate the building is beyond 75% of the cost to build new.
- The introduction of Special Education programming (IDEA, 1975) added 13 additional programming categories & medically fragile students. The following are ways that education has changed and continues to evolve.
 1. Special Education needs are growing at a rapid pace
 2. Federal requirements for Title I Program (reading and math instruction)
 3. Speech and Language Therapy is growing, needing additional space and staff.
 4. Physical Therapy and Sensory room space needed for students.
 5. Additional space is needed for the technology requirements and classes.
 6. Addition of Career Pathway Program and growth of Career/Technical Education/Ag Ed.

17. If the referendum passes, how long would it take to complete the work at the high school and elementary schools?

Currently, the estimate for project completion is 3 years.

18. Where would the addition to the high school be located?

The District is relying on the professional work of the engineers and architects to determine the exact location of the addition. At this time the District will not be committing to a specific area on the current DHS footprint due to the costs this work would entail.

19. Would the District incur a cost to relocate any students during the construction process?

No, students and staff would remain in the existing building while the addition is constructed.

20. Who is allowed to vote?

To vote in North Dakota, you must be:

- A U.S. citizen.
- At least 18 years old on the day of an election.
- A North Dakota resident.
- A resident in the precinct for 30 days preceding the election.
- Residents who meet all of the requirements above and live within the school district precinct may vote.

21. When and where can I vote?

Voting will take place on Tuesday, October 24th, 7 am-7 pm at Heart River Elementary, Jefferson Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, Prairie Rose Elementary and Dunn County Courthouse.

22. Is it possible to cast an absentee ballot?

Yes, absentee voter applications are available from both Dunn County and Stark County. Voters may contact Dunn County (701) 573-4448 or Stark County 701-456-7630

23. Who can I contact to ask questions?

Please contact Stephanie Hunter Email: shunter@dpsnd.org Phone: 701-456-0002 Ext. 2214

24. With the Southwest Career & Technical Education Academy open, why do you still need space?

The bond referendum solves two problems at DHS—the first being system updates. Many of the systems such as HVAC, electrical, fire, etc. are aged and need to be replaced. The cost to update these systems is significant and can't be covered by the current building fund.

The second problem is increasing enrollment. The current building is insufficient in space. The CTE center has drastically reduced the space needed at DHS. The bond referendum would provide additional space for core classes.

25. Does the ask align with the needs or is the ask just what the district thinks the community will support?

The needs for the district could have included items such as an elementary school but the survey made clear that the community was not supportive of the cost therefore the proposed plan is in alignment with the highest needs and the community's support from the survey.

26. What is the population vs. capacity of district buildings? Is the elementary at a healthy capacity level?

- To remain at a safe capacity level, the elementary grade levels would need to stay under 350 students. Currently, the grade level sizes average 328 students, kindergarten-5th. The maximum capacity for elementary students is 2,160.
- The middle school capacity is 1,050 students. The current population is at 877 for 6-8th

27. What happens if the fire marshal simply closes a portion or all of the building?

Contingency plans for programs and activities are currently being evaluated. We have open lines of communication with these agencies and will continue to work with them to update the contingency plans.

28. What is the age of other class A schools throughout ND? Is DHS the oldest?

Of the 17 Class A High Schools in North Dakota, there are five high schools that were built before DHS. (Central HS GF - 1882, Valley City - 1919, Bismarck HS - 1934, Fargo North - 1966, Red River GF 1968) All 5 have gone under significant renovations and additions.

29. How do you accommodate for future growth?

By building flexible space and creating partnerships within the community we have expanded our capacity within the district. We are building as much classroom space as we can to align with the community's support.

30. What is the projected interest rate for the bonds?

3.8%, however, the bonds will be sold on the public market.

31. What is the average life expectancy of a High School building in ND?

The structure of modern buildings is designed to last 50+ years however ongoing and continual maintenance is required for any facility.

32. How does the bond offset the deferred maintenance need in the district? Will the \$69 million project allow the district to stay on top of current/ future maintenance?

The bond will allow \$35M of maintenance needs to be addressed enabling the current building fund to align with the 10-year maintenance plan for the rest of the district's facilities.