



# Bond Referendum Question & Answer Document

## Election Day: November 3, 2015

*Moorhead School District residents will vote November 3, 2015, on a bond referendum that, if approved, will provide \$78.2 million toward construction and renovation of school buildings.*

### What is a bond referendum?

A bond referendum seeks voter approval for the school district to sell general obligation bonds, which provides money for building improvements. Bond referendum dollars cannot be used for operating expenses of a school district such as salaries.

### How will these facility improvements impact learning?

Our students deserve safe, inviting and inclusive learning environments that include:

- Secure entrances at all K-12 schools,
- Additional classroom space for our growing K-8 student enrollment,
- Learning spaces for active learning, group activities and projects,
- Buildings designed for age-appropriate learning experiences, and
- Performing arts space for both student and community use.

### What is included in this bond referendum?

If the Nov. 3 referendum is approved, the \$78.2 million bond would provide for growth and learning by:

- Adding secure entries in all school buildings;
- Creating adequate and appropriate learning environments for students from early childhood through grade 8;
- Building a K-4 elementary school for 750 students;
- Building a grades 5-6 school connected to Horizon Middle School



to create a shared grades 5-8 campus, reducing transitions for students;

- Building an auditorium for school and community use at Horizon Middle School; and
- Returning Probstfield Center for Education to an early childhood and district education center focused on the needs of our youngest learners.

### How were the projects in the bond referendum developed?

To accommodate this growth and provide our students with the 21st century learning experiences they need to succeed, we engaged in an extensive community-driven facilities planning process for the first time in 14 years.

The facilities task force process created a 10-year Facilities Master Plan for the district to address current and future needs. This plan led to the Nov. 3 bond referendum to invest \$78.2 million in renovation of existing schools and construction of new space.

### Why are these facility improvements needed?

Moorhead is a growing community, and our K-8 schools are over capacity. Our community and the school district have been growing steadily since 2005 and that growth is projected to continue. In the decade from 2009 to 2019, total K-12 enrollment is projected to grow by nearly 1,200 students. In the past five years, nearly 1,300 housing units have been constructed in Moorhead.

Enrollment growth and all-day kindergarten have increased classroom sections, creating a shortage of K-5 classroom space, impacting support program space, and eliminating flexible learning space. Since 2009, K-5 classroom sections have increased by 27 sections – from 95 to 122 sections for 2015-16.

On a temporary basis, the district has created classrooms

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# 2015 Bond Referendum Question & Answer Document

from spaces designed for large group and active learning. Probstfield Center for Education has been converted to a kindergarten center. Community Education and Early Childhood Family Education have been moved out of the district education center to leased space. These are not long-term solutions to the enrollment growth.

## How is this bond referendum different from a levy referendum?

Operating levies provide school districts money to be used for day-to-day expenses such as staff salaries, supplies, heating expenses, transportation and activities programs. These are the funds that it takes to run and operate schools. A helpful way to understand the difference is that *bonds are for buildings*, while an operating *levy is for learning*.

## When was the last time voters approved a bond referendum for the district?

District residents approved a building bond referendum election in March 2002. The funds from that bond issue were used to renovate schools and to build two new buildings.

The new and newly renovated schools helped to halt a downward enrollment spiral by spurring significant housing growth. Efficiencies in operating costs were realized by moving from 11 district buildings prior to 2005 to seven buildings.

## What has been the recent enrollment trend for Moorhead Area Public Schools?

In 2001, district leaders projected that enrollment would dip below 5,000 students by the 2009-10 school year. The recent housing growth, caused in part by the renovation of existing schools and the building of two new schools in 2004, has created significant student enrollment growth.

Over the past two years the district has added more than 540 students.



From 2009 to 2019, total K-12 enrollment is projected to grow by nearly 1,200 students.

## Didn't district residents pass an election in 2010 to support the schools?

District residents approved a levy referendum in 2010. The levy funds have been used for five priority areas:

- to provide a source of stable and predictable revenue to avoid further reductions;
- to preserve and improve class sizes;
- to repair and replace aging technology equipment;
- to restore reductions that had been made to world languages;
- to provide increased access to early childhood programs and Kinder Plus (K+).

The addition of these funds prevented further reductions in staff, services and programs.

## Will staff members have input on the design of the schools and rooms?

Staff members will be selected to meet with the architects on planning the spaces, similar to 2002 when design teams worked with the architects.

## Who will have input on the programming in the schools?

If voters approve the funding request, the district will form implementation task forces and will seek applicants (teachers, parents, students, etc.) to serve on those task forces.

## The district, when reconfiguring buildings 12 years ago, moved away from a grades 5-6 building to move toward a middle school model. Are we returning to this model?

The K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade level configuration was determined by a community task force in 2001-2002. As the recent Facilities Master Planning Task Force considered all the alternatives using existing buildings to find a fiscally responsible way to meet the needs of a growing student enrollment, the task force determined a 5-8 middle

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# 2015 Bond Referendum Question & Answer Document

school model would meet the needs of the district. In spring 2015, the Middle School Implementation Team recommended a separation of 5-6 and 7-8. Students will be on the same campus for grades 5-8.

## **How was the elementary school site selected?**

Several sites were considered and researched in conjunction with the City of Moorhead. The district has selected a property southeast of Horizon Middle School that provides the needed acreage and is near city infrastructure, which made it a preferred option.

## **Will the district be hiring security for the elementary schools?**

Currently there is no plan to add personnel at the elementary sites, but the district is planning to enhance the security at each elementary school through improved entrances and an improved check-in procedure for parents/guardians and visitors.

## **How will art instruction be taught under the new grade configuration?**

With the increased student enrollment, the district anticipates having an art teacher at each building. District wide implementation teams will determine the programs and grade levels for each school. If the referendum is not approved, then elementary art classrooms may need to be converted to general education or special education classrooms, which would impact art instruction at the elementary level.

## **How will the Spanish Immersion Program be affected?**

The Spanish Immersion Program will remain at Ellen Hopkins Elementary for grades K-4. Consideration is being given to expanding the K-5 Spanish Immersion Program to include grade 6. Previously teacher licensure requirements have limited the expansion of the program to the middle school level. Sixth grade licensure would allow for this expansion.

## **What space is provided at Horizon Middle School for special education students?**

The plan provides for centralized learner support spaces, space for gross motor activities, and support/resource rooms integrated into each house.

## **Will the Horizon auditorium be designed for multi-purpose use and have all it needs for high quality theater productions?**

The music and theater arts staff will work with the architects in the design of the performing arts space to meet the district and community's needs.

## **What will happen to the existing softball and baseball fields at Horizon?**

The early planning phase of the grounds includes the relocation one baseball diamond, the possible addition of a 12-court tennis complex, and an addition of a parking lot to help with accessibility of the relocated facilities.

## **What is being considered at the high school level?**

The high school is phase two of the facilities master plan. A community task force will be formed to develop a plan for the future of Moorhead High School, including consideration of a second high school or alternatives.

## **What is being considered for Red River Area Learning Center, Outreach and Adult Basic Education?**

These programs are all in leased space and are not part of this bond referendum. The district's goal is to find a district-owned facility for those programs. One of the district's 2015-16 strategic priorities includes a goal to develop a plan for the programs in leased space by February 2016.

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### Does the bond referendum vote require a super majority or a simple majority to pass?

Minnesota school district ballot measures require a simple majority to pass.

### When and where do I vote?

Any eligible voter living in Moorhead Area Public Schools, Independent School District 152, may vote at the polling place or combined place designated for the precinct in which he or she resides. These polling places are for school district elections in Independent School District 152 that are not held on the same day as a state-wide election.

Polling sites will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Nov. 3, 2015. *See the locations to the right.*

### How can a person vote by absentee ballot?

To vote by absentee ballot for the Nov. 3 election, voters must complete and return an application for an absentee ballot. Download the absentee ballot application from [www.moorheadschoools.org/referendum](http://www.moorheadschoools.org/referendum) and return it to the Election Clerk at Moorhead Area Public Schools, 2410 14th St. S., Moorhead, MN 56560. Absentee ballot applications also are available at the school offices.

### What happens to my property taxes if the referendum is approved?

If voters approve the school funding request, taxes would increase on the average-priced home (\$150,000) by approximately \$9 per month. Agricultural homestead property valued at \$750,000 would see an increase of \$30 a month. Agricultural non-homestead land valued at \$5,000 an acre would see a tax increase of \$4.16 a year per acre.

Commercial/industrial property valued at \$500,000 would see taxes increase by \$64 a month. However the tax impact will be either zero or less than that because of the Border



## Polling Places for November 3 Special Election

#### If you live in:

- Moorhead City Ward 1 (Precincts 1 and 2)
- Georgetown City
- Georgetown Township
- Kragnes Township
- Moland Township
- Morken Township
- Oakport Township

#### You will vote at:

*Combined Polling Place 1:*  
St. Francis de Sales Church  
601 15th Ave. N.  
Moorhead, MN 56560

#### If you live in:

- Moorhead City Ward 2 (Precincts 3, 4, 5a and 5b)
- Glyndon Township

#### You will vote at:

*Combined Polling Place 2:*  
Moorhead Youth  
Hockey Arena  
707 SE Main Ave.  
Moorhead, MN 56560

#### If you live in:

- Moorhead City Ward 3 (Precincts 6a, 6b, 7 and 8)
- Holy Cross Township
- Kurtz Township
- Moorhead Township

#### You will vote at:

*Combined Polling Place 3:*  
Bethesda Lutheran Church  
401 40th Ave. S.  
Moorhead, MN 56560

#### If you live in:

- Moorhead City Ward 4 (Precincts 9, 10, 11 and 12)
- Elmwood Township
- Sabin City
- Alliance Township

#### You will vote at:

*Combined Polling Place 4:*  
Lutheran Church  
of the Good Shepherd  
4000 28th St. S.  
Moorhead, MN 56560

#### If you live in:

- Dilworth City

#### You will vote at:

*Polling Place 5:*  
Dilworth Community  
Center  
709 1st Ave. NW  
Dilworth, MN 56529

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Cities Disparity Credit. See [www.moorheadschoools.org/referendum](http://www.moorheadschoools.org/referendum) for the impact on other property and the tax calculator.

## **What happens if the referendum is not approved?**

If voters do not approve the school funding request, the district won't have the funds to create additional building space to meet the needs of our growing enrollment. Class sizes would increase due to continued growth and crowding with less space dedicated for art, music and early childhood programs.

## **How will new and remodeled schools affect the community?**

Any new construction, either residential or commercial, that develops as a result of this proposal will grow the community's tax base reducing the tax burden on other property taxpayers. New and renovated schools should draw increased residential growth, positively impacting student enrolment and state funding for the school district.



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Prepared and paid for by Independent School District 152, Moorhead Area Public Schools, 2410 14th St. S., Moorhead, MN 56560.

