



## November 6 Referendum FAQ

OREGON SCHOOL DISTRICT

The purpose of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is to share responses to common questions we've received about the November 6 referendum. If you have a question not reflected in this document, please contact Brian Busler at [bsb@OregonSD.org](mailto:bsb@OregonSD.org) or 835-4003.

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### Growth & Population Projections

#### Why are we focusing on growth right now?

The Oregon School District is projected to grow by 2,000 resident students by the year 2030. This growth has already started, and within the next two years (by 2020), Rome Corners Intermediate and the elementary schools will be overcrowded. The Oregon Middle School will approach capacity by 2025. Planning now will ensure that our schools can accommodate the additional enrollment and preserve the values that we have come together as a community to create for our schools and students.

#### How were the growth projections created?

The Oregon School District assembled a Growth & Population Task Force in early 2017. The task force was charged with studying growth and the impact on current facilities. The committee met for more than a year and worked with consultant Mark Roffers, an expert in school district growth and enrollment projections. The forecast was created based on the following data: demographic and enrollment trends, residential development proposals and housing market trends. We are already seeing growth in our schools. Between January 2017 (when the study projections were created) and April 2018, enrollment has increased by nearly 100 students.

#### Who was on the Growth & Population Task Force?

The task force included school administrators, teachers, a school board member and community stakeholders.

## Where is our district growing?

The majority of the growth to the Oregon School District is coming from the northern edge (Hwy 14 corridor) and western parts of our district.

## How did the 2014 referendum help with growth?

The 2014 referendum focused on safety and security, learning environments and maintenance and efficiency. Approximately 64 percent of funds from the 2014 referendum went to improvements at Oregon High School. As a result, the high school can accommodate growth through 2030.

## Was this growth expected?

Growth in the Oregon School District historically has been relatively steady until the last two years. Recent new housing developments and growth throughout Dane County have created a trajectory of predicted growth that's higher than expected.

## Is growth unique to Oregon?

Growing populations are prevalent in most school districts within Dane County. Other Dane County school districts that are preparing for referendum to address population projections include Middleton-Cross Plains and Monona Grove.

## Impact of Growth on Oregon School District Children

### What does this growth mean for our children?

Our current K-8 schools cannot accommodate the increased number of students. Within two years, Rome Corners Intermediate and our elementary schools will be overcrowded. Oregon Middle School will approach capacity in 2025. Our objective is to plan proactively and take action now so that we can plan for growth in a way that prevents our children from experiencing overcrowding, which negatively impacts learning.

### What happens if we don't take action right now?

If we do nothing to plan for increased enrollment, our children will experience overcrowding in schools, especially at the K-8 levels. Examples of how other districts have handled overcrowding include:

- Increasing class sizes
- Some subjects will not have dedicated classrooms (e.g. classes on carts)
- Non-classroom spaces used as classrooms (e.g., hallways, storage)
- Temporary classrooms

### **Will there be a cost if action is not taken now?**

Yes. There will be costs both educationally and financially. Doing nothing will result in overcrowding in schools and classrooms, which creates a challenging learning environment for students. There will also be financial costs to create interim solutions and modify current classroom spaces or rent temporary classrooms. Finally, the costs of building in future years will continue to rise, at an estimated 6 percent increase each year.

### **How can we preserve reasonable school and class sizes for our children?**

The Oregon School District prides itself on the strong values that we came together with our community to create years ago. Our goal is to preserve these values as we grow. Proactively planning for this change and taking action now will enable us to avoid overcrowding in our schools and maintain the values of our school district.

### **Is growth happening because of open enrollment into our district?**

No. Growth projections take into account resident students, or those who live within Oregon School District boundaries.

### **How many students are currently open enrolled in our District?**

There are approximately 300 students (less than 1 percent) who are open enrolled in the Oregon School District. Once students are open enrolled into our District, they are allowed to continue through graduation.

### **How will open enrollment be handled moving forward?**

Open enrollment is considered on a case-by-case basis as space permits. Open enrollment will likely be minimal in the coming years due to enrollment projections.

## **The Proposed Plan**

### **How will the school district address increased student growth?**

The board selected a two-phased plan to address the more than 2,000 students who are projected to come into the District over the next 10-12 years:

- Phase I (2018 Referendum): Build a K-6 grade elementary school that will open for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Phase II (Future): Build a 6-8 grade middle school (estimated to be needed around 2024) and reconfigure elementary and intermediate schools for grades

K-5 and the middle school for grades 6-8.

### How did the school board select the plan for moving forward?

The Oregon School District board engaged in an extensive process of studying growth data and gathering community input before selecting an option. In early 2017, the board assembled a Growth & Population Task Force. The task force worked with MDRoffers Consulting, an expert in population projections for school districts, to conduct a growth projection study.

Next, a building capacity study was conducted based on growth projections. Using all of this data, the task force created approximately 15 different options and presented the five most viable to the school board for its consideration in February 2018. After reviewing the options, the board narrowed them down to four possible options to share with the community.

Seven focus group sessions were scheduled for community members to share feedback on the four options. All community members who were not able to attend a scheduled session were invited to share feedback individually. A full report on the community feedback was shared with the school board in May 2017. After reviewing data, community feedback and land options, the board selected a two-phased approach: (1) build a new elementary school by 2020 and (2) build a new middle school (around 2024).

All task force and projection reports are available at [www.OregonSD.org/referendum](http://www.OregonSD.org/referendum).

### Did the community have input into the proposed plan?

Yes! Community members were involved in the Growth & Population Task Force. There were also more than seven community focus groups, through which all community members were invited to share their feedback on plan options. Main themes from the focus groups that were incorporated into the plan included:

- *Build for today and tomorrow:* Take care of overcrowding now, but also plan for future growth.
- *Allow for future flexibility:* A two-phased approach provides flexibility to address immediate needs and also evaluate and modify the plan as needed.
- *Preserve our District's values:* The plan enables the District to continue delivering high-quality education consistent with our values (e.g., reasonable class sizes).

### **Where will the new K-6 elementary school be located?**

The K-6 elementary school will be located in the northern part of the Oregon School District (within the Fitchburg municipality), where significant growth is projected. It is a best practice to locate schools close to where students live. Doing so integrates schools into neighborhood communities and reduces transportation costs.

### **Why does there have to be a referendum in November 2018?**

Per state law, the building of new schools requires a voter referendum. Due to the urgency of elementary schools and RCI reaching capacity within the next two years, the school board has decided to present two referendum questions in November 2018 to potentially have a new building ready to accommodate students by 2020.

### **Why should we build a new school instead of adding onto existing schools?**

Some of our buildings have the capacity for additions, while others do not. Those that do have capacity include Brooklyn Elementary School and Oregon Middle School. We are not seeing the growth near Brooklyn, and so that option is not viable.

Although it is possible to renovate Oregon Middle School, doing so would create a very large building, with more than 1,000 students. A building of this size does not coincide with the values of our district and community came together to create. A very clear theme from our focus group research was that the community wishes to preserve reasonable school and class sizes. Adding on to schools would create both larger schools and class sizes.

### **Why isn't the high school impacted by the increased enrollment?**

Planning and improvements made to Oregon High School since the 2014 referendum have made that building able to accommodate increased enrollment without major updates through 2030.

### **Why does the proposed plan change grade configuration?**

The plan proposes to change grade configuration once Phase II is implemented (estimated to occur around 2024). The new grade configuration would include grades K-5 in elementary schools, grades 6-8 in middle schools and grades 9-12 in the high school.

In its comprehensive review, the task force examined about 15 options, some of which included retaining the current grade configuration of (K-4th grade elementary, 5-6 grade intermediate, 7-8 grade middle school, 9-12 grade high school). Retaining the

current grade configuration would require building three new schools in the next 10-12 years, rather than two.

### **Who will attend the new school?**

If a new K-6 school is supported and opens in the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 425 students would attend the school. Attendance details would be determined based on a combination of factors, such as primary residence, family preference, etc. Families would not be forced to transition their students from one elementary school to another.

## **Oregon School District Boundaries**

### **How far does the Oregon School District extend?**

The Oregon School District covers 88.1 square miles (56,384 acres), of which the Village of Oregon is about four square miles. OSD extends beyond Brooklyn to the south and almost to Hwy 12/18 (beltline) to the north. The District includes all or parts of eight municipalities (Oregon, Fitchburg, Dunn, Rutland, Brooklyn, Montrose, Blooming Grove and Union) and three counties (Rock, Dane, and Green).

All who live within the District's boundaries pay taxes to the Oregon School District. A downloadable map is available at [www.OregonSD.org/referendum](http://www.OregonSD.org/referendum).

### **Can we create new District boundaries to reduce the growth?**

No, this is not an option. School districts do not create boundaries. All who live within the boundaries are Oregon School District students.

### **Why doesn't Fitchburg have its own school district?**

The City of Fitchburg has never had its own school district. The city is divided into three school districts: Oregon, Madison and Verona.

### **Will Fitchburg ever create its own school district?**

At this point in time, Fitchburg does not have plans to create its own school district and will not have one for the foreseeable future.

### **How many students live in the northern part of our school district?**

To date, more than 700 students who live north of McDonald's (City of Fitchburg or Town of Dunn) are enrolled in the Oregon School District. This represents about 17-18 percent of our students.

## Cost & Tax Impact

### Who will pay for the new school?

All residents who live within a school district boundary pay taxes to that district. In other words, all who live within the eight municipalities of the Oregon School District pay their proportionate share of taxes to OSD.

### What impact will a referendum have on taxpayers?

Below is a chart that estimates the tax impact for both referendum questions. As of October 1, 2018, equalized value was reassessed and resulted in a lower tax impact. The numbers in the chart have been updated to reflect this change. For this reason, numbers in the chart will not match the numbers in previously printed materials.

#### Estimated Tax Impact - As of October 1, 2018

<b>MAXIMUM PROPERTY TAX INCREASE</b> over the 2017/2018 rate	<b>QUESTION 1</b> \$44,900,000 (\$0.56 per \$1,000 of Property Value)		<b>QUESTION 2</b> \$2,118,487 (\$0.66 per \$1,000 of Property Value) beginning in 2020/21	
	Per Year	Per Month	Per Year	Per Month
\$100,000 of property value	\$56	\$4.67	\$66	\$5.50
\$200,000 of property value	\$112	\$9.33	\$132	\$11.00
\$300,000 of property value	\$168	\$14.00	\$198	\$16.50
\$400,000 of property value	\$224	\$18.67	\$264	\$22.00

Projections provided by PMA Securities, District Financial Advisor, and are based on conservative growth and interest rates assumptions.

#### Previously Estimated Tax Impact (displayed in materials printed prior to October 1)

<b>MAXIMUM PROPERTY TAX INCREASE</b> over the 2017/2018 rate	<b>QUESTION 1</b> \$44,900,000 (\$0.65 per \$1,000 of Property Value)		<b>QUESTION 2</b> \$2,118,487 (\$0.69 per \$1,000 of Property Value) beginning in 2020/21	
	Per Year	Per Month	Per Year	Per Month
\$100,000 of property value	\$65	\$5.42	\$69	\$5.75
\$200,000 of property value	\$130	\$10.83	\$138	\$11.50
\$300,000 of property value	\$195	\$16.25	\$207	\$17.25
\$400,000 of property value	\$260	\$21.67	\$276	\$23.00

Projections provided by PMA Securities, District Financial Advisor, and are based on conservative growth and interest rates assumptions.

## What is included in the \$44.9M referendum question?

This referendum question includes construction of a new school that will address overcrowding in grades K-6.

Approximately \$32M of the total is the projected construction cost. The remainder includes:

- Infrastructure costs (e.g., road and utility improvements, fiber optic costs),
- Interior capital costs (e.g., furniture, library books, computer technology),
- Architect and engineering fees;
- Inflation of ongoing increased costs of construction, and
- Land for the elementary school and future middle school

The school will be designed to be a Net Zero Energy building. This means that total amount of energy used by the building on an annual basis is roughly equal to the amount of renewable energy created on the site. While there is a slightly increased cost for this energy efficiency at the time of construction, it saves energy costs in the long-term.

## How were costs for the proposed elementary school estimated?

This estimate was developed by JH Findorff, our general contractor and Bray Architects, who specialize in school building design.

The estimate is based on the recent building of two elementary schools in Sun Prairie. The benefit of modeling costs on these buildings is that it gives us a realistic estimate of two similar schools that were recently built within Dane County.

The costs of the proposed K-6 grade elementary school and operational expenses are in line with similar school projects in Dane County.

## When will land be purchased?

The District is currently in the process of negotiating for land, so costs are estimates at this point. Land would be purchased after the referendum at a public meeting in December or January.

## What is included in the \$2.1M referendum question?

This is an ongoing expense to operate the new school. In addition, this amount extends a recurring referendum that was previously approved in 2008. This recurring expense will begin when the new school opens in 2020-2021.

## What is the current breakdown of the Oregon School District tax base?

All residents who live within a school district boundary pay taxes to that district. In



other words, all who live within the eight municipalities of the Oregon School District pay their proportionate share of taxes to OSD. Proportionate share of taxes is based on land value. The approximate current tax breakdown is as follows:

- Village of Oregon: 47%
- Town of Oregon: 17%
- City of Fitchburg: 14%
- Town of Dunn: 11%
- Remaining municipalities: 11%

As population in the school district increases, the percentages would shift. For example, in today's dollars, the city of Fitchburg's proportionate share from planned development would increase its amount from the current 14 percent to approximately 30 percent.

### **Is the school board concerned about costs to taxpayers?**

Absolutely. Asking taxpayers for money is not a decision the school board take lightly. The decision was made after a year of analyzing population growth projections and community feedback. The board believes it is financially responsible to take action now, as there is still a cost to doing nothing and construction expenses will continue to increase over time.

## **Other**

### **Is there any research on the optimal school grade configuration?**

There is no definitive research on an optimal school grade configuration. In fact, we see grade configurations of all types in school districts today. Rather, research tells us that what makes the biggest difference is the classroom teacher.

### **How can I learn more?**

If you have questions or would like to discuss the referendum, you are invited to contact Dr. Brian Busler. In addition, information on growth and the detailed reports from the Growth & Population Task Force are available on our website, at

[www.OregonSD.org/referendum](http://www.OregonSD.org/referendum).