

# Proposition SPS



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Proposition SPS**

#### **1. Why is Springfield Public Schools placing a bond request on the April 4 ballot?**

Approximately 78 percent of SPS schools were originally constructed more than 50 years ago during a time when student needs were much different than they are today. It is important that all of Springfield Public schools' 25,000 students have access to quality learning environments, no matter what school they attend. To ensure quality schools, the Springfield school board engaged the Springfield community in developing a long-range [Facility Master Plan](#) to identify the most critical needs and create a strategy for addressing those needs.

An independent assessment of SPS schools determined that 43 percent rated as poor or unsatisfactory after the assessment. This Facility Master Plan will allow SPS to accomplish needed improvements in a strategic and fiscally responsible manner.

Proposition SPS is a \$189-million bond issue that will fund Phase 1 of the long-range Facility Master Plan to ensure that all SPS schools are quality places to learn and work.

#### **2. How will the question read on the April 4 ballot?**

##### *Proposition SPS*

Shall The School District of Springfield R-XII issue its general obligation bonds in the amount of \$189,000,000 for the purpose of (1) constructing new buildings, purchasing land and demolishing existing buildings, (2) improving, repairing, renovating and acquiring buildings, including technology improvements, and (3) furnishing and equipping school buildings?

If this proposition is approved, the District's adjusted debt service levy is estimated to increase by \$0.12 to \$0.67 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation in tax year 2017 and by an additional \$0.12 to \$0.79 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation in tax year 2018.

#### **3. How were the needs for the proposed projects identified?**

[Board policy FB](#) requires the Board to periodically review the long-range school facilities plan. This review provides guidance for capital outlay expenditures and ensures that the school district has well-planned school buildings at proper locations when needed and at

reasonable costs. While numerous facility upgrades have taken place over the past several decades and regular maintenance and repairs have been made, significant facility needs continue to exceed the budget available. In compliance with Policy FB, the Board of Education hired [MGT of America](#) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of facilities to assist in developing an updated long-range [Facility Master Plan](#) to guide strategic planning for the district.

MGT met with district leaders and community members to identify facility expectations and needs required to meet the constantly evolving needs of education. MGT then evaluated each facility, assigning a combined score in the areas of building condition, site condition, educational suitability and technology readiness. Based on the evaluation, two options were developed by MGT to address facility needs. Stakeholder input regarding the two options was collected during 30 public meetings and through an online survey. Stakeholders identified Option 2 as their preferred option. MGT then developed a two-phase plan to be enacted over the next 12 years.

#### **4. Was future growth of the district taken into consideration when developing the Facility Master Plan?**

Part of the contract with MGT included a demographic study. Enrollment projections indicate small but steady growth of approximately 1,000 students by the 2025-2026 school year.

#### **Impact on Students, Teachers and Schools**

#### **5. What schools will benefit from Proposition SPS?**

There are 19 schools that will be improved if Proposition SPS is approved, plus additional classroom space will be provided for expansion of early childhood learning opportunities. View the [complete list of schools](#) to be impacted by Proposition SPS.

#### **6. How were specific projects selected to be addressed in Phase 1?**

The district identified the projects for Phase 1 using the following criteria:

- Addresses some of the most critical facility needs
- Focuses on larger projects that have the greatest student impact while balancing new construction in each phase
- Provides improvements reaching all grade levels and all feeder patterns
- Balances number of projects in each phase requiring student temporary relocation
- Balances work to be completed requiring multiple phases and the availability of resources

## **7. What are the advantages of a combined elementary/middle school campus?**

The elementary/middle school combined campus creates one campus where two independent schools are located. Potential advantages of a combined campus include:

- Two independent schools, with separate identities and entrances, under one roof to create convenience and access for families with children in multiple grade levels.
- Opportunities to share spaces, otherwise unavailable.
- Easier transition from elementary to middle school due to familiar environment.
- Reduced building area and shared mechanical systems.
- Reduced site costs, i.e. total number of drive lanes, bus loops, and parking.
- Operational efficiencies through use of one kitchen. While kitchen space will be shared to prepare meals, elementary students will eat in a separate cafeteria than middle school students.
- Synergy of community support services in one location for a neighborhood serving hundreds of families

## **8. What impact will these projects have on neighborhood schools?**

We value neighborhood schools, and the Facility Master Plan is designed to keep all reconstructed schools within the current or adjusted boundary lines, allowing for the schools to remain as a foundational element of community identity. Further, the school board believes that community engagement supports ongoing growth of students and should be a consideration as renovation and new construction designs are completed. The school board is committed to ensuring community access and use of school facilities as a resource beyond the traditional school day for services to both students and families shall be a priority.

## **9. What impact will the proposed bond projects have on class size or student/teacher ratio?**

The school board shares the community's commitment to the value of small class sizes (student-teacher ratio). This plan is designed to have no negative impact on class sizes among those schools being newly constructed or renovated. Additionally, these projects will not produce any involuntary reduction of certified teaching positions. The plan is designed to positively impact the learning and working conditions of students and staff throughout the system. While such a comprehensive adjustment to district facilities will inevitably lead to shifts in staffing, any reductions will be handled easily through annual attrition.

## **10. The proposal calls for more early childhood classrooms. Will those additional classrooms be located within elementary schools or in an separate center like Shady Dell, Shining Stars and Bright Stars?**

As implementing the Facility Master Plan progresses, all options for housing an expanded number of early childhood classrooms will be considered. Options may include creating additional early childhood classrooms within elementary schools or repurposing district-owned facilities as early childhood center(s).

**11. Full implementation, over the next 12 years, of the Facility Master Plan will result in four schools closing. What schools are proposed to be closed, and what is the timeline for closing them?**

Bowerman, Campbell, Delaware, and York are proposed to close during the full 12 year implementation of the Facility Master Plan. The timeline for each varies based on voter approval of the bond proposal on April 4 for Phase 1 projects and approval of a second bond for Phase 2 projects that will be requested upon the completion of Phase 1 projects. Bowerman students are proposed to transfer to either Williams or the Robberson-Reed combined campus which is a Phase 1 project. Campbell will close during Phase 1 through the redistribution of enrollment between McGregor, Portland and Twain. Delaware will close and their boundary will be adjusted with Rountree and Sunshine. This will require an addition and renovation to Sunshine campus which will take place during Phase 1. York will close and students will attend a newly constructed Bissett school during Phase 2 of the Facility Master Plan. The creation of combined elementary/middle school campuses would also impact the future of the existing structures for Boyd Elementary School and Pipkin Middle School; Robberson Elementary School and Reed Middle School; and Portland Elementary School and Jarrett Middle School.

**12. What will happen with the vacated properties?**

The school board has stated that its goal is to ensure that sites with no district purpose will be repurposed in a productive way that adds value to the community. Any vacated properties will be repurposed in accordance with [Board Policy DN-2](#). When the district no longer needs property or the property is not suitable to the district's needs, the school board may authorize and direct the sale and transfer or lease of the property in accordance with law.

**13. Will the employment of the staff in the schools that will be closed be negatively affected?**

With a projected steady to slightly increasing enrollment expected for the next 10 years, no reduction in staff is anticipated as a result of implementing the Facility Master Plan. As the students from the buildings slated to close move to their new schools, additional staff may be required at those sites to accommodate the growing enrollment. Any staff reductions that might occur due to efficiency in operations will be handled through

normal annual attrition.

**14. Will new buildings and renovated buildings lead to increases in student achievement?**

The district makes no claim that new facilities have a direct correlation with increases in test scores. Quality school environments do impact students and staff and a quality environment provides SPS the ability to attract and retain students, families and staff members.

**15. What will ensure that future decisions by the school board align with what has been communicated about Phase 1 projects?**

As an assurance to the community, the Board of Education adopted, as part of the Facility Master Plan, a set of 10 guiding principles. This common philosophy will guide decisions related to the implementation of these projects over the next six years. [Read the complete definitions](#) of these guiding principles.

**Construction and Project Management**

**16. After receiving taxpayer approval of Proposition SPS, how will the bond projects be managed?**

When Proposition SPS is approved, a Director of Bonds will be hired on staff. This person would work with administration to develop recommendations for the most effective delivery method of managing projects to ensure taxpayer dollars are used wisely and that work is delivered as promised, on time and on budget. Those recommendations will be provided to the Board of Education for feedback, consideration and approval.

While there are multiple options that might be considered for managing projects, that decision will be made at a later date in coordination with the District Director of Bonds and Board of Education. The school district elected to use an internal bond management team in the past and these positions were phased out as all projects were completed.

**17. Will SPS use local companies to do the work on the bond projects?**

It is the policy of the school district to purchase locally and use local services when quality and price are competitive with other firms. According to [Board Policy DJF-2](#), the school board encourages district staff to give preference to purchasing products that are manufactured, mined, produced or grown within the state, and to all vendors doing

business as Missouri firms, corporations or individuals when quality and price are approximately the same. The school board further encourages the purchase of products manufactured, assembled or produced in the United States.

**18. How can the public stay informed on the progress of bond projects from the awarding of contracts through completion of construction?**

Quarterly updates are provided to the Board of Education during public board meetings. You may also [view quarterly updates](#) on the district's website. Information concerning awarding of contracts, change orders, etc. are approved by the Board of Education during regular monthly meetings as needed. Meeting agendas and related documents are available to the public on [Board Docs](#).

**19. Are there board policies that govern facilities development?**

Yes. Board of Education policies that establish the framework for what is to be done and provide guidance related to facility development include:

- [Policy FB-Facilities Planning](#)
- [Policy FC-School Closings, Consolidations and Reorganizations](#)
- [Policy FEB-Selection of Architectural, Engineering and Land Surveying Services](#)
- [Policy FEC-Selection of Construction Management Services](#)
- [Policy FEF-2-Construction Contracts Bidding and Awards](#)

**20. When will work on the projects listed in Proposition SPS begin?**

If Proposition SPS is approved by voters April 4, the district will move quickly to begin the work on the facilities listed in Phase 1 and the work will occur over an estimated six-year period of time.

**21. When will Phase 2 projects identified in the Facility Master Plan occur?**

As Phase 1 projects are being completed, voters will have an opportunity to consider the second phase of the Facility Master Plan recommendation. Phase 2 projects would begin after authorization of funding by voters approximately six years after the beginning of Phase 1 projects. Based on current economic projections, Phase 2 will not require and additional debt service levy increase.

## **Community Involvement**

### **22. Considering the 12-year timeline to complete both phases, why should parents support a bond that may not be completed while their child is still an SPS student?**

Quality schools make great places to work and learn so it would help SPS hire and retain qualified teachers and also enable SPS to provide students learning environments that meet the constantly changing needs of learners today and in the future. In addition, investments into our education system are investments into our future workforce. SPS is working to increase the readiness of all graduates so they each positively impact the economic stability of our community.

The bond proposal will also stimulate our local economy by generating work opportunities and demand for materials and supplies. If the bond is approved, SPS will employ architects, contractors and laborers and purchase materials and supplies required to complete the \$189 million in proposed projects.

This investment will help make Springfield a more desirable place to live and work. It will improve opportunities for current residents, plus attract new residents and businesses to the community.

### **23. Will the school communities being affected by the proposed bond projects have input into the design/renovation of their new school?**

Principals, staff and patrons will have opportunities to provide feedback during the planning stage through final layout. This work will be more thoroughly identified upon approval of the April 4 ballot question.

### **24. Have the locations for new construction been identified?**

No. Locations for new construction have not been identified at this time but the school board has expressed a desire to keep all reconstructed schools within the current or adjusted boundary lines allowing for the schools to remain as a foundational element of community identity. The District will work with their real estate broker and the community to identify options for land.

### **25. Will the improvements in Phase 1 benefit sites across the district?**

The 19 schools that will benefit from Phase 1 improvements span the district from as far north as Pleasant View K-8 on State Highway AA to as far south as Jeffries Elementary near Republic Road and 17 schools in between. This investment in schools is especially important for our under-resourced neighborhoods where schools tend to be older and have more significant needs. The proposal will invest \$77 million of the \$189 million in northwest Springfield, which will help revitalize these historic communities.

## **Cost and Financial Accountability**

### **26. How many bond proposals have the voters approved since 2000?**

Voters have approved \$278 million in bonds since 2000. Bonds were approved in 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2013. Examples of significant work funded by these bonds includes, but are not limited to, air conditioning all schools, major renovations to all five high schools, construction of new schools, installation of FEMA safe rooms, renovation and/or expansion of elementary schools, athletic facility improvements and upgrades to electrical, HVAC and technology infrastructure

### **27. What is Springfield Public Schools' record of accountability with previous tax revenue?**

In April 2013, Springfield voters approved \$71.65 million for bond projects. These projects were delivered on time as promised and with \$2 million remaining. The remaining surplus will be used to support any land acquisition necessary to fulfill the bond projects proposed in Proposition SPS.

### **28. Is this the largest tax increase SPS has ever requested?**

No. In June 2004, Springfield voters approved a 25-cent increase to the district's operating levy. Proposition K was supported by 66 percent of voters, preventing drastic cuts to bus transportation, building maintenance, Parents as Teachers, nursing staff, athletics, extracurricular activities and other programs. It generated \$6.2 million in revenue enabling the district to hire 25 classroom teachers plus technology support staff, and provide all employees a step increase and 2.5% cost of living raise in 2004-2005 and a step increase and cost of living raise in 2005-2006.

### **29. Does the tax increase have a sunset clause?**

The debt-service levy is only assessed until the approved bonds are repaid. The 24-cent increase to the debt-service levy will be phased in over two years. The levy will increase by 12 cents in 2017 and an additional 12 cents in 2018.

### **30. Why hasn't the district properly maintained these facilities?**

Springfield Public Schools does maintain its schools and regularly invests in facility improvements at all schools throughout the district. The needs identified in the Facility Master Plan go far beyond routine maintenance though. Over the past two decades, SPS has been diligently updating and improving its schools thanks to community support of multiple bond proposals. Since 2000, \$278 million in bonds alone have been invested into major facility improvements in addition to routine maintenance and repairs.

The age and number of schools and facilities, however, make it challenging to address all critical needs. SPS has 57 buildings to maintain, with several posing unique challenges since they were constructed almost 100 years ago.

The district's annual capital projects budget is intended to address routine maintenance and cannot stretch to meet the needs of major capital improvements. Building and site improvements utilizing regular capital outlay funds have ranged from \$1.3 million to \$8.5 million per year over the past 11 years with an average investment of \$4 million per year. In the current 2016-2017 year, \$6,296,580 has been budgeted for improvements to sites.

**31. Some of the facilities that will no longer be used have received some upgrades, such as air conditioning, from past bonds. Was that money wasted?**

In order to provide quality learning environments, it is necessary to continuously invest in our schools. Improvements made over the past few years have benefitted students and staff by making their learning and working environment better. Changes being proposed will continue to improve learning environments for generations of students in the future. Prior investment in these buildings have also protected district assets and will have a positive impact on the buildings' market value if/when the district decides to sell them.

**32. Will Proposition SPS address ADA standards?**

In all new construction and renovation projects funded by Proposition SPS, standards of the Americans with Disability Act will be met to ensure that buildings are easily accessible for all students and staff. Accessibility issues were among factors identified as needing improvement through the Facility Master Plan assessment. Addressing these and other issues are why some of the schools were identified for significant changes.

**33. What is the difference between a bond issue and an operating tax levy?**

A school district requests a bond issue when it needs to make capital improvements such as building or renovating schools. An operating tax levy funds expenses like salaries and benefits, utilities and textbooks. State law is very specific that money from a bond issue may only be used for capital improvements and not to fund a district's operating budget.

**Voting**

**34. Who can vote on Proposition SPS?**

Eligibility to vote on school-related issues (school board members, bonds, etc.) is based on the school district in which you live. If you live in the Springfield Public Schools attendance area you may vote on the proposal April 4. This is true even your residence is outside the city limits of Springfield.

### **35. How do I register to vote in the April 4 election?**

If you are not currently registered to vote, you must do so by Wednesday, March 8, to vote in the April 4 election. The voter registration application may be obtained from the Greene County Clerk's Office, 940 N. Boonville Ave., or accessed and printed [here](#). You may also register to vote at each of Springfield Public Schools' five high schools: Central High School, 423 E. Central St.; Glendale High School, 2727 S. Ingram Mill Road; Hillcrest High School, 3319 N. Grant Ave.; Kickapoo High School, 3710 S. Jefferson Ave.; and Parkview High School, 516 W. Meadowmere St. Please call the high school office before you visit to confirm that the person who registers voters will be available when you arrive.