



VALLEY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Frequently Asked Questions

PROPOSED REFERENDUM SOLUTION

What is the proposed solution to address the school facility challenges at VCPS?

To address these challenges and better position VCPS for the future, the district is proposing building a new school connected to Jefferson Elementary School. A successful referendum would include:

- **Closing and Selling Washington Elementary School**, which has served our community very well but could be retired to help the district save money, improve operational efficiencies, and bring all elementary students together.
- **Closing and Selling the District Office Building**, which would relocate the district administration and staff to another existing building in the district.
- **Demolishing the oldest portions of the high school**, while continuing to use the **Hi-Liner Activity Center** for school and community events and activities.
- **Constructing a new school** and connecting to the existing **Jefferson Elementary School**. This would create one k-12 school consolidating learning environments into a more modern, efficient, and flexible space tailored to current and future educational need

What has been done to arrive at where we are today?

VCPS has conducted facility condition assessments (2021), hosted public meetings, surveyed community members, formed school facility advisory committees, and consulted industry experts to understand and learn more about options how to address current facility challenges.

Is there room for future growth or expansion since the district would be reducing the overall square footage of school buildings in this project?

Yes. The number of classrooms and spaces in a consolidated k-12 school has been designed for 80-90 students per grade level. Currently, grades 6 and below have fewer than 80 students.

How much would the proposed project cost?

The total cost of the project will cost up to but not to exceed \$46,000,000.00.

FACILITIES PLANNING

What process was used by VCPS to identify maintenance needs and cost estimates?

A comprehensive facility conditions assessment was conducted in 2018 and updated in the fall of 2021. Both of these assessments were completed by the Consolidated Construction Company. A cost analysis and update were completed by JLG Architects in January 2023.

What were the major maintenance categories and costs identified with these assessments?

The assessment identified several major maintenance categories across the district primarily including the replacement of the HVAC systems, plumbing, electrical, roofing, windows, and addressing school safety and security needs. The initial cost estimate was \$12 million in 2018, increasing to \$26 million in 2021, and once again increasing to \$37 million in 2023 as a result of increases in the cost of construction and inflation following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why has VCPS deferred major maintenance needs?

Each year, the district allocates funds from the building fund for maintenance needs across the school district. Due to the high cost of maintenance, the building fund was unable to fund major maintenance projects identified in the assessment. The only way to address major maintenance needs would be through a successful community referendum. In the fall 2021, VCPS began asking for feedback from the community on how to best address the major maintenance needs and if a referendum should be considered. The school board delayed this decision in 2021-2022 because of economic uncertainty with the cost of construction. The school district has continued to study options for the past two years leading up to the decision to call for a referendum in March 2025.

In addition to major maintenance needs, what other challenges are facing VCPS?

Like a lot of school districts in North Dakota, VCPS is navigating several pressing challenges that could impact our students, staff, and community. These include:

- **Aging Facilities:** Many of our buildings are outdated, requiring significant dollars to repair, and no longer align with modern safety, accessibility, and learning standards.
- **Declining Enrollment:** Like many rural communities, VCPS has experienced a steady decrease in student enrollment over the past few years, this has prompted us to re-evaluate how our spaces are used across the district.
- **Educational Adequacy:** Our current facilities no longer fully support 21st-century teaching and learning. Classroom layouts, technological infrastructure, and support spaces need significant updates to meet today's educational demands.

What would be the annual maintenance costs of a new school in the first 10 years?

The maintenance costs of a new school for the first 10 years are estimated at 1-2% of the cost of a new building. This would put our annual maintenance costs of a new building for the first 10 years at \$450,000 - \$900,000. These costs would be funded from the districts building fund.

Why close and sell Washington Elementary and the District Office Building?

The district is seeking to save taxpayers' dollars by being more operationally efficient with school facilities across the district. This referendum proposal would reduce the two school buildings and eliminate an estimated \$5 million + in deferred maintenance. This action would also bring other cost-savings to the school district including with staffing and utilities.

What would happen to the Hi-Liner Activity Center with this project?

The HAC, which was built in 2003, would continue to be used by the school district for activity practices and events. The proposed portions of the high school that would stay connected to the

HAC would include the wrestling room, south gym, cafeteria, and possibly other portions of the 1970s building.

How did we arrive at the Jefferson site for the new building?

The Facility Advisory Committee had considered three site options for a new school. These included a site on I-94, Hi-Line Park, and the site next to Jefferson Elementary School. The committee believed that the I-94 site was too far removed from the community and the Hi-Line Park site wasn't available due to restrictions on grant funding. The committee ultimately determined that the Jefferson Elementary site provided opportunities for consolidation, access to Hanna Field and other activity facilities in the area.

If the referendum passes how long would it take to complete the new 3-12 school?

If the referendum passes on June 10, it is likely that the design, bidding, and build process will last at least two years. The soonest that we could occupy the new building would be in the fall of 2027.

When was the last time there was a vote on a school project for VCPS?

The last vote for a school building in VCPS was in 2003 for the Hi-Liner Activity Center. In the fall of 2021, the school district surveyed the community, but there was not a vote on a new school.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT/PROPOSED TAX IMPACT

What is the proposed tax impact of the proposed solution on residential and ag property?

The tax impact (true and full value) of a \$100,000.00 home would be \$336.46 per year. The tax impact (true and full value) of \$100,000.00 commercial or ag land would be \$373.84 per year.

What does the district save in operations for this project?

We are estimating a district cost-savings of \$500,000 - \$750,000 per year if this project was approved. This savings would include savings in staffing, utilities/maintenance, food service, and educational programs.

Are there any state or federal funds available for this project?

No. The district has moved the remaining federal ESSER funds into the general fund in order to balance the budget the past two years. The district partnered with other school districts in North Dakota to propose legislation for state supported funding, but unfortunately these bills were killed in session. If the project is approved, the district can apply for a low interest loan from the State of ND.

Does state law allow schools to use funds other than property tax dollars to build schools? For example, could sales tax be used to finance this project?

No. House Bill 1029 passed by the 2007 ND Legislature, prohibits school districts from benefiting from sales tax revenue. As the law is currently written, a sales tax cannot be used for school buildings.

How many years would be required to pay back the bond?

A referendum is usually financed for 20 years. The amount listed for tax impact would be the first year and then would be adjusted annually depending upon the taxable valuation in the school district for the remaining years of the bond.

Will the district attempt to raise money through sponsorships or donations?

Yes. The district will work to obtain funding from other sources in an effort to reduce the tax impact and/or enhance the project.

VOTER INFORMATION

When is election day?

The referendum election will be Tuesday, June 10, 2025

Who is allowed to vote on this referendum?

Any citizen 18 years and older who resides within the school district may vote on this referendum.

Where can I cast my ballot on election day?

Voting will take place only at the Valley City Public School District Office at 460 Central Ave. N, Valley City, ND 58072 on June 10, 2025.

What will be the polling hours on election day?

Polls will be open from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM CDT

When and how will I be able to vote absentee for this referendum?

Yes, absentee voter applications are available from the Valley City Public School District. Voters may contact the district at 701-845-0483 (please ask for Jackie Cordie, business manager) to request an application. The application can also be found at

<https://www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn51468.pdf>.

What is the exact question that will appear on the ballot?

Shall Valley City Public School District No.2 of Barnes County, North Dakota, issue its general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$46,000,000.00 maturing within a maximum of 20 years, resulting in an estimated additional millage of 74.77 mills, equal to \$74.77 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation for the first taxable year, for the purpose of providing funds, together with any other funds available to establish a new school that will be connected to Jefferson Elementary School creating a combined K-12 school, ensuring student safety and security, modernizing educational spaces and providing ADA accessibility. This will include selling the District Office, Washington Elementary School, demolishing the original 1919 building and 1940s and 1950s additions of Valley City High School, thus eliminating the estimated cost (\$30 million) of deferred maintenance in these buildings, maximizing operational efficiencies including right-sizing the square footage in the new school building to changing enrollments and to otherwise improve, renovate, remodel, construct, and equip school property and make site improvement to school property. Yes.... or No.....