



February 18, 2025

## **Phase 2 Facilities Referendum**

### **Background**

On April 1, 2025, Oshkosh Area School District (OASD) residents will be able to vote on a funding request for facility improvements and consolidations. The request aligns with OASD's strategic plan and its long-range facilities plan. The long-range facilities/consolidation plan was developed in 2020 based upon the input of a taxpayer Facilities Advisory Committee and approved unanimously by the Board of Education.

**Ballot Question:** BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of the Oshkosh Area School District, Winnebago County, Wisconsin that there shall be issued pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$197,800,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost of a school building and facility improvement project consisting of:

- construction of a new middle school at the existing Jacob Shapiro Elementary School site and removal of the current building;
- construction of additions and renovations at Carl Traeger, Franklin and Oakwood Elementary Schools;
- renovations at the Perry Tipler Middle School building to convert it into a pre-kindergarten center and recreation department offices;
- construction of an addition and renovations for an auditorium at North High School;
- renovations at Read, Emmeline Cook and Lakeside Elementary Schools to add air conditioning;
- district-wide site improvements;
- and acquisition of furnishings, fixtures and equipment.

Approval of this question would allow the District to invest \$197.8 million in capital funds to advance the second phase of the District's long-range facilities plan that will include Westside middle school consolidation, Westside elementary consolidation, building of a new auditorium at North High School, closing and sale of the downtown recreation center, and adding air conditioning to Emmeline Cook, Lakeside and Read Elementary Schools.

Specifically, the approval of the question will result in construction of a new middle school at the existing Jacob Shapiro Elementary School site and removal of the current building along with the closing of South Park and Perry Tipler, reducing from three to two westside middle schools. Also, construction of additions and renovations at Carl Traeger, Franklin and Oakwood Elementary Schools will result in the closings of Roosevelt and Shapiro, reducing from seven to five westside elementary schools.

The result would be consolidated and modern schools that are more efficient, effective and equitable - with fewer school buildings to maximize use and efficiency. While larger, the new middle school will have an enrollment of 680 students compared to 890 at Vel Phillips, 1,000 at Menasha, 1,200 at Kaukauna and 1,941 at Neenah (grades 4-8).

Key takeaways include improving student safety and student services, reducing operational costs through consolidation and financially structuring the debt so there is a zero-dollar increase to the current annual \$21.5 million debt levy for taxpayers through 2030.

The Phase I plan has resulted in documented cost savings of \$1,905,056 dollars per year. This reduction in district costs means that the buildings will pay for themselves in 46.5 years which is less than half of the projected building lifespan (100 years). After the buildings pay for themselves, they will continue to generate savings for the remaining 53.5 years to save an additional \$101,825,600.00 (in 2024 dollars).

The second phase could net similar or greater cost savings which is one of the primary reasons so many people advocated for consolidation of Oshkosh schools.

**Itemized Project Cost List:**

• New Middle School at Shapiro Site	\$88, 000,000
• Renovations at Oakwood Site	\$35,700,000
• Renovations at Franklin Site	\$31,100,000
• Renovations at Traeger Site	\$5,400,000
• New North Auditorium	\$22,100,000
• Renovations at Tipler for PreK/Rec Center	\$9,700,000
• A/C at E Cook, Lakeside and Read Elementary	\$5,800,000
Total Cost	\$197,800,000

**Position:** The Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce supports the Phase 2 Facilities Referendum. Support of this referendum allows OASD to build, consolidate, and

improve our current educational facilities to prepare Oshkosh students for future success and keep Oshkosh at the forefront of regional workforce success. The passage of the Phase 2 Facilities referendum will help OASD stay competitive and continue to be a leader in education throughout the Fox Valley region. If we do not make these investments in our school facilities, we run the risk of being passed by other districts, resulting in a decreased ability to provide the best education possible for our students. Our businesses and employers expect a strong education system. The passage of the referendum will continue to help prepare the future workforce, help recruit and retain employees at local businesses, and quality educators in our schools. For the Oshkosh community to remain competitive and to be a community of choice to live and work, additional resources need to be invested in the OASD.