

Facts about New Trier's Winnetka Campus Facilities Referendum



On Nov. 16, 2009, the New Trier Township High School District 203 Board of Education voted 7-0 for a construction and renovation project to address significant needs on the Winnetka Campus. **The project, if approved by voters through a Feb. 2, 2010, bond referendum, would cost a Township homeowner \$248-\$295 on a \$10,000 annual tax bill. The last referendum for Winnetka Campus construction was in 1953.**

Faced with the prospect of continuing to spend millions of dollars to maintain and repair 1920s-era buildings that have not seen significant renovations in 50 years, the Board began studying options to improve the Winnetka facilities three years ago. The plan they approved would cost \$174 million, which includes demolition, construction, renovation, fees, technology, furniture, site work -- all costs associated with the project, plus contingency and escalation.

Students are learning in buildings that were constructed between 60 and almost 100 years ago, many of which have not seen significant renovation since being built. **The last academic classrooms on campus were built in 1957**, before computers, before special education and before teaching grew beyond the model of a single teacher at the front of a classroom. Many areas of the campus are inaccessible to students, teachers and visitors in wheelchairs or on crutches. Teachers scramble to schedule time in the few modern classrooms on the campus, or limit their lesson planning to fit the classrooms to which they are assigned. Roofs leak in heavy rains as the school tries to keep up with the constant maintenance needed for 1920s-era buildings. The pre-World War I cafeteria does not have enough seats for all students assigned each period or the kitchen capacity to efficiently prepare food for students and staff.

The facilities proposal approved by the Board of Education was chosen among many alternatives because it:

- Provides flexible and modern academic, extracurricular and athletic spaces to meet the curricular needs of current and future students
- Replaces the oldest, most deficient buildings on the Winnetka Campus
- Solves accessibility problems for students, staff and visitors with physical disabilities or injuries
- Preserves recently renovated spaces, including science labs, the health services office and post-high school counseling offices
- Includes "green building" certification and preserves significant green space currently on campus
- Addresses the most urgent needs on campus for decades to come, in accordance with the Long Range Facilities Plan, avoiding perpetual construction projects and multiple referenda

The Board of Education approved this facilities plan after three years of intensive study and community input.

Many alternatives were considered, including:

- Switching upperclassmen to Northfield. This alternative was rejected because the Northfield Campus was designed for approximately 1,000 freshmen and is at capacity. To accommodate such an increase, the campus would have to be completely rebuilt at a cost close to \$400 million, about the same as a total rebuild at Winnetka.
- Replacing only the cafeteria, Tech Arts and Music buildings. This alternative would not address the significant deficiencies of the 1928 Gates Gym, which would need millions of dollars in repairs over the next few years alone to replace the roof and windows and fix exterior bricks.
- Completely replacing the Winnetka facilities. This alternative was estimated at nearly \$400 million and rejected as too costly and having too much impact on the campus.
- Continuing to repair and maintain existing buildings. This alternative was rejected because of its expense and because it would not do anything to address curricular needs or accessibility issues. The proposed project would avoid the expenditure of \$35.5 million over 20 years at the Winnetka Campus on routine repairs and maintenance to buildings that need to be replaced.

BECOME AN INFORMED VOTER

Why is the Board recommending this project now?

- To address the immediate curricular needs of students and teachers, who are limited by 50- to 75-year-old classroom spaces and outdated, costly-to-maintain athletic and extracurricular facilities
- To take advantage of the savings offered by using Build America Bonds, **available only through 2010** as part of the federal stimulus package.
- To take advantage of low construction costs. Current projects in nearby high schools are receiving bids ranging from 10 to 20 percent below estimates
- To avoid \$35.5 million in maintenance costs on buildings that eventually must be replaced
- To maintain the cost to taxpayers at \$248-\$295 on a \$10,000 annual tax bill, beginning in Fall 2011
- To take care of Winnetka's facilities needs so a major capital project would **not** be needed for 20+ years

What happens if the project is delayed?

- Outdated classroom spaces will continue to limit academic programming.
- Accessibility issues will continue to hinder the movement of students and staff with disabilities and injuries.
- A one-year delay in referendum passage increases the estimated cost to taxpayers by **\$85 per \$10,000 tax bill**.
- Building costs are expected to rise, adding an estimated \$18 million in construction costs over the two years.
- Financing costs will increase. With the loss of Build America Bonds and an estimated \$18 million increase in construction costs, total interest payments on the project would increase by an estimated \$87 million over the 20 year term of the bonds.
- The District will spend millions of dollars on repairs and maintenance to its outdated buildings only to replace them in coming years.

New Trier has made good use of its Winnetka campus, but after 50+ years it needs to be upgraded. The last facilities referendum for the Winnetka Campus was approved in 1953, to build the current Tower Building and Gaffney Auditorium. Those buildings are still in use today and would be retained under the current proposal. A referendum for operations (such as paying salaries) is **not** expected for at least seven to 10 years. New Trier is one of only eight school districts in Illinois with an "Aaa" rating from Moody's because of the Board's careful attention to its finances, and it is expected to maintain that rating.

For more information:

- Go to the District's website, <http://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/facilities>
- Take a tour. District administrators are leading many public tours in December and January to give community members a chance to see areas of the building that would be replaced. See the box below for dates and times. Tours last approximately 90 minutes, including time for questions.
- Contact Superintendent Linda Yonke at yonkel@newtrier.k12.il.us or Communications Director Niki Dizon at dizonn@newtrier.k12.il.us with any questions or to schedule a tour for your group.

Tour the Winnetka Campus

December Tour Dates:

Thurs., Dec. 10, 6 p.m., Room 301

Mon., Dec. 14, 10 a.m., Room 301

Weds., Dec. 16, 6 p.m., Room 301

January Open Houses:

(Tours leave at 10 a.m., 10:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 1 p.m. and 1:45 p.m.)

Sat., Jan. 9, Room M180

Sat., Jan. 23, Room M180

Sat., Jan. 30, Room M180

January Tour Dates:

(All tours leave from Room M180)

Tues., Jan. 5, 10 a.m.

Thurs., Jan. 7, 6 p.m.

Mon., Jan. 11, 6 p.m.

Weds., Jan. 13, 10 a.m.

Tues., Jan. 19, 10 a.m.

Thurs., Jan. 21, 6 p.m.

Mon., Jan. 25, 6 p.m.

Weds., Jan. 27, 10 a.m.

Fri., Jan. 29, 10 a.m.

For daytime tours during school hours, please check in with security. Room M180 is in the Music Building near the Student Cafeteria.