



BUILDING FOR LEARNING



2024 Bond Frequently Asked Questions

1. How did the district decide upon the schools to be replaced?

During the fall of 2023, more than 40 ASD community members, parents and staff served on a citizens committee. After studying the district needs for 12 weeks, the committee made the recommendations to the School Board. The full Citizens Ad Hoc Committee report is available [here](#).

2. Why do we need a new middle school?

The district needs a new middle school because middle school enrollment currently exceeds capacity by over 900 students.

The location in the south end will:

- Reduce overcrowding at Mt. Baker and Olympic Middle Schools.
- Allows middle school boundary adjustments that will reduce overcrowding at Cascade and Rainier Middle Schools.
- Provide additional middle school capacity in the south end to address new residential development that will occur at the Oak View and Diamond Valley Estate projects.
- Provide additional middle school capacity needed when a large residential development in the south end is built by Segale Corporation.

3. What is the tax total tax rate?

The total school tax rate has decreased from \$5.20 in 2021 to \$4.41 in 2023. Based on projections, the total school tax rate will be \$5.51 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, if the bond is approved. The tax rate has steadily declined over the last three years due to increased assessed valuation and the district's fiscal stewardship in managing current projects. If passed, this bond would add 81 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, or \$37.13 per month on a \$550,000 home.

4. Why doesn't the state pay for schools?

In Washington, the state provides a very limited amount of money for school construction; it is up to local districts to pay the majority of school construction costs. However, if passed, this bond will potentially generate \$26 million in state matching funds. The availability of these funds is dependent on the state's annual construction budget.

5. **Why does the district want to do all of these projects with one bond election?**

The School Board wants to meet the prioritized recommendations from the Citizens Committee. The assessed valuations in the district have made the overall tax rate lower than anticipated. With strategic planning and fiscal oversight, the new schools and facility improvements can be accomplished. Additionally, placing all of the projects on one ballot eliminates the need to run multiple elections for the already identified projects. There are costs associated with running elections and by running all at once, it eliminates future election costs and keeps funds available for students.

6. **Will the school attendance areas change?**

Yes, with the addition of a new middle school and increased enrollment capacity, it will be necessary to revamp attendance area boundaries. As Auburn has historically done, we will convene a Citizens Ad Hoc Committee to make recommendations for revising the attendance areas.

7. **When will all of these projects be finished?**

The preliminary schedule for the bond projects is to open the new Middle School #5 in August 2027, open the new Cascade Middle School and new Alpac Elementary School in August 2028, and complete the Facility Improvement projects in August 2029.

8. **Where will kids go to school while their school is being replaced?**

We are working on plans for housing students while their schools are being replaced. Once that plan is finalized, we will communicate it.

9. **Why is Cascade being rebuilt on a different site?**

The new Cascade Middle School will be built on a larger site that will accommodate a bigger school building, a more secure campus, more parking and more outdoor athletic facilities.

10. **What will happen to the old Cascade Middle School?**

The existing Cascade Middle School will remain in place and continue to be used by the school district. The uses will depend on need and may include office use, training facility, preschool, and future interim school site.

11. **Have the buildings been maintained?**

Yes, we have taken very good care of the buildings. Despite regular maintenance, buildings wear out. The cost to maintain old, inefficient buildings takes money from the general fund that could be used for student learning. Bond funding is needed because the cost of improvements exceeds the resources available from the school district's operating funds.

12. What is the difference between a bond and a levy?

In simple terms, bonds are for buildings and levies are for learning. Bonds are comparable to mortgages and can be used for building and replacing schools, buying property and renovations. Bonds usually have a 20-year payoff time line, while levies are for 2-4 years typically.

Levies pay for programs the state does not fund or partially funds such as all athletics and activities, additional teachers and support staff, maintenance and custodial staff, and more.

The Auburn community supported the latest 4-year Educational Programs and Operations levy in February 2024. The levy makes up approximately 14 percent of the annual operating budget.

13. Besides schools, what else will this bond money be used for?

Monies from this proposed bond will only be used to build a new middle school, replace Cascade, replace Alpac and facility improvements at 16 schools and six support buildings. No money is targeted for any other use.