Francis Howell School District

PROPOSITION S
Safer Students, Stronger Schools
Over the past two years, FHSD has worked proactively with a diverse group of stakeholders and the District’s architectural firm to develop a Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan (CFMP). The in-depth research that went into the plan identified both the current state of the District’s facilities as well as its future needs.
The Facilities Committee, made up of community members, facilities managers, building administrators, and Board members, met over the spring and summer of 2019 to identify priority areas in the CFMP and to determine the initial phases of a multi-year plan to address facility issues. They presented those priority areas and potential costs to the Board of Education during work sessions in the fall of 2019.
In December, the FHSD Board of Education voted unanimously to place Proposition S, a $244 million no tax rate increase bond issue, on the April 7, 2020, ballot. The funds generated by Proposition S would pay for the construction, repair, and renovation costs outlined in the CFMP. The bond issue would NOT raise the tax rate, and funds from a bond issue CANNOT pay for salaries, benefits, supplies, utilities, or other operating costs.
The District has 29 separate facilities, including three early childhood centers, ten elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, an administration building, and seven other sites. These sites include over 2.7 million square feet of building space under roof, with miles of plumbing and wiring and hundreds of mechanical systems.
The average building in the District is 30 years old, and the oldest building is now more than 50 years old. Many systems, like HVAC, plumbing, and electrical, are reaching the end of their useful life. The District is at a critical juncture in terms of facilities. Older buildings require significant repair and maintenance, and safety improvements are necessary at all of our buildings.
The Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan provides strategic direction on how best to address these issues, and the funds from Proposition S will allow the District to do the work necessary to adequately meet the learning needs of our students today and in the future.
We believe the safety of our students and staff is always a top priority of the Francis Howell School District. The funds generated by Proposition S would allow the District to improve safeguards in all FHSD schools.

- Security vestibules
- Controlled access
- Security film added to windows in places of final refuge
Proposition S would pay for the construction of new or updated safety vestibules at all schools in Francis Howell, which would route visitors through a separate space for check-in and visitor screening, improving safety and security for everyone in our schools.
The single biggest project in the CFMP and Proposition S is a new Francis Howell North High School. FHN opened in 1981 as Henderson Middle School. In the decades that followed, there were six additions with a variety of roof structures and heating and air-conditioning systems serving all of those different areas and no single master plan guiding the placement of those additions. The result is a building structure that presents challenges for appropriate supervision of students and creates potential student and staff safety issues.

The building has mold problems that have been mitigated multiple times. The ceiling leaks despite our best efforts to continually patch the different roof surfaces. Many other major systems, like HVAC, plumbing, and electrical, have reached the end of their useful life and are so old that it is now difficult to find spare parts when systems break down. The current building is not up to the standard of the other FHSD high schools and needs to be replaced.
A new Francis Howell North can be built on the existing property, on the practice fields behind the current building. That would allow students to continue using the current building during construction, and help to minimize the impact on the educational environment. A new Francis Howell North is estimated to cost approximately $86 million, and is the largest single line item in the facilities master plan and in Proposition S.
Passage of Proposition S would pay for major updates at the older schools in the District, including Henderson Elementary. Henderson was opened in 1986 and is now more than 30 years old. It is also one of the smallest schools in the District in terms of square footage, and is bursting at the seams. Henderson has run out of classroom space, and more than a dozen areas that were designed as storage have been turned into educational spaces out of necessity. We are teaching students in spaces and under conditions that are far less than ideal. We have art classes in areas with no plumbing, and we have converted our small stage into two music classrooms. Counselors often have to work with students in a converted closet in order to get any privacy.
Henderson is unique in Francis Howell because it is the only school with a gymacafetorium, where the only thing separating students having lunch from PE classes is a green curtain. Sometimes it’s a gym, sometimes it’s a cafeteria, but usually, it’s both. And when they pull the curtain for school assemblies, it becomes an auditorium – hence the name, gymacafetorium. The phase I addition at Henderson would include a dedicated gymnasium and eight additional classrooms, a new security vestibule, required ADA modifications, and inclusive playground and field updates.
Becky-David Elementary was named a National Blue Ribbon School in 2019, one of only eight in Missouri (Daniel Boone and Warren were as well). But Becky-David is also one of the oldest schools in the District, and it houses an electrical system so old, that FHSD employees don’t even have a key to access that area of the building. Only Ameren employees have access the electrical access because it’s that old and fragile. The boiler loop is 30 years old and is failing in some areas because it has also outlived its life expectancy. If either of these systems fail, the school will have to be shut down for an extended period of time for repairs and replacement. Phase I budgets just over $9 million for renovations, replacements, and upgrades at Becky-David.
The Proposition S work at Becky David includes electrical upgrades (of course), a new safety vestibule, exterior and interior renovations and updates including a new roof, boiler loop replacement, plumbing upgrades, HVAC updates, a parking lot addition and renovations to the inclusive playground and activity fields.
Fairmount Elementary was built 40 years ago for a smaller student population, and now has the largest enrollment of any elementary school in Missouri – and is still growing. They have run out of classroom space, and many storage areas have been turned into educational spaces out of necessity. They are teaching students in places and under conditions that are far from ideal. They have two temporary cubicles set up in the learning commons that are shared by six instructional assistants, so they have a place to provide reading interventions for our students. Storage needs are so critical that custodians must transport their cleaning supplies to the building every day because there simply isn’t room to safely store these items on-site. The former janitor’s closet now holds library materials and filing cabinets.
The cafeteria is too small to efficiently accommodate the current enrollment, so the school has had to expand to six lunch shifts over three hours to serve the more than 1,100 students at Fairmount. The kitchen is not fully functional and only has warmers to prepare the food. There is just one conference room for parent and community support meetings, so staff often have to go off-site for important meetings. And as the Fairmount community knows, there is not enough parking for parents and volunteers.

If voters approve Proposition S, then we will be able to add additional classrooms in the current cafeteria space and build a new cafeteria. We will also be able to renovate the interior and exterior of Fairmount, and make necessary ADA updates. We will also be able to expand and reconfigure the parent pick-up area and parking lot.
Barnwell was built 40 years ago and is the smallest middle school in the District. The classrooms, hallways, and stairwells are too small for the current student enrollment, and the school layout is not good for supervision. There is no separate teacher workroom, a lack of storage space, and no conference or meeting rooms in the building. The building envelope is in need of significant repair, with many exterior cracks and multiple locations where our roof leaks.
Drainage issues in the front of the building cause water to enter several classrooms in the lower level even when our sump pumps are running. The gym is small in comparison with the other middle schools and we cannot secure the rec-room due to fire code requirements. There is a lack of adequate PE space for weight machines and other equipment, so as a result the locker room showers must be used for storage. If our voters approve Proposition S, then we will be able to renovate the interior and exterior of Barnwell, update plumbing and electrical systems, get rid of the portable buildings that are currently used for office space and storage, make necessary ADA updates, and resurface the old outdoor track.
Hollenbeck was built in 1971, and is the oldest middle school in the District. The school requires interior updates, and still has the original lockers that are now almost 50 years old. The classrooms, hallways, main office, and stairwells are too small for the current student enrollment, and the school layout is not good for supervision. The kitchen and loading dock are too old and small to adequately serve the student enrollment, and the building has sewer and drainage issues. Many building systems, like HVAC, plumbing, and electrical, are reaching the end of their useful life.

Voter approval of Prop S would allow the District to renovate the Hollenbeck exterior, kitchen, and loading dock. We would have the funds for interior updates, electrical upgrades, and be able to resurface the track.
The FHHS auditorium seats less than 300 people. It’s so small that we can’t fit one grade of students in all at the same time. Additionally, the AV technology in the auditorium is outdated. There is also insufficient space for our band and choir programs. While there is a world-class wrestling program at Howell High that has claimed multiple individual and team State titles, the program has no dedicated space, and the space it does use is small, dated, and worn out. The stadium bleachers are in desperate need of replacement. FHHS also needs an expanded parking lot and to replace the cracked and worn-out tennis courts.

Voter approval of Prop S would allow the District to build a much larger auditorium that would also have a storm shelter to help keep our students and staff safe during severe weather. That new addition would also have more appropriate space for our band and choir programs. Prop S would provide the funds to build a dedicated wrestling room, and install new stadium bleachers and tennis courts. It would also allow us to expand the parking lot to better accommodate car and bus traffic.
Prop S would generate funds that would enable us to update the HVAC system, replace the parking lot and inclusive playground at Castlio, as well as pay for electrical upgrades and window replacements.
Prop S would generate funds that would enable us to replace part of the Central Elementary HVAC system and flooring, as well as pay for upgrades for the inclusive playground and fields.
Originally built in 1962, Daniel Boone is one of the oldest schools in the District. Many of the District’s building systems, like HVAC, plumbing, and electrical, are reaching the end of their useful life. Prop S would generate funds that would enable us to update the interior and exterior of Daniel Boone, replace parts of the HVAC and electrical systems, replace the leaking canopy, as well as pay for upgrades for the inclusive playground and fields.
Prop S would generate funds that would enable us to renovate the interior and exterior of Harvest Ridge as well as update the HVAC system. Prop S would also pay for upgrades to the inclusive playground and fields.
Prop S would generate funds that would enable us to update the HVAC system, parking lot, inclusive playground, and fields at Independence. As the population growth continues in this part of St. Charles County, Prop S would pay for eight additional classrooms and interior updates as well.
Prop S would generate funds that would enable us to update the HVAC system, inclusive playground, and fields at John Weldon. As the population growth continues in this part of St. Charles County, Prop S would also pay for an addition with 4-6 new classrooms.
Prop S would generate funds that would enable us to update the HVAC system, parking lot, inclusive playground, and fields at Warren. Prop S would also pay for interior and exterior building renovations as well.
Prop S would pay for a new parking lot and track resurfacing at Bryan, as well as millions for interior renovations and HVAC upgrades.
Prop S would generate millions for interior renovations and HVAC upgrades at FHMS, as well as pay for track resurfacing.
Prop S would generate millions for interior renovations and replacing the HVAC system at Saeger, as well as pay for a new roof and parking lot.
Prop S would pay for a new HVAC system for FHC, one of those things you don’t think about much until it stops working. It would also pay for a new parking lot, interior renovations including a major renovation of the auditorium, and a new softball field. Prop S would also fund important updates at all of the schools that feed into FHC.
Approval of Proposition S would fund safety vestibules at all three early childhood centers. It would also pay for HVAC updates and interior and exterior renovations at all three, and a new roof at EC-Central School Road.
Rounding out the bigger items in Phase I are the construction or purchase of a new Francis Howell Union, our alternative high school, construction of a new District bus garage, a District Learning Center, and miscellaneous plumbing and ADA upgrades.
After the completion of Phase I projects, the Phase II projects would include major renovations at Francis Howell Central, HVAC upgrades and interior renovations at most middle schools, classroom additions at Independence and John Weldon, and additional work at every school in the District totaling $68.6 Million.
Proposition S Totals

Phase I - $175,097,000
Phase II - $68,640,000
Total - $243,737,000
State law allows schools to borrow funds through the sale of general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed 15 percent of their assessed value. If the bond issue is approved by voters, the District would sell bonds incrementally over time, based on the construction schedule. The District plans to issue approximately $80 million in bonds in June 2020 which would fund several of the Phase I projects, including the initial phase of construction of the new Francis Howell North High School. Additional bonds would be issued in subsequent years to provide funds for Phase I and Phase II projects and to complete construction of the new high school. The District’s current debt is at only four percent of its assessed value. Because of the District’s current low debt ratio and the projected growth in assessed value, issuing the additional bonds would not require an increase in the existing debt service levy.
The District would not need to increase the debt service to repay the bonds, and all bond proceeds are restricted in use solely for capital improvements in the District.
We are sometimes asked how people in our community who don’t have students in Francis Howell will benefit from passing this bond issue - The school district in each community is an important part of maintaining high property values. High-quality schools are one of the key components people look for when moving into a new community, and studies have confirmed the link between strong school districts and strong communities. A strong public school system protects property values, provides a qualified workforce, lowers crime rates, creates a better sense of community, and enhances public services with less demand for social programs.
Shall the Board of Education of the Francis Howell R-III School District, St. Charles County, Missouri, borrow money in the amount of Two Hundred Forty Four Million Dollars for the purpose of acquiring land and buildings and constructing, renovating, repairing, expanding, improving, furnishing and equipping school sites, buildings and related facilities for school purposes in the District, including, but not limited to safety improvements at District facilities, and issue general obligation bonds for the payment thereof. The District may issue such general obligation bonds in different years or different amounts in any year as is determined to be in the best interests of the District so long as the aggregate amount does not exceed the Two Hundred Forty Four Million Dollar authorized amount. If such general obligation bonds are issued, the adjusted debt service levy of the Francis Howell R-III School District is estimated to remain unchanged from the current debt service levy of 67.13 cents ($0.6713) per one hundred dollars assessed valuation of real and personal property.
While tax levies only require a simple majority (50 percent plus one vote) to pass, a bond issue like Proposition S requires approval by $\frac{4}{7}$ths of voters, or a little more than 57 percent.
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Questions?

This informational material was paid for by the Francis Howell School District | Dr. Mary Hendricks-Harris, Superintendent | 4545 Central School Road, St. Charles, MO 63304