



Questions and Answers About Forest Hills Facilities Transformation



Facilities Q&A.....page 1
 Funding Q&A.....page 6
 Timeline and Process Q&A.....page 7
 MISC Q&A.....page 8

To submit a question regarding district facilities or funding options, please email Erika Daggett, Communications Coordinator, at erikadaggett@foresthills.edu, with “facilities question” in the subject line.

This FAQ will be updated periodically with new questions and answers.

FACILITIES Q&A

What current concerns does Forest Hills have in regards to facilities?

According to facilities evaluations conducted by the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, all schools in the district are in need of significant repairs and the majority of mechanical or structural systems need to be repaired or replaced including the plumbing, roofing, heating systems, and ventilation. Capacity issues also exist at each school. The most extreme conditions have caused the district to rent trailers to house classrooms at Maddux and Wilson elementaries. For safety reasons, the district also believes it would be beneficial to move the Transportation Center from its current location on the Anderson High School campus to a new location that is yet to be determined.

Why address these issues now?

Forest Hills facilities are in need of improvements now to provide spaces that support teaching and learning and to protect property values. According to two state evaluations over several years, our schools are rapidly deteriorating and there are a number of mechanical systems at every school that are in need of repair or replacement. Safety, security, and accessibility issues need to be addressed. In addition, by addressing these issues now, the district can take advantage of interest rates that are the lowest they have been in 30 years, as well as low construction costs that appear to be on the rise. Not addressing these issues now means students and teachers will continue to work in environments that are not optimal for learning and risk complete system failure as time passes. Forest Hills needs to address these issues now to maintain property values and the educational excellence for which the district is known and before costs increase.

What decision did the Board make regarding facilities?

During their July 21 meeting, the Forest Hills Board of Education approved placing a 4.45 mill bond issue on the November 4 ballot to renovate eight of the district’s neighborhood schools and replace Wilson Elementary, as well as address the other concerns described above. The issue would also include .5 mills to create a permanent improvement fund to provide revenue for future building maintenance.

What will be funded by the bond issue?

- Extensive renovations at 8 of the district's 9 neighborhood schools
- A new elementary school to replace Wilson Elementary (on the same property as the current school) due to costs to renovate exceeding costs to rebuild
- Improved learning environments at every school
- More secure entrances and security features at every school
- Climate-controlled schools, including air conditioning systems at 4 schools that do not currently have AC
- Handicap-accessibility to every portion of every school
- Additional and flexible spaces for innovative learning
- Improved technology at every school
- Relocation of the transportation facility currently located on the Anderson High School campus, for safety purposes
- Relief of traffic congestion at many schools
- Additional classroom space to accommodate the gradual implementation of full-day kindergarten.
- Maintenance of every school for future generations

What happens if the bond issue fails?

If this bond issue does not pass, it means:

- students and teachers will continue to work in environments that are not optimal for learning and our buildings will continue to deteriorate as time passes;
- the district will not have dedicated revenue for facilities; Forest Hills is one of a very few local districts that does not have a dedicated revenue stream for facilities maintenance;
- the district will have no choice but to continue to use general fund dollars to address ever-increasing facilities needs to try to keep schools operational, rather than using general fund dollars to address curricular needs; and
- the district will not have the classroom space to implement full-day kindergarten.

What is the cost to carry out the facilities plan?

The budget for the facilities plan is \$103 million dollars.

What is the length of the bond issue?

Similar to a mortgage, the maximum length of this bond issue's debt is 32.5 years. As always, the district will look at refinancing opportunities to reduce the cost to our taxpayers.

Does this bond issue and the plan address all of the district's facility needs and concerns? Can the desired work be done for \$103 million?

This plan will address the district's current and long-term facility needs. The district has worked with several architects and engineers who have extensive experience in school construction and renovation projects and who have verified the scope of the project can be accomplished with \$103 million.

Why are you not asking for more money? Why is the plan on the ballot less expensive than other options?

Forest Hills School District conducted a community survey and the community specifically said they would support the proposed cost-effective plan, not a more expensive option. The district will save dollars by reutilizing viable portions of buildings and building systems.

Are there other districts that have not used plans from the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission to fund renovations or rebuilding in their districts?

Yes. Many schools throughout the state, including Sycamore Community Schools, Lakota Local Schools, Kettering City Schools, and Beavercreek City Schools did not utilize OFCC plans or funds for many reasons including:

- the amount of support from the state did not cover the expenses of OFCC-required projects;
- funding was not guaranteed;
- funding would not be available for many years;
- the community did not support the requirements of OFCC plans;
- districts wanted to do more than OFCC plans allowed.

How is this bond issue different from the May 2013 bond issue which also involved funding for facility improvements?

Based on community feedback, the currently proposed plan will provide for more extensive renovations without putting a large financial burden on the community. This plan addresses both current and long-term needs and goes beyond to also enhance teaching and learning and provide changes that will positively impact students, teachers, and the community. The proposed plan is significantly more comprehensive and allows for additional classroom space to accommodate the gradual implementation of full-day kindergarten, will relocate the Transportation Facility from the Anderson High School campus, and provide on-going revenue to fund future facility needs.

What criteria was used determine whether to renovate or replace a school?

In order to determine whether to renovate or replace a school, the Board evaluated and considered educational benefits, student and staff safety and security needs, handicap-accessibility, the best use of taxpayer dollars, construction and operational costs, facility maintenance, building and system life expectancy, industry standards, and expert opinions. Community members also provided input to assist the Board in making a decision.

If the bond issue passes, what is the next step?

Work will begin immediately. The Forest Hills community can expect to see work beginning as early as the spring of 2015. All facilities work is anticipated to be completed in approximately 3.5 years.

Do you need two high schools? Do you need six elementary schools and a middle school? Will both Turpin and Anderson high schools remain?

Yes. Our community supports our current configuration of two high schools, a middle school, and six neighborhood elementary schools.

Did you consider consolidating schools? Will you consolidate the high schools or the elementary schools?

Forest Hills did consider consolidating schools and sought community opinions on the topic through formal and informal means, including conducting multiple community surveys and holding meetings. The community said they *would not* support consolidation of schools at any level and *would* support maintaining two high schools, a middle school, and six neighborhood elementary schools. Therefore, the district will maintain its current school configuration.

Will the trailers be eliminated at Maddux and Wilson?

Yes, all classrooms in trailers will be eliminated throughout the district.

Why are you only rebuilding Wilson Elementary and not every school?

According to independent architects and engineers, the cost to renovate Wilson exceeds the cost to build a new school due to the current age and condition of the school.

Where will the elementary school that will replace Wilson be located?

The new elementary school will be located on Wilson's current property, although a change in placement of a school building on the property would occur to allow students to continue to attend Wilson Elementary until a new school is completed.

What would the student capacity be in the school that replaces Wilson Elementary?

The new elementary school will be built to accommodate more than 700 students.

How will you modify open concept schools at Ayer and Sherwood elementaries?

Although specific designs have not yet been determined, the district wants to maintain flexible learning spaces while taking such things as safety and security, nature lighting, technology, furnishings, and more into consideration.

Are all schools at or over capacity and in need of additional classroom space?

According to independent facility studies, every school in the district, with the exception of Nagel Middle School, is near or over capacity.

What security and safety updates will be made to the schools?

Every school's public entrance will be updated to include security vestibules to make them more secure. In addition, every school will receive additional security cameras and monitors with remote access; security control centers beyond the main office; improved exterior lighting; and exterior door upgrades and electronic security access at entrances, where needed. The district will also move the Transportation Center from its current location on the Anderson High School campus and address traffic congestion at each school for safety reasons.

Where will the Transportation Center be relocated?

Decisions will be made in regards to cost and location after funding is secured.

What is the plan for current students while schools are renovated or rebuilt?

The district will draw upon the opinions of experts to develop a plan that supports continued excellent instruction for all students during construction, whether renovating or rebuilding. Most of the work for renovations will be done during the summer months. However, students may temporarily be moved to different areas within their current schools if work continues during the school year.

Will the renovations and rebuilding of schools address technology?

Enhanced and new technology supports and resources will be an important design aspect of rebuilt and renovated buildings. The technology infrastructure in every building will be improved to provide optimal learning opportunities for all students. This includes improved technology to support 1:1 initiatives, improved wifi access, and additional electric.

The district has said the proposed bond issue will create “flexible learning spaces”. What are “flexible learning spaces”?

Flexible learning spaces are designed to be multidisciplinary, collaborative learning spaces that can be configured in different ways for specific educational experiences. This means they provide opportunities for people to work together in new ways. Flexible spaces provide teachers with more choices for interaction with students. For example, a flexible learning space could be a classroom with retractable walls, so schools have the flexibility of having large groups and more teachers in a room, or small groups if that’s what they choose, depending on what is being taught at the time. Flexible learning spaces can also contain movable furniture and a variety of technology to meet varying needs.

Are you considering if schools will be more energy efficient?

Yes, the district is considering the environmental impact of each school. Each project will evaluate the benefits and costs of reaching LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, including the impact on instruction and our environment.

How will the district continue to maintain facilities moving forward?

The bond issue on November 4 includes .5 mills to create a permanent improvement fund to provide on-going revenue to maintain our facilities.

Would you offer tours of schools for the public?

Building tours can be scheduled by contacting Ray Johnson, Director of Business Operations, at 231-3600, ext. 2987, or rayjohnson@foresthills.edu.

When was each school originally built?

- Anderson High School was originally built in 1961.
- Turpin High School was originally built in 1976.
- Nagel Middle School was originally built in 1999.
- Ayer Elementary was originally built in 1973.
- Maddux Elementary was originally built in 1966.
- Mercer Elementary was originally built in 1973.
- Sherwood Elementary was originally built in 1970.
- Summit Elementary was originally built in 1968.
- Wilson was originally built in 1959.

What was the total cost of having the OFCC evaluate each school in the district?

The OFCC analysis was free of charge.

Does the community use your buildings?

Yes, community residents and groups extensively use our buildings for various activities and meetings. With the passage of this levy, the hope is to provide additional spaces and greater opportunities for community usage.

FUNDING Q&A

How much will the bond issue cost residents?

The tax rate for the bond issue is 4.95 mills, with an annual estimated cost to taxpayers of \$14.44 per month per \$100,000 of home market value. The budget for the plan is \$103 million dollars.

What will bond issue fund?

By law, bond proceeds can only be used for facility needs. The bond cannot fund operational expenses. These costs are funded by previously approved operating levies.

What is the length of the bond issue?

Similar to a mortgage, the maximum length of this bond issue's debt is 32.5 years. As always, the district will look at refinancing opportunities to reduce the cost to our taxpayers.

Did the Board consider participation the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission plan? What percent of funding would Forest Hills have received if they went with OFCC?

The district considered the utilization OFCC plans and funding for facilities projects. However, the district determined this was not a viable option because:

- state funding was not guaranteed;
- all Ohio districts are ranked according to local property value to determine which districts will receive funding first; Forest Hills is ranked very low on the list and the funding may not have been available when the district was eligible for a credit;
- If the district did receive funding, OFCC required the district to meet certain requirements that would cost more than the funding the district would receive;
- The community would have had to support a \$173 million plan for the district to be eligible to possibly receive an approximate 15% credit of the total \$173 million, and the community said in a scientific-survey that they did not support the \$173 million plan.

How do Forest Hills taxes compare with neighboring districts?

Forest Hills currently has the ninth lowest residential property tax rate out of 25 neighboring school districts.

Source: Hamilton and Warren County Auditors

What is a mill?

A mill is the factor applied to the taxable valuation of property to produce tax revenue. A mill is defined as one-tenth of a percent or one tenth of a cent (0.1¢) in cash terms.

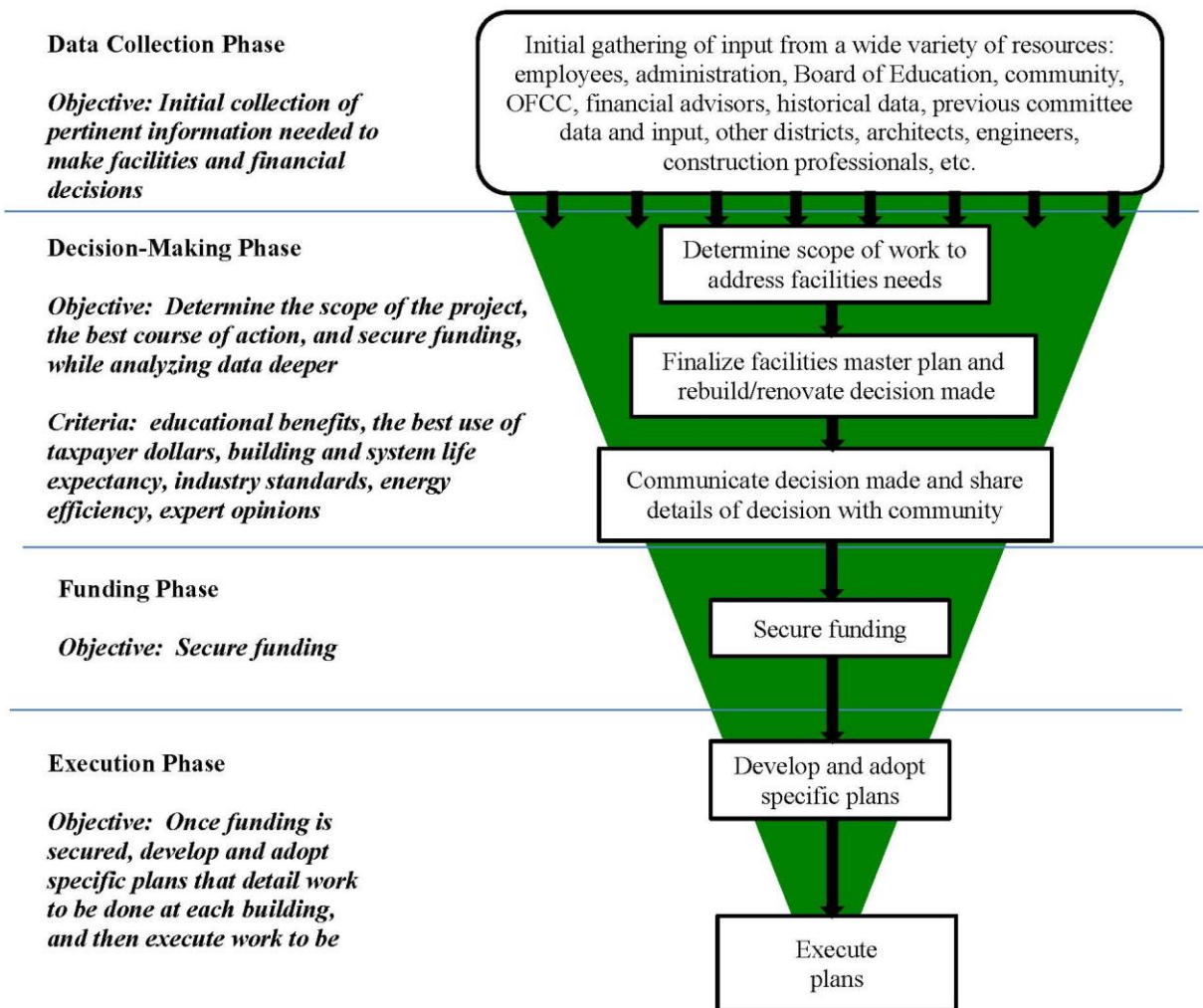
How can I ask a question regarding district facilities and/or funding options?

To submit a question regarding district facilities or funding options, individuals can email Erika Daggett, Communications Coordinator, at erikadaggett@foresthills.edu, with “facilities question” in the subject line. Questions that are pertinent to district facilities and funding will be posted on this FAQ.

TIMELINE AND PROCESS Q&A

What process is the Board using to make decisions about facilities?

The graphic below provides an overview of the Board’s decision process for facilities.



How and when will the district make design decisions?

More specific details of the project will be determined once funding is secured. In the interim, the district is currently, and will continue to, work with the community and staff to obtain input on how facilities can have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

How long will it take to complete the projects? When will work begin?

Facilities design work will begin immediately with the passage of the bond issue. Facilities work will begin in the late winter/early spring. All facilities work is anticipated to be completed in approximately 3.5 years.

MISC Q&A

What about full-day kindergarten?

The passage of this bond issue will allow the district to provide additional classroom space to accommodate the gradual implementation of full-day kindergarten.

How can I get more information? How can I get involved?

Facilities and funding information are posted on the Forest Hills website home page, www.foresthills.edu, under “Facilities”. Facilities will also be discussed during Forest Hills Board of Education meetings on August 25, September 22 and October 27. All of these meetings will occur at 7 p.m. in the Administration Building, 7550 Forest Road, and community members are encouraged to attend these meetings.

How will the district publicize meetings that will discuss facility and funding options?

The Board of Education will discuss facilities at all of their meetings until a resolution is reached. The dates, times, and locations of these meetings are posted on the district website. The district will work with local media to help spread information on meetings and this process as well, as well as include information in newsletters and on social media as space allows and needs arise.

Created 8/19/2014

Updated 9/9/2014

Updated 9/24/2014