

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOND ELECTION

February 4, 2003

RENTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

NOVEMBER 2002

Voters asked to continue school construction plan

Voters in the Renton School District will have an opportunity to vote on the final phase of the district's 20-year school building improvement plan. The Renton School Board will place the school building bond measure before voters on the February 4, 2003 ballot. Absentee ballots will be mailed out about mid-January.

This phase of the plan is the same as was presented to voters in February 2002. While that measure received overwhelming support, acquiring a majority of positive votes, it failed to reach the 60 percent "supermajority" mark. Of the 14,237 votes cast, the issue failed by less than 270 votes. (See inside for details.)

School tax rates to remain among the lowest in the region

The school improvements will be paid for with an estimated tax rate increase of less than .60 cents per thousand of assessed value.

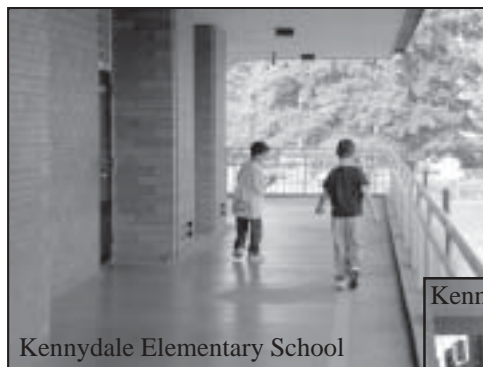
If passed, the **total** tax rate—including this bond, previous bonds and the voter-approved education levy—will be an estimated \$3.78 per/\$1,000 of assessed value, keeping the Renton School District tax rate among the lowest in the region.



A directional sign shows Benson Hill's detached design



Benson Hill Elementary School
The design of Benson Hill Elementary School—having students walk outside to pass between classrooms—is a significant health and safety concern.



Kennydale Elementary School

Kennydale Elementary School—whose entrance way allows unsupervised access to classrooms on the upper level and causes students to walk outside to pass between classrooms and go to the restroom—is a significant health and safety concern.



Kennydale's front entrance

Final phase of 20-year construction plan

This \$150 million bond issue will fund Phase III, the final phase of the district's 20-year facilities plan to renovate, renew or rebuild every building in the district. Voters have supported the plan by passing facilities bonds to fund construction improvements in Phases I and II. The district has built new schools where old ones cost too much to maintain, and renovated those that were still serviceable. Projects have been well managed and completed as planned.

Major projects in this final phase include continued safety upgrades at all schools, including seismic upgrades in case of natural disaster and improvements to school security measures. Also planned are significant technology upgrades and continued improvements in electrical, lighting, heating and ventilation systems to further reduce energy costs at all buildings.

Projects planned

School Construction

- Benson Hill Elementary School
- Kennydale Elementary School
- Hazelwood Elementary School
- Renton Park Elementary School

Improvements

- Roof replacements/improved drainage
- Restroom and locker room upgrades
- Exterior wall upgrades
- Play field improvements
- Fire code compliance updates
- Health code compliance updates
- Paving improvements
- Handicap accessibility upgrades

Technology for Students and Teachers

- Additional instructional computer labs
- Additional computer hardware and software
- Telecommunications improvements
- Server upgrades
- Classroom wiring/cable improvements
- Infrastructure improvements

Safety/Security

- Earthquake upgrades
- Security alarm upgrades
- Security lighting additions
- Separate car and bus drop off points
- Playground equipment upgrades
- Alarm and communication systems improvements
- Fire alarm systems upgrades
- Communication upgrades to portables
- Addition of emergency generators
- Improved access to play fields

Energy Conservation

- Upgrade interior and exterior lighting
- Replace building heating/cooling controls
- Upgrade windows
- Upgrade/replace heating and ventilation systems
- Replace boilers
- Replace electrical panels
- Install water conservation technology



Students at Lindbergh High School learn in portables while part of the school is upgraded.



Hazelwood Elementary School uses portables to provide basic programs.



Renton Park Elementary School does not have the electrical power needed to simultaneously run groups of computers while other devices are on.

Questions & Answers *about the bond...*

What is a school building construction bond?

It is a means of financing major school construction projects, much like a home mortgage. Citizens authorize the district to offer bonds to investors and pledge repayment through property taxes collected over a specified number of years. Bond monies, by law, can only be used for school building construction, remodeling or specified capital improvement projects; they cannot be used for teacher and staff salary increases or other operating expenses.

If approved, how will the bond affect my taxes?

The school improvements will be paid for with an estimated tax rate increase of less than .60 cents per thousand of assessed value. If passed, the **total** tax rate—including this bond, previous bonds and the voter-approved education levy—will be an estimated \$3.78 per/\$1,000 of assessed value, keeping the Renton School District tax rate among the lowest in the region.

How were the individual bond projects and their costs determined?

A committee of citizens and staff studied the district's facility needs during the 2000-01 school year. They recommended completing the district facility renovation plan. Phase I, which focused on many elementary and middle schools, was completed in 1998. Phase II focused on high schools, district-wide safety, technology and athletic fields. Most of those projects are complete; a few are currently under construction. This bond is Phase III of that long-range plan. Cost estimates are based on recommendations from outside construction engineers and other industry professionals.

Why are you fixing schools that look OK to me?

With hundreds of students in classes each day, schools wear out at a faster rate than homes. Many renovations are for things such as plumbing, electrical, heating, roofing, seismic (earthquakes, other natural disasters), upgrades/replacements and safety and security systems. Building codes for public facilities are much more safety-oriented now than in years past. It is important to upgrade buildings to current standards as they age in order to provide a safe environment for students. The cost of maintaining the current heating, cooling and air-quality systems in our older buildings is claiming too many of our maintenance dollars.

Why rebuild a school rather than simply remodeling existing facilities?

In most cases, it is more cost effective to rebuild rather than to remodel. Estimates are that it costs about \$8.5 million to remodel a typical elementary school. To rebuild is an estimated \$10 million. With a new building, you gain space to provide for future growth, use materials that have warranties that last many years longer than replaced materials, provide special purpose spaces such as computer labs and performance stages, and make better use of existing land (saving costs to buy land for additions). Construction codes, safety and security codes, access for the disabled, and many other building regulations often prescribe a total rebuild of some school buildings.

School districts need a “supermajority” to pass elections. What is a supermajority?

Under the state constitution, school election issues need at least a 60 percent “yes” vote to pass a levy or bond issue, not the simple majority needed by almost all other elections including those to build ball fields and prisons. Across the state, school districts have failed levy or bond measures by only a few votes, even when they received more than 59 percent of the votes; a majority of votes in most other elections.

Keeping promises to taxpayers

Pictured are some of the projects paid past phases of voter-approved school construction bond measures.



Campbell Hill Elementary School



Renton High School & IKEA Performing Arts Center



Hazen High commons



Hazen High School auditorium



Renton High commons



Lakeridge Elementary School



Talbot Hill Elementary School



Tiffany Park Elementary School



McKnight Middle School

For more information about the Renton School District bond election, contact the Community Relations Office at 425.204.2345 or visit the district's Web site at www.renton.wednet.edu