



1. Why are you considering a referendum now?

After wrapping up projects to close out our previous Facilities Maintenance Plan, the District began working on the next 10-Year Facilities Maintenance Plan. From December 2022 to March 2023, the District conducted a Facility Study including an Existing Conditions Assessment and Educational Space/Capacity Analysis to determine the safety, accessibility, and conditions of our buildings and sites as well as the functional use of our spaces.

Portions of our buildings, including the building systems, equipment, furniture, and finishes within them are original to the 1964, 1977, 1981, and 1999 construction and have exceeded life expectancy requiring costly repairs that exceed our annual operating budget. Even our newest facilities are nearly 25 years old and are beginning to have normal maintenance issues due to age.

Though our staff does a phenomenal job maintaining our buildings, the costs associated with major building system improvements are extremely high. Much like a home, when the cost to repair exceeds the budget, borrowing funds for larger-scale improvements is necessary, and doing more at one time can save money.

2. Why doesn't the District's operating budget cover the needed maintenance?

The current school funding formula does not allow districts to keep up with the increasing costs associated with funding normal school operations.

The 22-23 school district had general operating expenses of around 7 million dollars. While the district budgets for yearly maintenance and maintains a Fund 46 Capital Improvement account to save funds for larger capital projects, the majority of the 7 million goes to day-to-day operations like salaries/benefits, utilities, routine maintenance, insurance, supplies, etc. To maintain facilities on a larger scale, the Wisconsin school funding system relies on capital improvement referendums

Wisconsin Act 16 implemented per-pupil revenue limits beginning with the 1993-94 school year. Being a low-spending district, Rib Lake was capped lower per pupil than higher-spending districts at that time.

Furthermore, under the 2009-11 Wisconsin State Budget Act, the inflation adjustment was deleted bringing the per pupil revenue amount more than 15 years behind the consumer price index (CPI) inflation rate after the current biennial budget period (2023-2025).

This scenario is not unique to Rib Lake. In fact, 89% of Wisconsin school districts currently have active referendums.

3. What would the referendum plan included in the survey cost me?

If passed, the referendum will have the following estimated tax increase using 2022-2023 property values and school district budget. For a fair fair market property value of \$100,000 the portion of your property taxes that are allocated to the School District of Rib Lake would be projected to increase by the following:

- Base Plan: \$220.00 per year or \$18.33 per month
- Community Daycare Facility: \$22.00 per year or \$1.83 per month
- Athletic Updates: \$17.00 per year or \$1.42 per month

Please note, as fair market property value increases, the total project cost remains the same. In turn, if property value increases, the estimated tax would decrease accordingly.

4. With reassessments on our properties, is now a good time to consider a referendum?

The District recognizes that a financial ask of any size cannot be taken lightly. We have diligently worked to build a plan that addresses our most pressing needs, increases academic opportunities for our students, and aligns with the desires of our community. We understand that recent reassessments may have more community members questioning their future tax bills.

While we cannot control portions of property taxes outside what the District levies, we are focused on thoughtful planning to ensure our investments have minimal impact on taxpayers and improvements are carefully prioritized to positively impact student outcomes.

For example, repurposing the existing gym allows us to provide adequate space to support our amazing band and choir programs.

5. What happens if the community is not supportive of the proposed referendum plan?

Regardless of whether this plan is supported, we know we have to invest in our facilities. Our 10-year maintenance estimates exceed \$13 million to simply address our needs in our current buildings as is. When investing this amount, it's important to consider the overall return on our investment. If we are opening up our walls and ceilings to address major mechanical issues, we feel it's of more value to provide more efficient and functional spaces that meet our academic standards today and well into the future than to simply put the spaces back together as they are today.

6. If enrollment is steady, why are you proposing an addition to the Middle/High School?

The safety of our students and staff is our top priority. The standard for schools across the country is to provide fully secured buildings during the school day. Due to our current configuration, our middle and high school students and staff must exit the building throughout the day to move from one building to the other for classes. Connecting our buildings through an addition allows us to provide efficiency while meeting important safety standards.

During community input sessions we evaluated multiple options to connect the buildings ranging from a simple hallway to the proposed plan which includes a replacement gym. The community and staff feedback overwhelmingly supported repurposing our undersized existing gym to serve band and performance space needs and adding an appropriately sized gym to accommodate extracurricular opportunities.

7. Why is the District considering renovating space for a licensed child care center?

Today, there is a child care shortage throughout the state of Wisconsin. Taylor County currently has only 11 licensed child care centers including ten in Medford and one in Gilman. Rib Lake does not have a licensed child care center which may require Rib Lake parents to take their children outside of our community for child care. Some of these kids never return to our schools, ultimately impacting enrollment and reducing our state funding.

Many schools have or are considering incorporating space for a licensed child care center to operate. These centers can be operated privately or through the district. In addition to potential enrollment benefits, common factors schools consider in providing these spaces are teacher recruitment/retention and early childhood training/job opportunities for high school students.

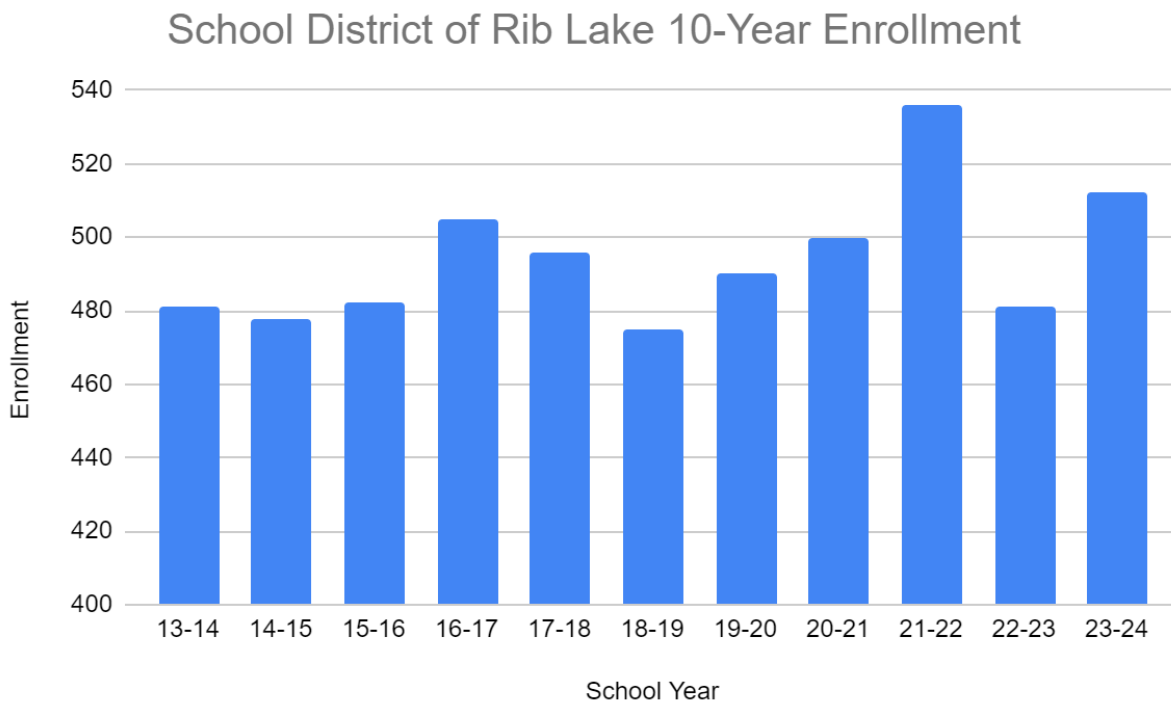
Through our facility study, we identified spaces in our Middle and High Schools that were underutilized. By reconfiguring and consolidating classrooms we have enough space to dedicate to a child care center.

8. Why are we not updating more athletics spaces?

We recognize the impact the referendum, if approved, will have on District residents' taxes. We intend to include the improvements we feel have a direct impact on educating our students and the areas in critical need of repair or replacement to operate efficiently. We are asking our community for feedback on addressing our most critical athletics improvements and would look to prioritize additional improvements over time as well as investigate other funding options for these.

9. How has our enrollment changed in the last 10 years?

Despite a decline in Wisconsin rural school enrollments over the past century, the School District of Rib Lake has held steady. Year to year there are slight changes, but 6 out of the last 10 years saw an increase in enrollment between years. The 2013-2014 school year we had 481 students and in the current school year we have an enrollment of 512 students.



10. What all is involved with light renovation? What is involved with heavy renovation?

Light renovation is classified as areas where updates are needed to interior finishes like flooring, ceilings, and paint in poor/worn condition. Heavy renovation is classified as areas where building reconfiguration like moving walls or extensive systems updates occurs.

11. Why do we need to connect the schools? What classes currently do students travel between buildings for? What classes do teachers travel between buildings for?

Connecting middle and high schools allows students and staff the ability to transition safely and securely between both buildings, utilize our spaces more efficiently, and reduce renovation costs.

Contrary to safety and security standards in schools, our students exit one building to transition outside before entering the other school for tech ed, business/technology, band, and choir. Staff transition between buildings for art, Spanish, family and consumer science, high school study hall, and food service. Connecting the buildings significantly limits the amount of time our buildings are vulnerable.

The proposed connection also addresses our need for a secure main entrance by creating one efficient fully secure entrance/office space to serve our middle and high schools. The current plan also includes the addition of fully accessible bathrooms to meet current building codes without the need for costly renovation.

12. What is the expected timeline for the completed project?

If the project is approved in an April 2024 referendum, the design phase would begin promptly and be completed by the end of December 2024. There will be continued staff and community input opportunities while the detailed design is developed. Construction is projected to begin in early spring of 2025 and to be complete for the start of the 2026-27 school year.