



FAQs

1. Why now?

Although we are still navigating the current impacts of COVID-19 while trying to understand what the future holds, we have learned a lot about this experience. One of our takeaways is the importance of a physical school building to our students, staff, and community. Although virtual learning does work for some students, the majority of them prefer to learn, and ultimately thrive, in an actual school building.

That being said, we will be back to normal at some point in the future and our facility needs will remain unchanged. Much like a 50-year-old home with its original systems and rooms, the high school needs investment to make sure it is a safe, welcoming, and innovative place to learn for years to come. Costly repairs are made every year to maintain out-of-date and inefficient systems. However, it is time to replace them and upgrade our learning spaces to meet the current and future educational needs of our students.

At the same time, interest rates are the lowest they have been in our lifetimes. These significant investments will cost taxpayers less if they are made while interest rates remain low.

2. Why MASH?

Medford Area Senior High (MASH) opened in 1968 and is the oldest building in the district. Although MASH has been very well maintained, many of its major systems (heating, ventilating, electrical, and plumbing) are close to the end of their useful lives. These items are very costly to repair and replace.

Along with age and the way teaching and learning has evolved over the past 50 years, there are educational challenges with the current building. Today's higher education spaces and even professional office buildings, approach work differently. There is more space for teams to collaborate, and flexible furniture to allow for personalized learning and development. To prepare our students for life after high school, aligning their educational experience to post-secondary careers, college, and community is essential.

3. What does STEM or STEAM mean?

STEM or STEAM is an instructional approach that blends: science (S), technology (T), engineering (E), art and/or agriculture (A), and math (M) to give our students cutting edge skills so they are ready to tackle whatever field they choose to pursue.

4. Certain job preparation is needed within our community. What can these projects offer our students at the high school?

The high school redesign includes renovation of the existing Technical Education spaces with a new connection to the rest of the school. This connection will include expanded Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Agriculture, and Math (STEAM) programming, which will provide investments in Career and Technical Education workshops, labs, and classrooms.

5. Will there be opportunities for local businesses to be part of the projects if the referendum passes?

The district always strives to hire and engage as many local businesses as possible throughout the year. The potential referendum projects will not be handled any differently. Our construction manager, J.H. Findorff & Son Inc. has a long track record of using local businesses, vendors, and subcontractors on their projects. They understand the value local businesses who employ local people bring to their work - especially when they're being funded by local taxpayers.

Should the referendum pass there will be opportunities to learn about the scope of the projects as we move through design. We will communicate well ahead of bid day so that any of our great local businesses have an opportunity to be part of the work.

6. Why is there an additional gymnasium part of the proposed projects? Isn't one gym enough?

When the high school first opened in 1968 we didn't have WIAA sanctioned girls athletic teams. We had 12 athletic teams total, and today we have 6X for both girls' and boys' sports. This means that our students are in the gym before and after school, oftentimes late into the evening for practice. Our spring sports begin the season inside due to the weather which puts additional strain on the facility's capacity.

When it comes to physical education classes, our current gym is also used during the school day for other activities. Every year the following different events need the use of the gym:

- picture day

- Veteran's Day
- an art show in spring and fall
- the student reality fair
- band and choir concerts

While these events are taking place, our physical education classes need to either go outside or into the fitness center.

Our community uses the current gymnasium as often as time allows since we give preference to our students. Whether it's womens or mens volleyball and basketball leagues, club youth and adult sport teams, quilt shows, the Boy Scouts, or the Girl Scouts, we do our best to accommodate our community members.

Having another gym would allow more opportunities for physical education class options, athletic practices, hosting sports tournaments, and more availability for community use. As part of the safety and security upgrades to the school, the proposed location of the gym having exterior access directly from the parking lot would provide ease-of-use and allow the district to close off the remainder of the school from the public.

7. How long is the borrowing period of the \$39.9 million loan? And will the tax increase extend the entire time frame?

State law does not let us amortize a debt issue for more than 20 years. It is estimated that the debt portion of the taxes would go up \$53 on a \$100,000 property, and remain at that level for the life of the 20 year loan.

8. Why do we need a larger Red/White Theater?

The current Red/White Theater holds around 350 people. With a new, larger facility that would hold at least 500 people the majority of our students would fit for assemblies. The stage would also be larger and would enable us to hold our band and choir concerts in the theater rather than in the gymnasium.

As part of the safety and security upgrades to the school, the proposed location of the theater having exterior access directly from the parking lot would provide ease-of-use and allow the district to close off the remainder of the school from the public.