



Whitefish Bay
SCHOOL DISTRICT

An Exceptional Place to Learn

A Focused Path Forward

September, October, November 2026

[Website](#)





Facilities Planning: Timeline

Spring 2026 Election Preparation

Strategic Oversight: Strategic Planning, Charter, & Facilities Advisory Council Review	Feedback and Analysis: Focus Groups, Community Survey, Community Information Sessions, Board Discussions	Referendum Vote: \$135.6M bond defeated by 302 votes
Jan 2023 - Aug 2025	Sept 2025 - Apr 2026	April 2026

Fall 2026 Election Preparation

Feedback and Analysis: Focus Groups, Community Survey, Board Discussions	Ballot Question Approval: The Board approved adding a question to the November ballot	Feedback and Analysis: Board Discussions, Community Information Sessions	Referendum Vote: Voters decide on refined \$90.0M bond
May - Aug 2026	August 19, 2026	Aug - Nov 2026	Nov 2026



Our Guiding Compass: The Focus Plan

- Safe, caring, and inclusive schools
- Student-centered learning environments
- Educational equity and excellence
- Stewardship and integrity



**Whitefish Bay**
SCHOOL DISTRICT



FOCUS PLAN

VISION An Exceptional Place to Learn

MISSION The Whitefish Bay School District, in partnership with families and community, is student-centered with a tradition of educational excellence that:

- Supports the individual needs of the whole child in a safe, caring, and inclusive learning environment;
- Empowers students with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and character necessary to thrive in an ever-changing, global society so that students are life, career, and college ready;
- Honors the diversity of all students and the pursuit of educational equity*.

VALUES

Educational Equity and Excellence:
We maintain high expectations for personal growth and achievement.

Tradition and Innovation:
We acknowledge the past and commit to continuous improvement.

Safety and Well-being:
We strive for a safe and welcoming environment that fosters individual and collective welfare.

Individual and Community:
We develop the talents and skills of individual learners and collaborative teams.

Stewardship and Integrity:
We serve through principled and strategic decision-making and allocation of resources.

GOALS

Learn: Every student will continuously grow to meet or exceed academic learning targets and social emotional competencies.	Work: Every staff member will experience an environment where they are valued, developed, and supported.	Engage: The community will be provided with opportunities to be involved in activities that promote collective growth, learning, and well-being.
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*Educational Equity "means that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, across race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2023).

School Board Approved: April 10, 2024



Why We are Here



We will:

- **Thoughtfully Respond:** Scaled back borrowing to \$90M (a **reduction of \$45.6M**), removed all land acquisition, and focused on rebuilding *and* renovating on the Middle School site.
- **Enhance Protection:** Overhaul essential fire safety systems across three schools and replace aging High School heating and cooling systems.
- **Modernize Spaces:** Replace rigid Middle School classrooms with flexible learning spaces, modern science labs, and collaborative areas.
- **Improve Efficiencies:** Address deferred facility maintenance now to protect our day-to-day operating budget for staff, programs, and class sizes.





Building Futures



In preparation for the final part of the session, your small group will:

1. Discuss any questions, new learning you might have at this point.
2. Share out any common, emerging question(s) or new learning to the larger group.



Exceptional Place to Engage: Listen and Learn





Exceptional Place to Engage: Listen and Learn



“In partnership with families and community” (Focus Plan, 2024)

- Over 2,100 survey responses
- Over 170 community focus group participants





Exceptional Place to Engage: Listen and Learn



Significant Scope Reduction: Major Scope Cut: Reduced borrowing from the unsuccessful April referendum by **\$45.6M**, bringing the new target down to **\$90M**.

Excluded Projects:



Lydell: Facility updates removed.



Cumberland & Richards: Elementary HVAC, safety/security upgrades, and accessibility improvements removed, infrastructure repairs cut (plumbing, electrical, brickwork, and foundation work).



High School: Safety/security upgrades, and accessibility improvements removed, infrastructure repairs cut (plumbing, electrical, brickwork, and foundation work).



Exceptional Place to Engage: Targeted \$90M Bond Scope



Middle School Rebuild *and* Renovate (\$68.4M): Multi-year overhaul on current site footprint without acquiring outside land.



High School Upgrades (\$35.5M): Full mechanical HVAC replacement, plus code-required fire protection and fire alarm system overhauls.



Cumberland & Richards Elementary (\$4M): Modern code-required fire protection systems and alarm upgrades.



The school district plans to contribute \$17.9 million of funding in addition to the \$90 million referendum which will be integrated into the projects listed above.



An Exceptional Place to Learn and Work: Rebuild *and* Renovate the Middle School





Exceptional Place to Learn and Work: Student-Centered Middle School





Exceptional Place to Learn and Work: Student-Centered Middle School





Exceptional Place to Learn and Work: Student-Centered Middle School



Exceptional Place to Learn and Work: Student-Centered Middle School



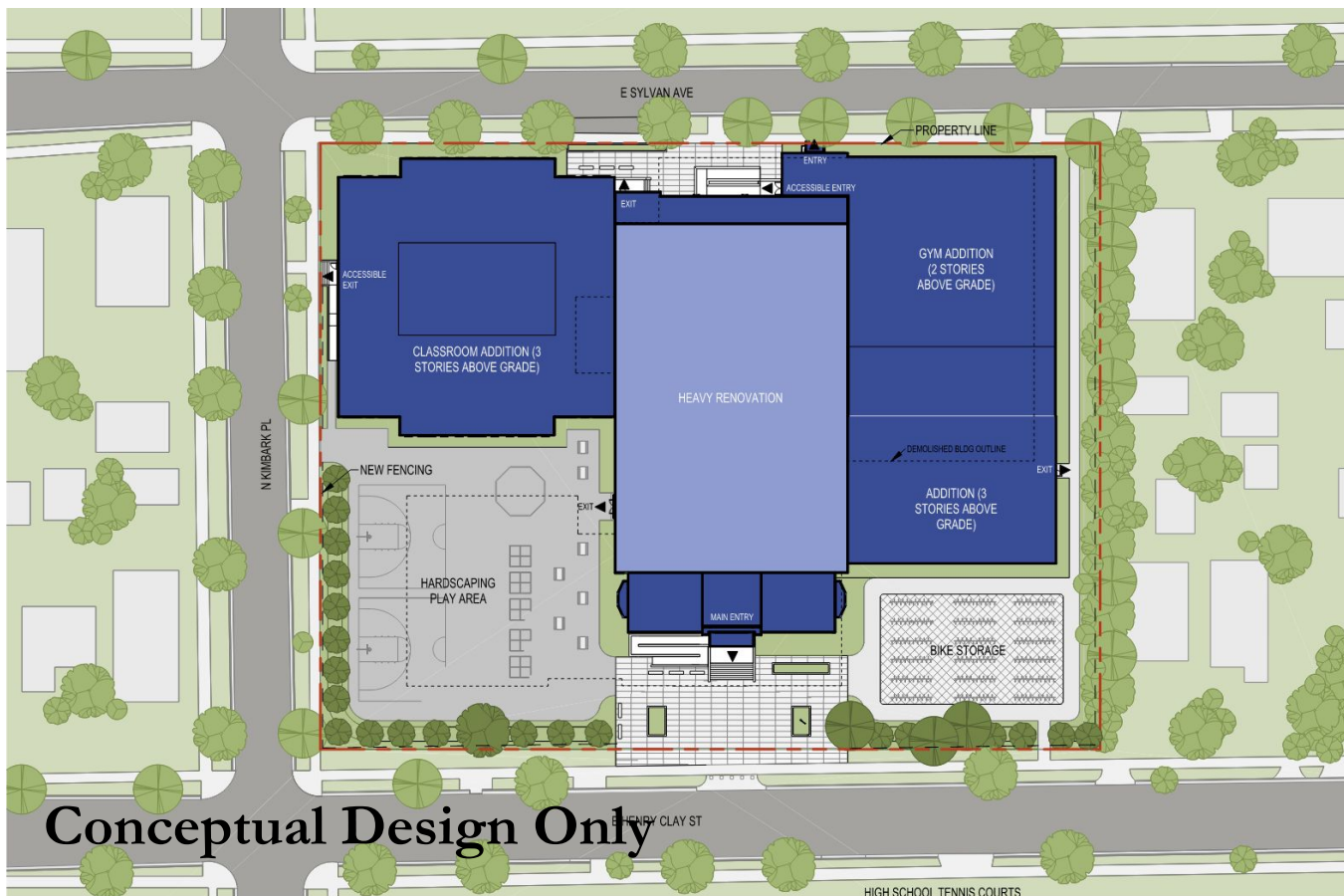


Exceptional Place to Learn and Work: Student-Centered Middle School





Middle School: Site Plan



Conceptual Design Only



Middle School: Floorplan

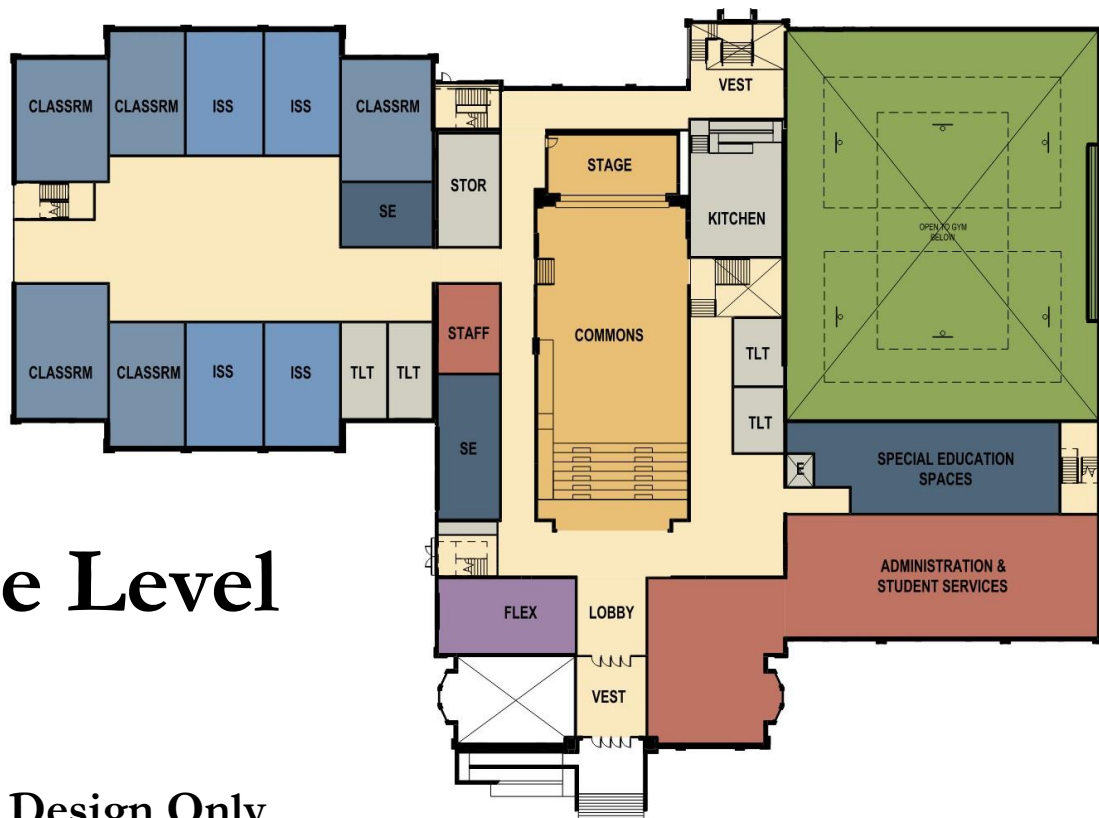


Lower Level

Conceptual Design Only



Middle School: Floorplan



Middle Level

Conceptual Design Only



Middle School: Floorplan



Upper Level

Conceptual Design Only



Middle School: Renderings





Middle School: Renderings



Middle School: Phasing (video)



Whitefish Bay
SCHOOL DISTRICT

An Exceptional Place to Learn
2026 Referendum

Middle School Renovation





Middle School: Construction Safety and Security



- **Student and Staff Safety:** Maintaining a safe environment throughout school construction is CD Smith's fundamental responsibility to students, staff and the broader community.
- **Physical Isolation:** Temporary partitions, fencing, controlled access points and mechanical system isolation to completely wall off construction zones and prevent dust migration.
- **Schedule Optimization:** High-noise or disruptive activities scheduled strategically during non-school hours, weekends, school break or periods of low occupancy.
- **Proactive Site Controls:** Rigorous housekeeping, air quality monitoring, and precise logistics/traffic management plans.
- **Stakeholder Communication:** Ongoing coordination with school staff to maintain transparency, regarding active work zones and daily operations.



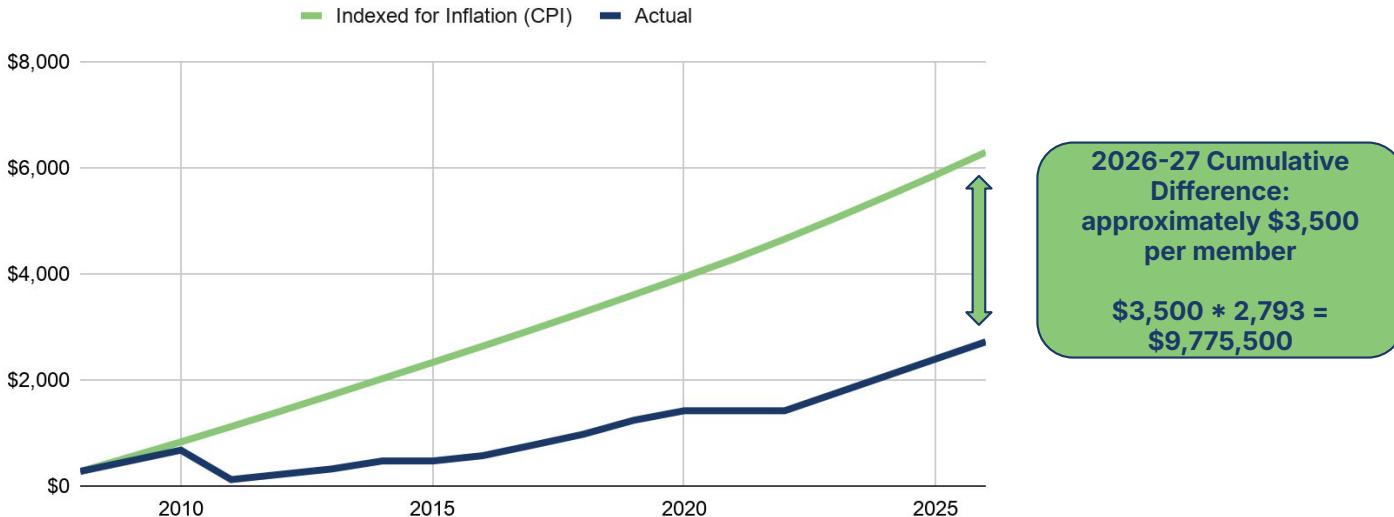
Finance and Funding





Public School Funding

Per Pupil Funding Increases: Inflation vs Actual



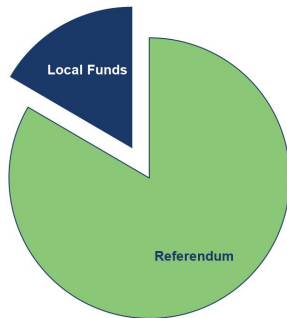
Wisconsin public schools have not received an inflationary increase from the state since 2008-09. Even with limited funding, costs continue to rise for school districts resulting in many schools needing to make significant cuts into their educational programs or having to pursue an operational referendum. This shortfall represents roughly 20% less buying power compared to 2009 and a funding gap of over \$9.7 million for Whitefish Bay.

Source: Kava, Russ (January 9, 2023) Legislative Fiscal Bureau Memo re: Revenue Limit Per Pupil Adjustment Indexed for Inflation; Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), PTMA Financial Solutions, Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated





Long-Term Capital Planning



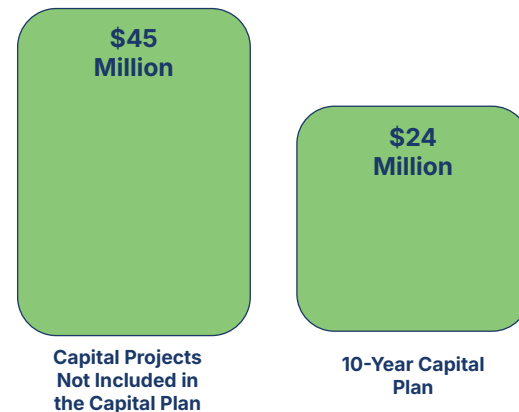
The District plans to contribute \$17.9 million from local funds that were already designated for long-term capital projects to help reduce the total referendum project amount and, as a result, reduce the tax impact on the community.

Our current 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan includes two primary project categories:

- **Budgeted Projects:** Approximately \$24 million in identified work planned and scheduled over the next 10 years.
- **Unfunded Projects:** Approximately \$45 million in additional facility needs that have been identified, but are not currently budgeted.

If the referendum is approved:

- This proposed referendum would address the most urgent needs within our facilities and reduce the total amount and cost of projects currently included in the district's 10-year capital plan and list of un-budgeted capital projects by an estimated \$42 million.





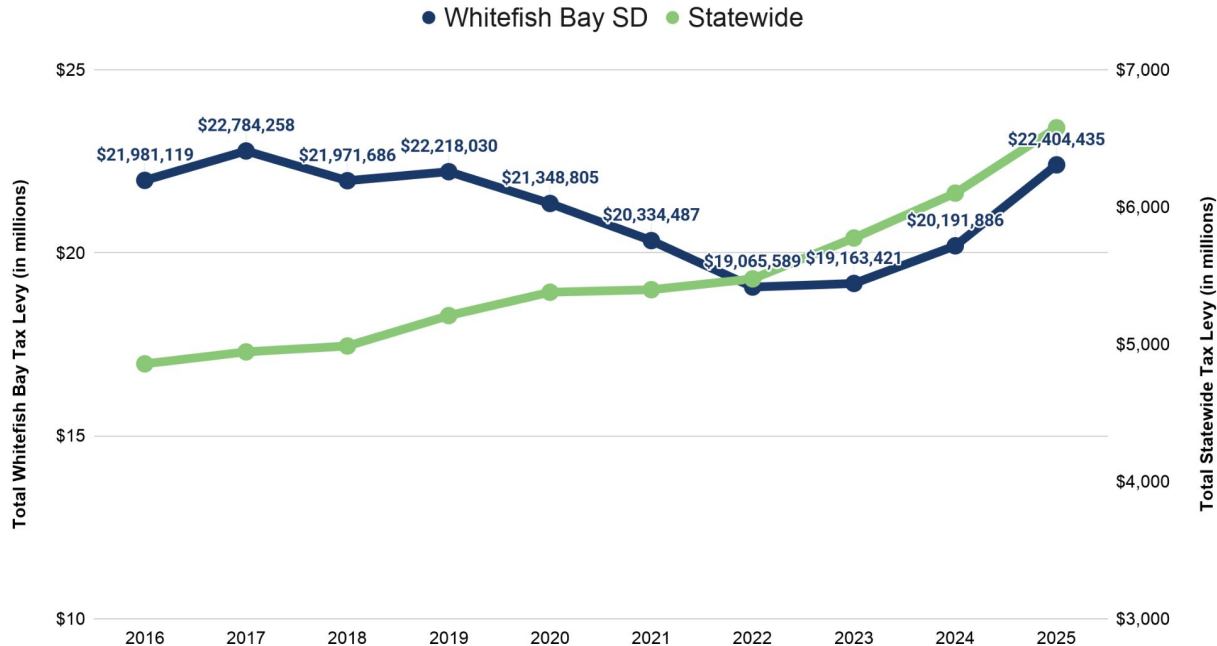
Exceptional Place to Learn and Work: Protecting Classroom Instruction

- Made up of community members, parents, staff, and students, the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) identified over \$325 million of capital projects as part of their facility review process.
- Facility needs will not vanish if the referendum fails. Without long-term bond funding, emergency repairs must be paid through **Fund 10** (the operational budget).
- Diverting operational funds to fix failing boilers or roofs will require **significant program cuts, reduced staffing, and instructional sacrifices** within 5 to 10 years.



Tax Levy History

Total School Tax Levy History



After a slight decline in the total tax levy starting in 2020, the total levy amount for the Whitefish Bay School District has increased over the last few years due to a number of factors including the state budget, private school vouchers, and the final debt payments from the 2009 referendum. The total levy amount for Whitefish Bay School District for 2025 is less than the total amount levied in 2017.

Source: Department of Public Instruction

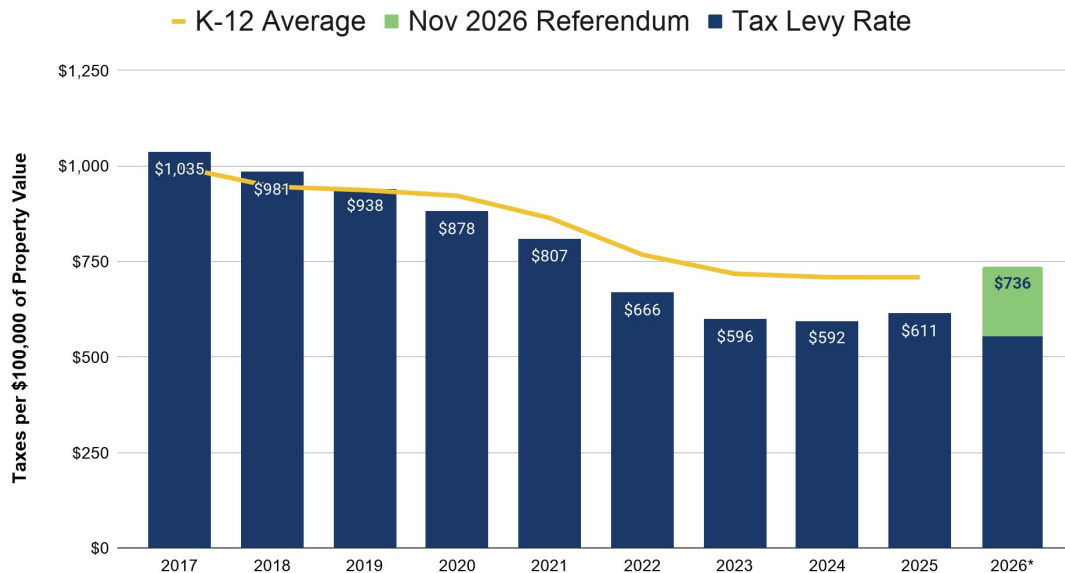




Tax Levy History



Tax Levy Rate History



The tax levy rate for the Whitefish Bay School District has decreased by over 40% in the last ten years and has stayed below the state average in each of the last six years. The estimated 2026-27 tax levy rate is \$736 if the November 3, 2026 capital referendum is approved by the community. This estimated tax levy rate does not include any increases to equalized valuation.

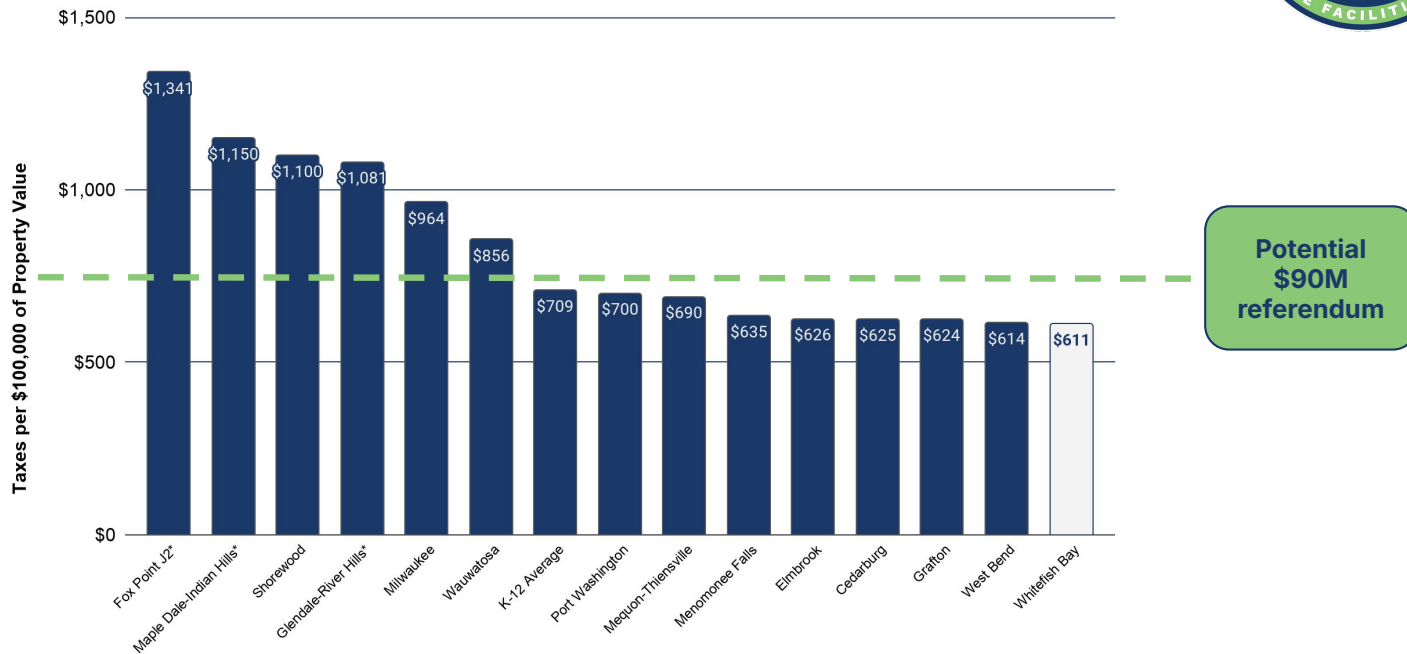
*The tax levy rate for the current year will be an estimate until General Aid is certified in mid-October and will be impacted by the outcome of the November 3, 2026 capital referendum.
Source: Department of Public Instruction



Tax Levy Comparison



2025-26 Property Tax Rates (per \$100,000 of Property Value)



The Whitefish Bay School District has one of the lowest tax levy rates in the area and is below the K-12 average in Wisconsin.

*Combined K-8 Grade School plus Nicolet UHS
Source: Department of Public Instruction



School District Tax Levy Impact

Referendum Cost NOT TO EXCEED: \$90 Million	Estimated AVERAGE ANNUAL School Property Net Tax Impact:	Estimated AVERAGE MONTHLY School Property Net Tax Impact:
Per \$100,000 of property value	\$125 ⁰⁰	\$10 ⁴²
Per \$575,000 of property value (median value in Whitefish Bay)	\$718 ⁷⁵	\$59 ⁹⁰
Per \$685,800 of property value (average value in Whitefish Bay)	\$857 ²⁵	\$71 ⁴⁴

Preliminary tax impact estimates assume borrowing over a 22-year period at an interest rate of 4.5%. The District paid off the remaining debt obligations from the November 2009 referendum in June 2026 and the impact of those final payments is included in these estimates. The tax levy impact of the November 2009 referendum debt was \$57 per \$100,000 of property value.

Source: PTMA Financial Solutions, Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated





Your Needs: Transparent Public Resources



Tax Impact Estimator: Online tool for residents to view estimated property tax impacts.

Facility Assessments: Complete architectural reports and HVAC engineering diagnostic data.

FAQ & Feedback Portal: Submit questions directly to district administrators and district partners (architect, construction manager, and owner's representative).



Time for a Tour





Opportunity for Questions and Answers





Building Futures

1. Discuss any questions, new learning you might have at this point.
2. Share out any common, emerging question(s) or new learning to the larger group.
3. Choose 1 person to share out for your group.

03:00





Staying Informed and Questions about the Process

- You can visit our **Facilities Long-Range Planning [webpage](#)** for additional updates on any next steps.
- If you have a **question about the referendum** you can [submit a question](#).



Website
with slides



Questions?





Building Futures

Thank you for your engagement in this facilities planning process. This work has the potential to benefit current and future students as well as community members.

