

# Austin High School Bond Program Facts

MythBusters

## REAL FACTS ABOUT THE PLAN TO REBUILD AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL.

The beautiful new Austin High School has been designed to prepare students for college and careers with modern facilities and integrated technology, while preserving the architecturally and historically significant building structure. The goal is to create a campus that will attract both neighborhood and magnet students and continue to provide a foundation for academic excellence for generations of students.

Input from parents, students, teachers, staff, alumni, and community members has been sought and incorporated throughout the development of the project design, which features new enlarged classrooms and science labs, gymnasiums, CTE spaces, plenty of natural light and outdoor views, an enhanced area for the school's maritime careers program, fine arts, JROTC and more.

**Myth: Students will be relocated to Attucks Middle School and the Jones campus for two to four years.**

Fact: Students will **remain on campus and in temporary buildings on adjacent property.**

**Myth: Students will spend two hours being bussed to other schools**

Fact: Because students will remain on campus during construction, **bussing will not be needed.**

**Myth: Enrollment will drop by 800 students during construction, causing the school budget to decrease by \$2.7 million.**

Fact: Some students may choose to go to other schools during construction, but any loss in enrollment is likely to be temporary. **New schools tend to attract as many, if not more, students.** Research shows that new school buildings have a positive impact on academic achievement. Daylighting, improved ventilation and air quality, and larger classrooms with better acoustics all play a role in learning outcomes. Students and staff will benefit from a modern, safe and healthy learning environment.

**Myth: The new school is too small and won't accommodate future growth on the East End.**

Fact: The new school will accommodate 1,800 to 2,000 students, as approved by voters in 2012. All schools within the district use a similar process to forecast student enrollment, including analysis of data on population, births and housing, regional economic forecasts, and private and charter school programs, as well as interviews with other organizations — such as housing and municipal authorities, developers and builders — to better understand future development trends. The district also considers factors that may impact a school's enrollment, including transfer data, attendance zones, facility capacity, and programs at nearby campuses.

For Austin High School, specifically, district research shows that over the next 10 years, births and transfers will affect this attendance zone more than any other factor. This part of the city has been the epicenter of birth decline in the metro region. Unlike other areas, the annual 25 to 30 percent drop in births has not recovered since the recession. Aging populations, aging homes, changing birth rates, and development due to proximity to downtown and University of Houston/Texas Southern University are all factors contributing to the birth decline. In addition, enrollment at Austin's two feeder middle schools has stayed stagnant over the past four years. Finally, nearly 900 Austin students transfer to other high schools in HISD. Another 500 students zoned to Austin transfer to charter campuses or other public school districts. **The 1,800 to 2,000 student capacity of the new Austin High School will accommodate the forecasted student population for at least the next decade.**

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**Myth:** The new school will have fewer classrooms and the teachers may float or share spaces.

**Fact:** The building, including all new and renovated spaces, will be 284,482 square feet and is **designed to have 82 teaching stations, which includes classrooms for core classes, special education, career and technology programs, art, music, physical education and grad labs and JROTC.** Whether teachers share spaces will depend on the master schedule, as well as the number of students and teachers.

**Myth:** The new school uses its square footage less efficiently, and there is less space for students to interact.

**Fact:** The **new building is designed to maximize the amount of space dedicated to learning** by eliminating square footage in areas not used by students and transferring that space to learning centers **and common areas that will enhance interaction and collaboration.**

Currently, building support functions — walls, corridors, elevators, and mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems — take up more than 38 percent of all the space in the existing Austin High School. In the new building, those functions will take up just 28 percent of the space. The result is a much more space-efficient building. The new classrooms are designed to have 850 square feet of instructional space, up from the current size range of 620 to 700 square feet. Science labs will be nearly twice that size.

The proposed learning and dining commons are designed to accommodate nearly 1,900 students and follow Texas Educational Agency rules and requirements, which guide the planning and design of all HISD schools.

The proposed new dining commons is 10,132 square feet, which is bigger than the 9,755 square feet required under TEA requirements. The proposed new learning commons is 8,355 square feet, which is bigger than the 7,150 square feet required under TEA requirements. Both of these spaces will be designed for collaboration and socialization among students during the entire school day. In addition, the new building creates extended learning areas throughout the building that will allow for more student collaboration and interaction.

**Myth:** If the project is postponed, we will be able to build a “bigger and better Austin.”

**Fact:** Construction costs have continued to rise since the inception of the bond program, though they currently are rising at a slower rate than seen in 2015. **The cost of construction and related materials today will be less than the cost a year or two from now.** The goal is to maximize the value of bond dollars and supplemental funding allocated to Austin, and that can best be achieved by proceeding with the current schedule, not delaying the project.

**Myth:** HISD doesn't want to use the land it owns on the north side of Lockwood for Austin.

**Fact:** **HISD is currently looking at the lot as a possible location for temporary buildings that will be needed during construction.** The district is analyzing a variety of factors, including cost of the temporary buildings and regulatory requirements imposed by the City of Houston. Once that analysis is complete, the findings will be reviewed with the school administration and the Project Advisory Team. Any future use of this land, including proposed athletic/practice fields, will depend on the availability of funding. Those improvements are not part of the current design plan and are outside the scope of the bond program.

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