

**HISD Bond Package Would Rebuild High Schools, Address Campus Needs in Neighborhoods Across Houston**

*Aging high schools would be converted into campuses designed to meet 21st Century educational needs*

*June 21, 2012* – Forty-two schools across Houston, including 24 high schools, would be rebuilt, renovated, or renewed under a recommended bond package presented for the HISD Board of Education’s consideration on Thursday.

**The board must decide by August whether to seek approval of the $1.89 billion proposal from Houston Independent School District voters during the Nov. 6 general election.**

While including nearly $225 million in recommended projects that would benefit students at all 279 schools in the district, the proposed bond package focuses heavily on the city’s high schools. HISD’s most recent bond programs approved by voters in 1998, 2002 and 2007 have primarily addressed needs at the elementary school level. The average age of HISD secondary schools now stands at 50 years, compared to 39 years for the district’s elementary schools.

Many of these schools were designed to meet the needs of students in the 1950s and are no longer able to accommodate the best instructional approaches for helping today’s students meet rising academic expectations, according to independent school facilities experts who presented their findings to the board on Thursday.

Superintendent Terry Grier agreed the district’s high schools are long overdue for major improvements.

“Houston’s prosperity of today is rooted in the historic high schools erected generations ago by our city’s visionary leaders who knew the value of a solid long-term investment,” Dr. Grier said. “Now is the time for today’s generation to step up and follow their lead. Houston’s high schools should be places of pride for every neighborhood and, more importantly, the students they serve. Just like the baby boomers of the 1950s, our children today deserve modern campuses that will bring real value to their neighborhoods for the 50 years to come.”

The proposed bond package would completely rebuild some of Houston’s most historic neighborhood high schools across the city, while others would undergo renovations and renewals. The proposal also includes new campuses for some of HISD’s prestigious specialty magnet schools, including the nationally renowned High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. The new HSPVA would be built downtown near Houston’s vaunted Theater District on land that HISD already owns at 1300 Capitol.

**The proposal calls for $1.67 billion to be spent on improvements at 42 schools. This would cover:**

* $577 million to completely replace 8 high schools
	+ Furr
	+ High School for the Performing and Visual Arts
	+ Lee
	+ Madison
	+ Sharpstown
	+ Sterling
	+ Booker T. Washington
	+ Yates
* $354 million to replace the inadequate facilities at 4 high schools
	+ Bellaire
	+ Lamar
	+ Sam Houston
	+ Westbury
* $259 million to replace inadequate facilities and renovate 5 high schools
	+ Austin
	+ Eastwood Academy
	+ Milby
	+ Waltrip
	+ Worthing
* $27 million to build 2 new early college high schools
	+ North Early College
	+ South Early College
* $61 million to renovate or renew 9 high schools
	+ Davis
	+ DeBakey
	+ Jones
	+ Barbara Jordan
	+ Kashmere
	+ Scarborough
	+ Sharpstown International
	+ Young Men’s College Prep
	+ Young Women’s College Prep
* $121 million to convert 4 elementary schools into K-8 campuses
	+ Garden Oaks
	+ Pilgrim Academy
	+ Wharton Dual Language
	+ Mandarin Chinese Language Immersion Magnet School at Gordon
* $74 million to replace Dowling Middle School and expand Grady Middle School
* $126 million to replace 5 elementary schools
	+ Askew
	+ Condit
	+ Kelso
	+ MacGregor
	+ Parker
* $67 million to renovate and make building additions at K. Smith Elementary, replace inadequate facilities and renovate Tijerina Elementary, and build a new elementary school on the district’s west end to reduce overcrowding

**The proposed $225 million in district wide projects would cover:**

* Technology upgrades at all HISD schools ($100 million)
* District athletic facility improvements ($42.7 million)
* Middle school restroom renovations ($35 million)
* Safety and security improvements ($27 million)
* Land acquisition ($20 million)

Some of the schools recommended for major construction work are among those that had renovations under the 2007 bond program. In many of those cases, the previously completed work will be incorporated into the new building design, said Leo Bobadilla, HISD’s Chief Operating Officer.

***School community input included in plan***

Earlier this spring, HISD hired Parsons -- national specialists in the assessment, design, and project management of education facilities -- to update the 2007 comprehensive assessment of the HISD’s facilities. HISD principals were asked to engage their campus communities as they completed detailed surveys about the condition of their schools. **More than 3,300 parents, teachers, and community members representing 95 percent of the district’s schools participated in this feedback process.** Some of the specific facility issues raised by school communities in the surveys will be addressed outside of the recommended bond through HISD’s normal building maintenance program.

**Links to school community survey results for each campus, along with more details about the data that helped formulate the proposal, are posted online at** [**houstonisd.org**](http://www.houstonisd.org/)**.**

Using this school community input, existing data from 2007, and information about the condition of HISD campuses based on work completed since 2007, Parsons experts personally inspected dozens of schools and interviewed principals and plant operators to develop the list of campuses included in the bond proposal. They took several factors into account while developing this list:

* Overall building condition
* Each school’s educational suitability and technology readiness
* Enrollment projections and capacity
* Community input

Even with the many projects included in the bond proposal, HISD schools still have many additional facility needs that remain unaddressed, according to the report presented to the board. Those needs will be identified as HISD moves forward with developing a comprehensive long-range capital improvement plan.

***Property tax implications***

**Because of the district’s strong fiscal management practices, HISD has been able to maintain the lowest property tax rate of the 20-plus school districts in Harris County.** In addition, HISD is among the few districts in Texas that offer an optional 20 percent homestead exemption on top of the standard $15,000 exemption that other school districts offer. This means that a home with a taxable value of $200,000 in another school district that doesn’t offer the optional 20 percent exemption would be taxed at a value of $160,000 in HISD (a 20 percent reduction).

If an election is called, and voters approve the bond package, HISD would likely adopt a property tax rate increase in the future. **This tax rate increase would have no impact on the homesteads of HISD residents age 65 and older, because their tax rates are frozen.**

HISD estimates that the tax rate increase would be phased in over a 4-year period, beginning with an estimated 2-cent increase in 2014. This would result in an additional $29 in taxes for the owner of a home valued at $200,000. By 2017, the total tax rate increase resulting from the bond’s passage would reach 6.85 cents, raising the average tax bill by $99 a year, or $8.25 per month.

School construction and renovation work approved by HISD voters in 2007 is nearing completion under budget. So far, HISD has opened 16 new or replacement schools under that bond program, 6 more new schools are under construction, and 2 more are in the planning stage.  More than 100 HISD campuses have undergone renovations so far.  [Click here](http://blogs.houstonisd.org/bond) for more detailed information about the work completed under the 2007 bond program.

The **Houston Independent School District** is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 279 schools and more than 203,000 students. The 301-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area with nearly 30,000 employees.

**For more information, visit the HISD website at** [**www.houstonisd.org**](http://www.houstonisd.org)**.**