

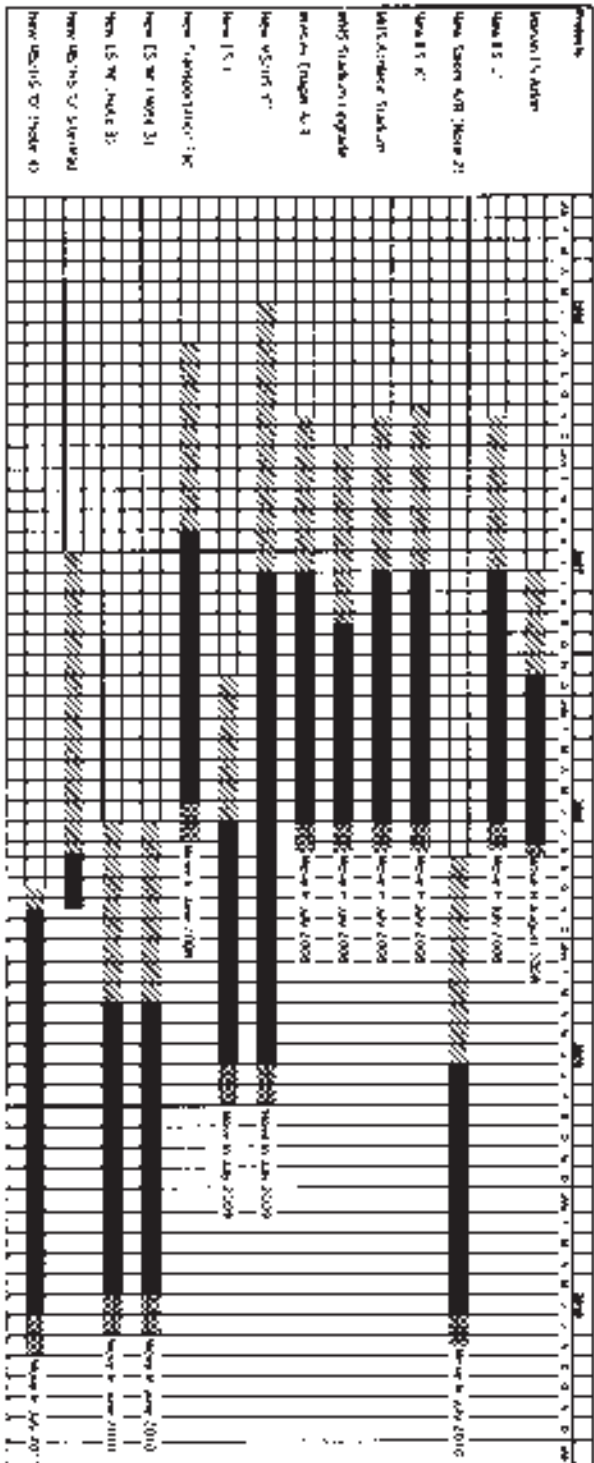
2006 Bond Referendum Information Brochure

School Bond Referendum



The Union County Board of Commissioners has placed a Bond Referendum on the November 7, 2006, ballot for your consideration. The Bond Referendum is for \$174.5 million for school facilities in the Union County Public Schools. All Union County registered voters are eligible to vote in this bond referendum. You are urged to read this brochure, become informed about the bond election, and vote on November 7.

BOND 2006 PROJECT CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE



Notes:
 1. Schedule 2004 not effective for bond referendum. Approval of BOA required.
 2. Design only for New Schools 15-48. Construction start in 2005.
 3. Land purchase and design only for 15-48 and 49 provided.
 4. Design only for 2005-2006. Schedule is subject to change.

Legend:
 // Design/Design phase
 ■ Construction
 ■ Design



WHY is there a need for a school construction bond referendum?

The answer is simple. Growth. Union County is the fastest growing county in North Carolina and the sixteenth fastest growing county in the nation. The student population is increasing by at least 10 percent annually. This means more than 3,000 new students enrolling in our schools each year. School construction must keep up with the growing number of students. Past school bond referendums have provided much needed relief for many of our schools, yet most still remain at critical points of overcrowding. Two-thirds of our elementary, one-half of our middle schools and five out of seven high schools are currently over capacity. Almost one-fourth of our schools currently exceed 120 percent capacity.

WHY use bonds to finance the school facilities needs?

Voters are not actually voting to build schools, but, in reality, they are voting on how to finance school facilities. School buildings, like homes, are difficult to pay for in one lump sum. Like homes, they must be financed over a number of years. Bonds spread the cost over an extended period of years and will allow future residents, businesses, and industries to help pay for the schools which will serve them. Bonds are the most cost effective method of financing school facilities needs. Other finance methods available to the county will cost significantly more.

HOW were facility needs determined?

Facility needs were determined by growth. Past bond referendums have brought most of our schools up to much needed maximum building capacity, but has not eliminated the need for additional elementary, middle and high schools.

Currently, more than 7,500 students attend classes every day in 300 mobile classrooms. For the opening of the 2006-07 school year, 105 additional mobile classrooms had to be purchased at a cost of almost \$4.2 million. Mobile units do nothing but further overcrowd the cafeterias, gyms, hallways and media centers in schools.

The need for additional schools in Union County will not go away. As time passes, the need will only become greater and at a higher cost.

WHAT effect will the bonds have on the property tax?

According to the county finance officer, it is projected that the \$174.5 million bond referendum could, **in the worst case scenario**, result in about a 7.75¢ tax rate increase based on 2007 taxable property values.

Recent projections show that growth in Union County will continue for years to come. This means new residents, businesses, and industries could take much of the burden off current property owners.

WHY not use lottery funds to build new schools?

The anticipated funds (about \$2.3 million) from the North Carolina lottery earmarked for school facilities will amount to less than the cost of building a new elementary classroom wing. While any and all funding from the state for building is welcome and useful, our needs in Union County far outweigh our share of the state lottery proceeds.

WHAT will the \$174.5 million bond provide?

- Five new schools (three elementary-J, K, L, one middle school-C and one high school-C)
- Design packages for additions/renovations for New Salem Elementary School
- Monroe High football stadium
- Weddington High football stadium upgrade to 4A Division standards
- New transportation facility
- Classroom additions for Marvin Elementary
- Design packages for new elementary schools M and N
- Design and site work for middle/high school D
- Additions and renovations for Wesley Chapel Elementary

WHAT is being done to insure building cost-effectiveness and efficiency?

The phenomenal growth that UCPS is experiencing requires an extremely aggressive building program. On average, 3 to 4 new schools open each year along with extensive additions and renovations occurring at existing schools. Positive steps have been made toward making sure we are building quality schools as cost-effectively and as efficiently as possible. Here are some of those steps:

- The school board has adopted building guidelines developed by community focus groups called "Building Program Cost-Saving Principles."
- Exploration visits are being made to other school systems in search of more cost-effective ways to build.
- Legislative lobbying efforts are under way to restore state sales tax reimbursements to public school systems or exempt school systems from sales tax on building expenses. In the meantime, the school board has entered into a building lease agreement with the county so sales tax can be recouped by using the county's authorization for reimbursements which amounts to almost \$3 million a year.

HERE are some specific cost saving measures we currently use:

- Use prototype schools and refine each time they are used.
- Shared fields and bus parking at multi-school campuses.
- Heating and air conditioning systems based on efficient life-cycle and maintenance cycle cost to maximize air quality.
- Bulk buying of school furniture.
- Negotiate value changes with the contractor during construction.
- Standardized equipment and parts that have normal frequent change-out periods.