

Solon schools plan \$25 million bond referendum to fund new indoor activity center, intermediate school expansion

District looking to the future with 500 new residential units planned in community over next 10 years

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Nov. 28, 2022 6:00 am



[Fifth-graders Tanner Vollbrecht, from left, Alex Ammeter and Braden Yale play instruments during music class at the Solon intermediate school in Solon on Nov. 16. The school currently holds 4th and 5th grade classes, but with the addition from the bond they would extend the school to 3rd grade as well. \(Savannah Blake/The Gazette\)](#)

[Fourth-grader Kendall Henning works on a Nov. 16. The Solon school district wants to and possibly add a new indoor activity cen](#)

**SOLON** — The Solon Community School District is proposing a \$25 million bond referendum in March that would fund an expansion to its intermediate school, build a multipurpose indoor activity center and make improvements to its facilities.

Solon Intermediate School — which serves fourth- and fifth-graders — was built in 2017 and designed for an additional wing to be added when necessary, Superintendent Davis Eidahl said.

The wing would provide room for third-graders to move from Lakeview Elementary to the intermediate building. This would create enough space in the district's schools to accommodate seven classrooms per grade level in prekindergarten through eighth grade, Solon Intermediate Principal Melissa Holtz said.

The addition to Solon Intermediate is estimated to cost between \$9 to \$10 million, which includes seven general education classrooms, one special education classroom, one project-based learning room and a gym.

Another major proposal under the bond is building a multipurpose indoor activity facility with turf flooring that could be used for baseball, softball, soccer, golf, marching band, archery and other activities. The middle school property would be a potential site for the \$4 million project.

"It's really exciting to think of the possibility of giving our students a space suited for what they're doing," Solon activities director Casey Hack said.

The bond referendum could be taken to voters as early as March 7, and would not increase property taxes, Eidahl said. The district's current tax rate of \$16.28 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation would be unchanged if voters approve the bond.

The district, [like the town of Solon](#), has seen a steady increase in enrollment since 2014, and anticipates planned housing developments — with another 500 new residential units — to bring additional families in to the district. Solon schools' current enrollment is 1,450 and is expected to increase by about 350 to 750 students over the next 10 years, depending on how quickly

new housing developments take shape.

The plan includes updating Lakeview Elementary School — which was built in 1966 — and the district administrative offices with major building systems including electrical, plumbing, heating and ventilation.

Other projects at Lakeview Elementary would include updating the gym floor and replacing the bleachers, adding energy-efficient lighting, repainting classrooms, renovating the library for group collaboration and replacing worn playground equipment. This project could cost up to \$7 million.

Currently, the district's administrative office is located in the 1917 built tower of the former middle and high school. The building has excess space the school district does not need, and the majority of the building is leased to the city. The city has indicated it may eventually end its lease, which leaves the district with a significant amount of unneeded space, according to district officials.

A recent facility assessment identified more than \$4 million in repairs needed, making the space unusable for a school. Even if improvements could be made, the building would not meet educational standards of today, Eidahl said.

One option is to update and maintain only the 1917 tower portion of the school and demolish the rest of the building, which would be a \$5 million project and is not recommended by district officials as it is not "financially responsible."

Another option is to demolish the entire building and replace it with a 4,000-square-foot office building for \$2.1 million. The site would be cleared and maintained for a potential new school should it be needed in the future.

The bond also would include renovating a former truck stop — purchased by the district on the north edge of town — in to a transportation center with covered space for bus parking for \$650,000. This would help extend the life of district-owned buses and reduce the amount of time drivers spend prepping buses in the winter months, Eidahl said.

Finally, the bond would provide funds to replace the 12-year-old turf field at Spartan Stadium for \$800,000. The district has experienced cost benefit from not having to water or mow the field for the last 12 years, according to school officials.

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