



Frequently Asked Questions – School Bond Proposal

Election Date: May 6, 2025

Background / Purpose

1. What is on the May 6, 2025 ballot?

On May 6, 2025, voters in the Lakewood School District will be asked to consider a bond proposal focusing on **Fiscal Responsibility**, **Declining Enrollment**, **Educational Outcomes**, **Safety & Security**, and **Decreasing Utilization** supporting the District's strategic plan. The focuses of the bond program are defined as the following:

- **Fiscally Responsible** - Efficiently allocating funds to maximize impact and minimize long-term costs.
- **Declining Enrollment** - Right-sizing facilities to align with student population trends.
- **Educational Outcomes** - Creating modern, developmentally appropriate learning environments.
- **Safety & Security** - Enhancing building security and emergency preparedness.
- **Decreasing Utilization** - Optimizing school spaces to support academic and extracurricular programs effectively.

When the August 2023 bond proposal failed, the school debt millage dropped from 4.0 to 3.25 mills. If voters approve the May 2025 bond proposal, it will authorize the issuance of \$29.95 million in bonds, which will increase the millage rate by an estimated 1.7 mills from 2024.

2. What projects are included in this bond proposal?

Lakewood Elementary School

Proposed Grade Levels:

Great Start Readiness Program | Early Childhood Special Education | Kinderstart | Kindergarten | First | Second

Scope of Work to Answer the Why's:

- **Fiscally Responsible**: HVAC replacement (boilers and chiller), roof replacement to extend building longevity.
- **Declining Enrollment**: Classroom reconfigurations for age-appropriate learning environments.
- **Educational Outcomes**: Classroom furniture upgrades, instructional technology enhancements.
- **Safety & Security**: Replace fire alarm, renovate main entry for improved access control.

- Decreasing Utilization: Add restrooms to PreK-K classrooms, reconfigure parent drop-off/pick-up area, and add parking.

Lakewood Middle School

Proposed Grade Levels:

Third | Fourth | Fifth | Sixth

Scope of Work to Answer the Why's:

- Fiscally Responsible: HVAC system upgrades, including boiler replacements and updated building management system.
- Declining Enrollment: Reconfigure classrooms for better utilization, including labs and specials for 3rd-5th grades.
- Educational Outcomes: New age-appropriate & ergonomic classroom furniture, instructional technology, and a new playground for younger students.
- Safety & Security: Reconfigure main entry for enhanced security, replace fire alarm.
- Decreasing Utilization: Optimize classroom layouts and dedicated spaces to match grade-level needs.

Lakewood High School

Proposed Grade Levels:

Seventh | Eighth | Ninth | Tenth | Eleventh | Twelfth

Scope of Work to Answer the Why's:

- Fiscally Responsible: Energy-efficient lighting upgrades, HVAC replacements, and track/tennis court renovations, and optimize gym PA and lighting control.
- Declining Enrollment: Athletics area repurposed for central office to optimize space utilization.
- Educational Outcomes: Classroom furniture replacements, instructional technology upgrades, auditorium lighting and sound enhancements.
- Safety & Security: Main entry reconfiguration, exterior door security with card access, fire alarm system replacement, additional fire water pump and generator installation, track replacement with new fencing, and tennis court removal/replacement.
- Decreasing Utilization: Optimize classroom layouts and dedicated spaces to match grade-level needs.

Investing in Our Students & Schools

The Lakewood Bond Capital Improvement Program ensures that our facilities align with current and future student needs, create learning environments, enhance security, and make fiscally responsible use of our resources.



3. Why do school districts bring bond proposals to their communities for approval?

A bond proposal is how a public school district asks its community for authorization to borrow money to pay for the construction of new facilities, additions and remodeling of existing facilities, repurposing classroom and other learning spaces for new or updated instructional programs, replacement of higher cost capital assets such as roofs, boilers, drives and parking lots, site improvements such as athletic fields and playgrounds, buses, technology, furnishings, equipment, and other capital needs.

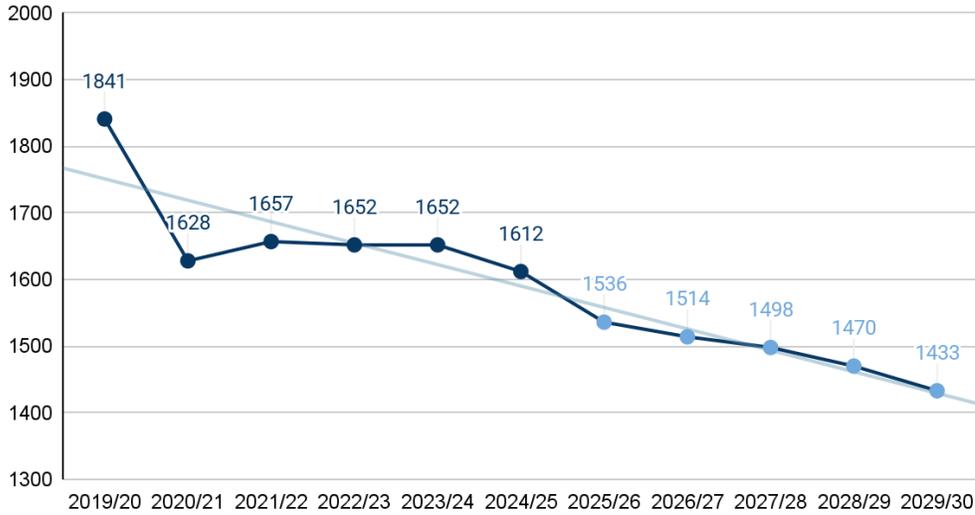
4. Why is Lakewood Public Schools pursuing a bond proposal now?

The District failed to gain the community's support for a \$39 million bond proposal in August of 2023. As a result, the District surveyed the community for feedback to understand why the bond did not pass. Approximately 400 parents, community members, staff, and students completed the survey. In addition, The One Lakewood Committee garnered community input through seven community input sessions to engage in discussion and share their assessments on how to address short and long-term needs. The One Lakewood Committee reviewed and considered all feedback and worked alongside our bond partners to create the five Whys that shaped our May 2025 bond program.

5. What does future enrollment look like for the District?

Lakewood Public Schools is expected to see an average enrollment **decrease of 9% over the next five years**. Projections range from a -1% change to a -16% change over the coming five year period. *See past, current, and projected enrollment on the chart on the next page.*

Student Enrollment (Past 5 Years and Projected)



Note: Chart Excludes Pre-K programs

Scope of Bond Program

6. What projects are being considered to achieve these District goals?

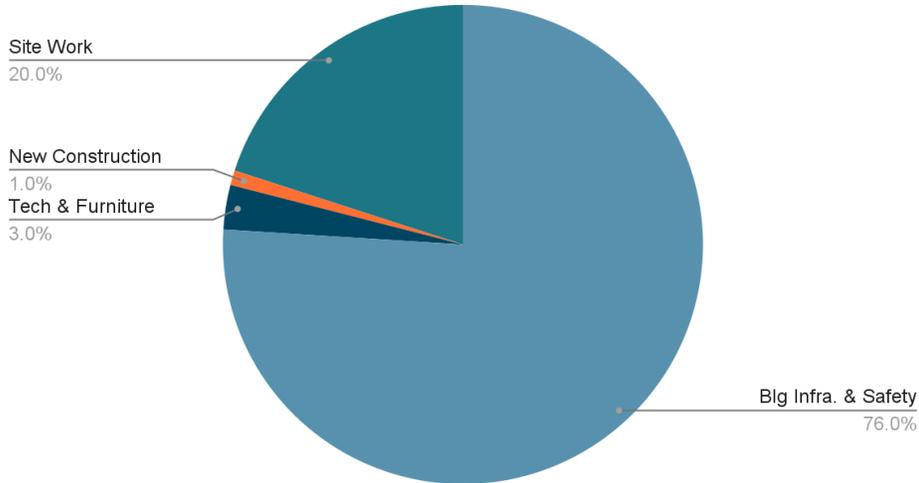
A complete project list is available on the district website at:

<http://www.lakewoodps.org/2025bond>

7. What is an overview of the estimated costs of the projects being considered?

Building Infrastructure & Safety	\$17,228,168
Instructional Technology / Furniture, Finishes, Equipment	\$ 675,000
New Construction	\$ 168,750
Site Work	\$ 4,520,265

Bond Costs Breakdown



8. How were these projects identified?

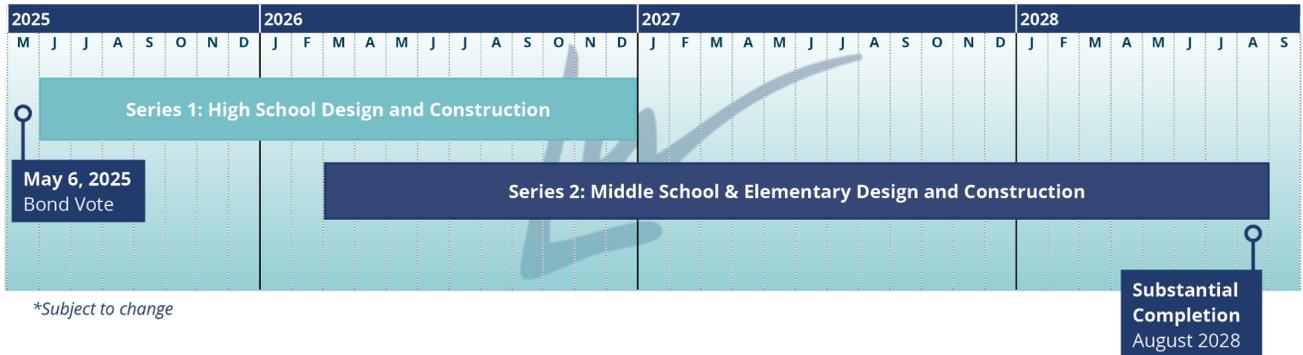
The One Lakewood Committee took a thorough and collaborative approach to addressing the District's needs following the bond attempt in August 2023. The committee started fresh without preconceived notions and focused on community input through seven meetings held in the fall of 2024. Through the meetings, they actively listened which helped them understand the real concerns and priorities of our community. The bond partners also played a crucial role in assessing the District's facilities and identifying the high-priority items.

9. When would the projects be complete?

By law, school districts must have a reasonable expectation to spend most of the funds on approved projects within three years from the sale of the bonds (not the date of election). Because of this, many districts will split the total voter approved amount in what is referred to as two "series" of bonds, selling bonds so as to receive an initial amount of revenue and the remainder either during the initial three-year period or immediately afterward.

Our Lakewood bond project calls for the sales of bonds in two series, the first series includes work for the High School, the second series includes work for the Middle and Elementary Schools. Therefore, an estimated timeline would include a successful bond vote in May 2025, sale of bonds is as follows: Series 1 - August 1, 2025, Series 2 - August 8, 2026 with construction completed over the following three years.

Proposed Construction Timeline*



10. Can I vote ‘yes’ on some projects and ‘no’ on others?

No. The District is placing a single question on the ballot for community members to vote yes or no on the entire scope of projects.

11. What will the District do if the bond proposal fails?

If the bond proposal fails, the District will have to reconvene with the Board of Education and One Lakewood Committee to consider all options going forward.

12. If the bond is passed, what will happen to the Woodland building (Lakewood Early Childhood Center) and the historical items in it?

It is important that the building not sit empty and either 1) require the District to spend money to maintain or 2) be allowed to deteriorate. The first choice is to sell the building and property for alternative use, including, but not limited to, residential development.

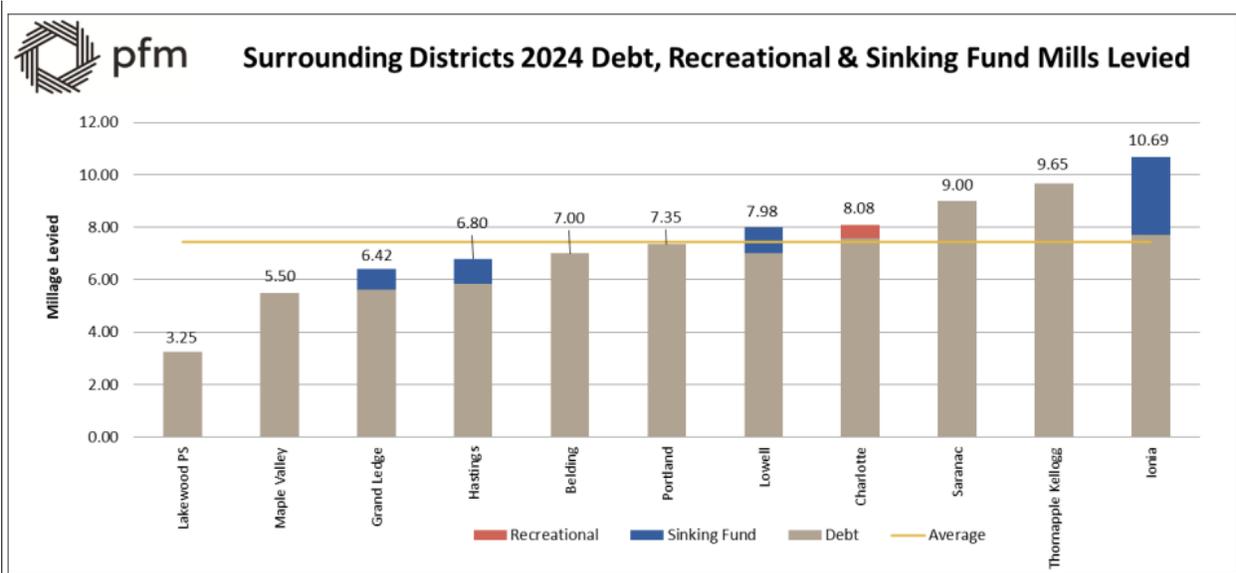
The District will work closely with the Woodland community to make sure that the historical items currently contained in the building are preserved. So too, will it ensure the area youth soccer program that uses the field space has a home should the property be sold.

13. Unity Field was renovated completely with community donations. Will any of the work those donations provided be lost, torn down, or replaced?

No. The Board of Education greatly appreciates the support of the community to make the improvements at Unity Field and will only approve projects that enhance the work that has been done there.

Financial Information

14. How does our district millage rate compare to surrounding districts?



Source: Estimated 2024 County Apportionment Report and Individual School Districts.
Estimated: 7.43 mill average



15. How would the bond proposal impact my property taxes?

\$29,950,000
 May 6, 2025 Bond Proposal
 Lakewood Public Schools

Estimated Millage Impact to Taxpayers

Taxable Value	Market Value	Estimated Initial Tax Increase*			
		Cost/Year	Cost/Month	Cost/Week	Cost/day
\$75,000	\$150,000	\$127.50	\$10.63	\$2.45	\$0.35
100,000	200,000	170.00	14.17	3.27	0.47
150,000	300,000	255.00	21.25	4.90	0.70
200,000	400,000	340.00	28.33	6.54	0.93
250,000	500,000	425.00	35.42	8.17	1.16
300,000	600,000	510.00	42.50	9.81	1.40

**Represents the estimated net tax increase of 1.70 mills compared to 2024 levy*

*** Taxable Value should not exceed 50% of market value.*

Please verify taxable value with local taxing jurisdiction or assessment notice.

Note: If taxpayer qualifies for the State Homestead Property Tax

Credit, the "net" tax increase would be less than shown above

16. What is the current financial health of the District?

The District’s finances are independently audited every year. Consistent with previous audits, the Fiscal Year 2023-24 audit was “clean” in that there were no findings requiring corrective action. In addition, since the consolidation of schools in 2015-16, the district’s fund balance has increased from 5.95% to 18.76% and its bond rating was increased from A to A+ by Standard and Poor’s.

17. Would the approval of the bond proposal have any impact on the District’s current operational budget (General Fund)?

This bond program proposes replacement of old mechanical and electrical equipment with new, more efficient systems. These changes will help reduce the operational costs to the District.

18. How much money would the bond proposal generate?

The proposal recommended by the One Lakewood Committee would generate \$29,950,000 million which would be raised by the selling of bonds over two series to be spent over six years on district-wide capital improvement projects.

19. How long will it take for the District to repay this bond proposal?

Through several community meetings, the district heard the consensus of keeping the bond term to 20 years or less. This will save interest and has still made it possible to achieve the funding amount of \$29,950,000 million.

20. Can I deduct these property taxes on my income tax return?

Property taxes may be deductible as itemized deductions on your federal income tax return if you itemize. You may also be eligible for the Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit on your Michigan Income Tax Return. Please consult your tax preparer.

21. What exactly is the Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit?

The Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit is a method through which some taxpayers can receive a tax credit for an amount of their property tax that exceeds a certain percentage of their household income. This program establishes categories under which homeowners or renters are eligible for a homestead property tax credit. To find out if you qualify for this important and beneficial tax credit, please consult your tax preparer.

22. Once approved, can bond money be used for any purpose a District may choose?

No. Bond proceeds cannot be used for:

- Salaries and wages
- Retirement, health care, or benefits
- General operating expenses and maintenance
- Classroom materials, supplies, and textbooks

Bond proceeds can be used for:

- Construction and remodeling of facilities
- Purchase of instructional technology equipment
- Equipment and furniture
- Site improvements

23. How can I be assured the bond funds will be spent the way they are supposed to be spent?

Construction contracts for bond projects are awarded through a competitive bidding process, followed by presentation and approval by the Board of Education during an open meeting. Additionally, Michigan law mandates that the use of bond proceeds must be audited upon the completion of each project compliance with permissible expenditures.

Election/Misc. Information

24. What are the key dates leading up to the May 6, 2025, election day?

- Registering to vote:
 - a. The last day for voters to register by mail is April 21, 2025
 - b. Voters may register in-person through Tuesday, May 6, 2025 (election day) with the required documentation
- Absentee voter ballots are available as early as March 27, 2025 until May 6, 2025
- Contact your local clerk with questions

25. Where and when will the vote occur?

Election day is on Tuesday, May 6, 2025. Registered voters can vote absentee by mail or in person by Tuesday, May 6, 2025. Voters may also cast a ballot at the polling location established by their city/township. If you have questions or do not know where you vote, please contact your city/township office. Polls will be open from 7am to 8pm on Tuesday, May 6, 2025.

26. Are you hosting a public information community forum?

Yes, community forums are planned:

- Lakewood High School Media Center – Monday, March 3rd @ 7:00 pm
- Lakewood Early Childhood Center Gymnasium - Thursday, March 6th at 6:00 pm
- Clarksville Township Hall – Wednesday, March 12th @ 6:00 pm
- Sunfield United Brethren Church - Monday, March 17, 2025 @ 7:00 pm



27. What is the May 6, 2025 Bond Proposal Ballot Language?

LAKEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOND PROPOSAL

Shall Lakewood Public Schools, Ionia, Barry, Eaton and Kent Counties, Michigan, borrow the sum of not to exceed Twenty-Nine Million Nine Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$29,950,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds therefor, in one or more series, for the purpose of:

remodeling, furnishing and refurnishing, and equipping and re-equipping school buildings, including for school security; acquiring and installing instructional technology; erecting, equipping, preparing, developing, and improving athletic facilities, a support structure, playgrounds, and sites?

The following is for informational purposes only:

The estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2025 is 2.09 mills (\$2.09 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a 1.70 mills net increase over the prior year's levy. The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is fifteen (15) years. The estimated simple average annual millage anticipated to be required to retire this bond debt is 3.22 mills (\$3.22 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation).

The school district does not expect to borrow from the State to pay debt service on the bonds. The total amount of qualified bonds currently outstanding is \$20,245,000. The total amount of qualified loans currently outstanding is \$0. The estimated computed millage rate may change based on changes in certain circumstances.

(Pursuant to State law, expenditure of bond proceeds must be audited and the proceeds cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs, teacher, administrator or employee salaries, or other operating expenses.)

28. How can I request a District representative to speak at a neighborhood, service club, or business organization meeting?

Please contact Jodi Duits, Superintendent, by phone at 616-374-8043 or via email at duitsj@lakewoodps.org

29. How do I get a question answered that wasn't included in this FAQ?

Email your question to: duitsj@lakewoodps.org

Or Contact Jodi Duits, Superintendent, 616-374-8043 or duitsj@lakewoodps.org