



Everybody counts;

Everybody learns

**2014 Capital Project**

# Capital project vote set for March 25

**\$70 million project will  
have little to no tax impact**



On Tuesday, March 25, Schenectady voters will decide on a \$70 million capital project that will address needs at several district schools. **There is little to no tax increase associated with the proposed project.**

If voters approve the proposal, state building aid would cover 95 percent of the project cost. The district would use about \$3.5 million in EXCEL funds to offset the local share (See Q&A on page 3 for further details).

In November, the Board of Education adopted a plan that will reconfigure the district's grade structure. The planning process for the reconfiguration spanned more than two years. District leaders were determined to address long-term facility needs and building capacities, while also ensuring equity and stability for Schenectady's students and families.

The plan includes making all of the elementary schools Pre-K to 5, the middle schools grades 6 to 8, and the high school will remain a 9 through 12 building.

"The new grade alignment will afford every family the same opportunities regardless of where they live or attend school," said Superintendent Larry Spring.

In order to make those changes, the district is embarking on a series of four capital projects. The first project – or Phase I of the district's long-range plan – will focus on making renovations to Mont Pleasant, Oneida, and Central Park so that they can open as 6–8 middle schools in 2016.

Classrooms will also be added to Howe to increase capacity so that the Early Childhood Education Center can be converted to a Pre-K

(continued, page 2)

## At a glance...

### Referendum Total

\$70,000,000

### Percent of Annual Cost that will be paid by NY State Building Aid

95% (\$66.5 million)

### Amount paid by EXCEL Funds

5% (\$3.5 million)

### Estimated Annual Tax Increase for Home Valued at \$100,000

\$0 – \$1.14

### Project Highlights

Renovations to Oneida, Mont Pleasant and Central Park

## BUDGET VOTE: TUESDAY, MARCH 25 NOON—9 P.M.

(see page 8 for polling place  
information)

## What's inside?

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## Long-range plan addresses issues with inequity, building capacities

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to 5 elementary school in 2016. Van Corlaer Elementary, Paige School and Steinmetz Career and Leadership Academy will also see some renovations.

Elmer Avenue and Franklin D. Roosevelt are slated to close after the 2015-2016 school year.

**"This is work that must be done. It's not fancy and, in some cases, may not even be noticeable, but it must be done to preserve our schools."**

*— Larry Spring,  
Superintendent of Schools*

The long-range plan includes work to all of the district's schools and will ensure regular ongoing maintenance, moderate reconstruction and renovation of buildings. It also addresses overcrowding in some schools, forecasted enrollment shifts across the city, equity issues and deteriorating conditions at some of the district's oldest buildings.

According to Superintendent Larry Spring, the long-range facilities plan will extend the life span of many of the district's schools.

"Our buildings have significant needs," he said. "Some of them are more than 100 years old."

Spring noted that much of the work will be addressing building condition items like heating and ventilation repairs, roof leaks, boilers and inefficient systems.

"This is work that must be done," Spring added. "It's not

fancy and, in some cases, may not even be noticeable, but it must be done to preserve our schools."

### Implementing the changes

If the March 25 referendum is approved, work won't begin until the summer of 2015. Changes to grade configurations and attendance zones would be implemented in September 2016.

Today, the district has a hybrid grade level model with a variety of configurations. Over the last several years, grade levels were added and removed at many of the schools in response to budgetary or enrollment issues. The multi-phase plan adopted by the board of education is designed to change that by providing a concise road map for the next several years.

### Addressing inequities and creating more opportunities

Spring has spoken about the inequities that exist at the middle school level starting with where students attend seventh and eighth grade. He pointed out that some sixth graders would like to stay in the school that they have attended for years, but can't because there isn't enough space. Yet, other sixth graders in the district do have the opportunity to remain in the same school through eighth grade.

Because the seventh and eighth grade enrollment is much smaller at the K/1-8 schools, enriched programming that belongs in those grades often cannot be offered. Advanced programs are, however, offered at Mont Pleasant Middle School, where there are enough students

and demand, to fill classes like algebra, biology, enriched English, advanced math and studio in art.

"Some of these are courses that middle school students need in order to follow an advanced track in high school," said Spring.

### Establishing stability

The plan also gives parents the opportunity to know where their children will go to school for elementary, middle and high school.

"Our current model makes it very difficult for our families to know where their children will attend school," said Spring. "If I live here, my child transitions in these grades, but if I live over here, he only transitions one time - from eighth to ninth."

As the board of education explored various options and grade level configurations, including the K-8 model, it was determined that the grade configurations within a school building do not matter much.

"Speaking from an educational standpoint, there is no real advantage to the way you arrange a school," said Spring. "Leadership and adults and how they do their work matters much more than grade structure."

The structure that will be in place in 2016 will address many of these issues and, according to Spring, will give the district staff opportunities to provide equitable resources to students.

**Space in this newsletter is limited, so we hope you will also visit the district website for more referendum information:**  
**[www.schenectady.k12.ny.us](http://www.schenectady.k12.ny.us)**

# Q&A on the proposed project

## **Q. How can we complete \$70 million in school renovations without impacting taxes?**

**A.** The Schenectady City School District has a 95 percent building aid ratio, so \$66.5 million of the project will be covered by the state. Ordinarily, local taxpayers would pick up the remaining \$3.5 million.

In 2006, the state Legislature created a short-term form of building aid called EXCEL (EXpanding Children's Education and Learning). Legislators agreed to send \$1.8 billion of EXCEL aid to New York City schools to begin settling the long-standing Campaign for Fiscal Equity court case. At the same time, they set aside \$800 million in EXCEL aid to be shared by more than 700 public school districts outside of

New York City. The taxpayer's share will be covered by the EXCEL funds that Schenectady received.

## **Q. The majority of this project may be paid for by the state, but doesn't that money still come from my pocket?**

**A.** Yes, it does. Most state money comes from the income and sales tax paid by New York residents and business all across the state. But these are taxes we will all be paying whether or not Schenectady's capital project is approved.

Money is reserved in a state fund for all schools to complete projects such as the one being proposed here. Districts are encouraged to take care of their school buildings and to use the

money to invest in their infrastructure.

You are paying the taxes whether or not our referendum is approved. This is an opportunity for us to get our fair share of building aid.

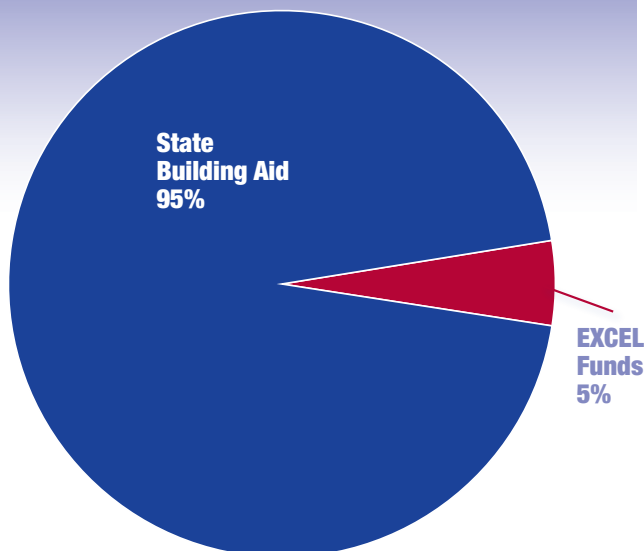
## **Q. Is building aid different than regular education aid?**

**A.** Building aid is very different from education aid (Foundation Aid). While Schenectady is significantly short-changed in the amount of education aid we receive, the district does get a fair distribution of building aid.

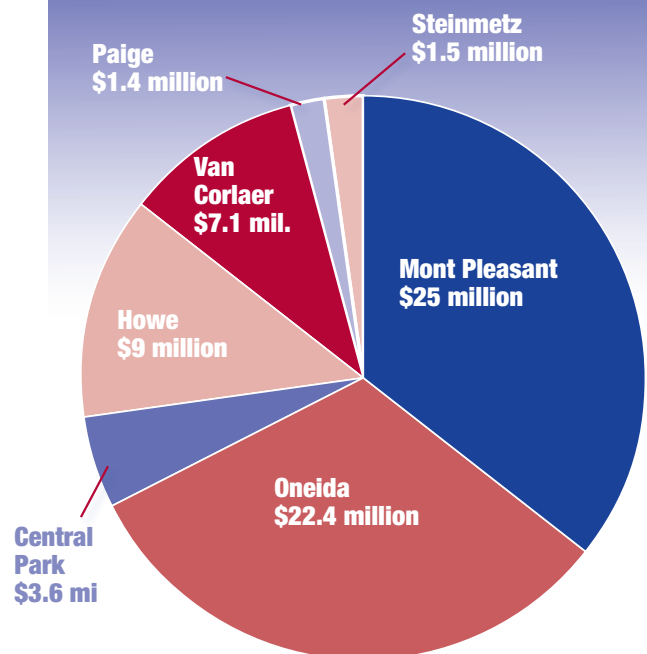
The funding set aside for building aid can only be used to improve, repair, renovate and construct educational spaces. It can only be used on school buildings and infrastructure needs.

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## Where will the \$70 million come from?



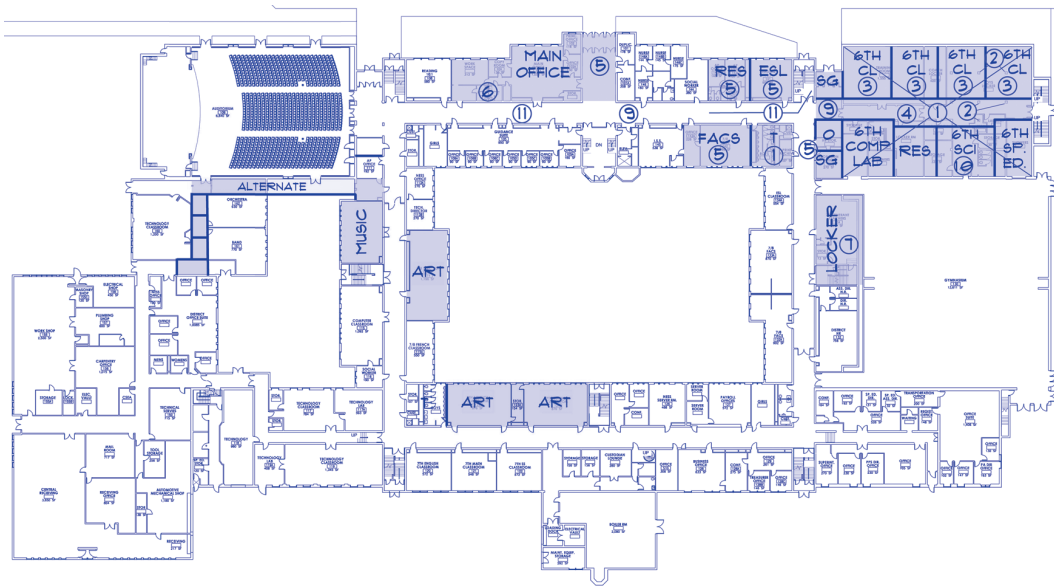
## How will the \$70 million be distributed?





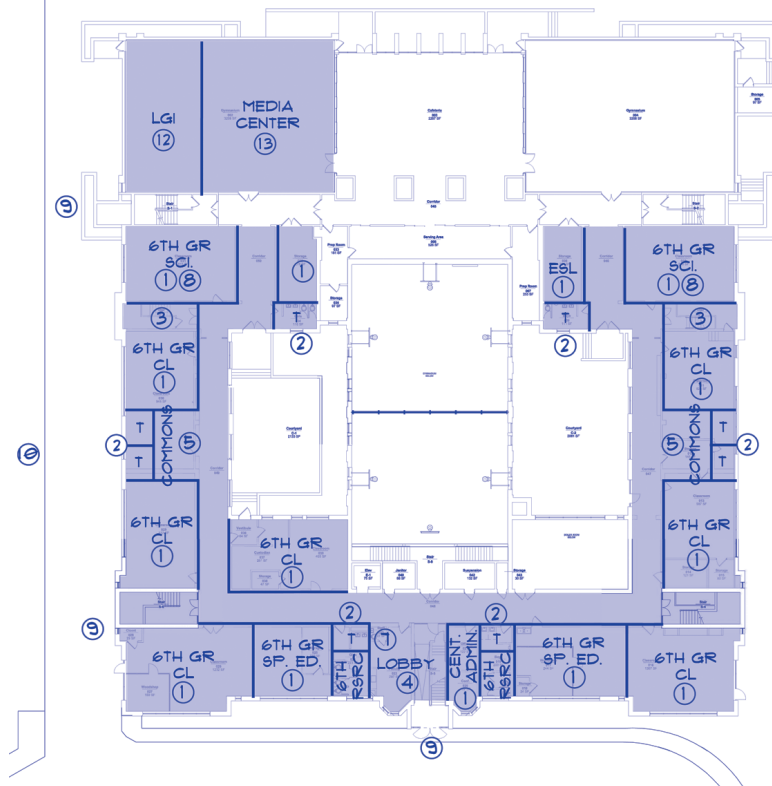
The district's latest Building Condition Survey (BCS) provides recommended improvements to address many building facility deficiencies. The Board of Education, our operations and maintenance staff and the architects have worked together for the almost two years to develop a plan to address each of the building's needs over the next 15 years.

**Mont Pleasant: \$25 million**



- ▼ Create grade level  
Small Learning Communities
- ▼ Provide new partitions and ceilings at  
select locations
- ▼ Install new door/window assemblies
- ▼ Install lockers
- ▼ Provide HVAC, lighting and IT  
technology
- ▼ Reconstruct new bathrooms, fixtures, light-  
ing, HVAC and infrastructure
- ▼ Upgrade classroom infrastructure
- ▼ Install new stairs, ramps and handrails
- ▼ Install science lab tables, counters, sinks,  
enhanced electrical & IT
- ▼ Install light fixtures in classrooms  
and corridors
- ▼ Provide improvements as  
outlined in BCS

- ▼ Create grade level Small Learning Communities
- ▼ Provide new partitions and ceilings at select locations
- ▼ Install new door/window assemblies
- ▼ Provide new bathrooms, HVAC, lighting and plumbing
- ▼ Install lockers in each small learning community
- ▼ Reconstruct existing bathrooms
- ▼ Install science lab tables, counters, sinks, enhanced electrical and IT
- ▼ Provide new entry canopy structure
- ▼ Provide new driveway
- ▼ Provide new sidewalk
- ▼ Provide finishes, ceiling lighting and HVAC distribution
- ▼ Remove existing gym equipment. Install new partitions, library casework, floor, wall, ceiling finishes, HVAC, electrical and IT infrastructure
- ▼ Install light fixtures in classrooms and corridors



- Van Corlaer: \$7.1 million**

## Q&A continued

### **Q. Why are Elmer Avenue and Franklin D. Roosevelt closing?**

**A.** All of our school buildings were inspected and surveyed as part of the required Building Condition Survey. Elmer Avenue is a wood-frame building that has significant issues with flooding and has been subjected to severe water damage from the grounds beneath the school. It was recommended that the district not make a significant investment into the school. The building is safe and can remain open for the next few years, but it is nearing the end of its life span.

Franklin D. Roosevelt is a building that the district leases from Albany Diocese. Our long range plan includes exiting the short-term leases and instead increasing capacity in our district schools so that we can accommodate all of the city's school-age population. The students who live in the Elmer Avenue and FDR attendance zones will be carefully considered as the attendance zones are being reshaped for 2016-2017.

### **Q. It seems like the district frequently makes changes to the grade level configuration. What's makes this change any different?**

**A.** The district did not have a long-range plan prior to this.

Over the last several years, grade levels were added and removed at many of our schools in response to budgetary or enrollment issues. The structure currently in place was not by design or part of any comprehensive long range plan for the district.

The multi-phase plan adopted by the board of education is designed to change that by providing a concise road map for the next several years. The new configuration that will be implemented in the 2016-2017 school year ensures equity, builds capacity, addresses enrollment issues, provides consistent feeder patterns and improves the conditions of deteriorating school buildings.

### **Q. Why is it necessary to hold four separate capital project votes?**

**A.** While the New York State Education Department provides the funding for renovation projects and facility needs, the amount a district can spend at one time is limited.

This is known as the Maximum Cost Allowance or MCA. Every five years, the MCA is re-set by the state which enables us to begin the next phase. We are considering the timing of our projects and doing them in carefully planned phases to ensure that they are in sync when the funding is reset and we are eligible for maximum aid.

Our plan is to ensure that the projects are covered by building aid funds and have little or no impact on the tax rate.

## Phase I Timeline

**February 5, 2014:** Board of Education Approves Resolution for \$70 Million Capital Project Referendum to take place on March 25, 2014.

**March 25, 2015:** Bid Period for Renovations at Mont Pleasant and Oneida.

**April 2015:** New Attendance Zones will be determined. There will not be any changes to Attendance Zones prior to September 2016.

**March 25, 2014:** Schenectady Residents Vote on Referendum.

**June 2015:** Project Work will begin on school buildings.

**September 2016:** New school grade configurations are in place. Central Park, Mont Pleasant & Oneida open as Grade 6–8 Middle Schools. Howe opens as PreK–5 elementary school.

**Q. What happens if the capital project gets voted down?**

**A.** The district will move forward with its long-range plan, including changes to grade configurations and attendance zones.

The district would have to find a different way to fund the necessary repairs.

**Q. Do we have room to fit all of the students in our elementary schools?**

**A.** We are working to increase capacity in our elementary school buildings. This is a significant consideration as we develop our plans. We are working with demographers to learn as much as we can about

the population of our city and where elementary school age children will be living and going to school. We are certain that we will have to re-district. With that, we will give parents predictable patterns of where their children will attend school.

**Q. Will Fulton stay open?**

**A.** Right now, we are unsure if Fulton will be an educational space. While it is a building we can use, we are not sure how we will use in the transition or long-range plan.

As we study each school's capacity and begin work on the re-districting and attendance zones, we will look closely at how the school might fit into the long-range plan.

**Join the attendance zone sub-committee**

A team of stakeholders, demographers, experts and educators will be working on how the district attendance zones will be reshaped. This must be done to consider the forecasted population shifts in the city, to account for the changes in the grade configurations as well as the closing of two elementary schools.

The process of determining and re-drawing the zones is complex and will take more than a year to complete. If you are interested in joining the sub-committee that will be working on developing the district attendance zones, please contact Lori McKenna, Director of Planning and Accountability at 881-3405 or by e-mail, [mckennal@schenectady.k12.ny.us](mailto:mckennal@schenectady.k12.ny.us).

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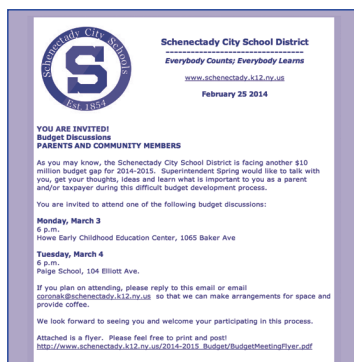
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## Schenectady City School District

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## RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER POSTAL PATRON

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**Capital Project Vote  
Tuesday, March 25  
Polls Open Noon – 9**

## Voter Information

### Voter Eligibility

You are eligible to vote if you are a U.S. citizen, 18 years or older and a resident of the school district for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

### Voter Registration

All voters can register with the Schenectady County Board of Elections until 5 p.m. on the day of the vote. For more information, call the Board of Elections at (518) 377-2469.

### Absentee Ballots

Applications for absentee ballots must be received by the district clerk seven days before the election if the ballot is to be mailed, or on the day before the vote if the ballot is to be picked up. All absentee ballots must be received by 5 p.m. on the day of the vote.

## Polling places & election districts

### **YATES ELEMENTARY – 725 Salina Street 12308**

Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12

### **SCHENECTADY HIGH SCHOOL – 1445 The Plaza 12308**

Districts 8, 9, 17, 18, 19

### **ELMER ELEMENTARY – 90 Elmer Avenue 12308**

Districts 13, 15, 16, 24, 25, 27, 28

### **PAIGE ELEMENTARY – 104 Elliott Avenue 12304**

Districts 11, 20, 23

### **WOODLAWN ELEMENTARY – 3311 Wells Avenue 12304**

Districts 14, 21, 22, 29, 34

### **MONT PLEASANT MIDDLE – 1121 Forest Road 12303**

Districts 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 & Town of Rotterdam residents of School District 10

### **FULTON EARLY CHILDHOOD – 408 Eleanor Street 12306**

Districts 5, 10, 41, 42

*For more information on polling places and election districts, call the Schenectady City School District's Office of the Superintendent at 370-8100, ext. 40105.*