

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How are school building projects financed in the Jackson County School System?

Building and renovating schools is generally done with State of Georgia Capital Outlay funds, Education Special-Purpose Local-Option Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) funds, and/or proceeds from the sale of general obligation bonds. Typically, the larger percentage of funding comes through E-SPLOST and bond proceeds. In some cases, grants and local general funds may be used to increase the totals available.

What building projects would a new general obligation bond fund?

Bond proceeds will fund a significant portion of a new west side high school that will provide full-scale facilities, including fine arts and athletics, for the students who attend Jackson County Comprehensive High School. Remaining bond proceeds will help fund projects throughout the district, including the planned renovation at East Jackson Middle School and work on the **Empower College & Career Center**.

Why do we need a new high school?

Our community continues to see new development and population growth, particularly on the county's west side. The current JCCHS facility in Jefferson is near capacity, and neither expansion nor renovation will be cost effective in serving the growing population in this zone.

Placing the existing JCCHS facility in the geographic center of the county made good sense when we had just one high school for our system, and its location will be an asset in the future for the programs of the **Empower College & Career Center**. The Empower program will engage students in real-world learning experiences, will provide a variety of high-tech and academic opportunities, will offer dual enrollment, and will prepare all students with personalized pathways to higher education and career opportunities.

Why not just renovate the existing high school facility in Jefferson?

A full renovation of the existing building would cost millions of dollars but would not provide significant additional classroom space or the opportunity for improved and innovative instructional spaces. Though less expensive in the short term, renovation would not accommodate future growth and program opportunities.

Couldn't extra classrooms at East Jackson Comprehensive High School be used?

Formerly open classrooms at EJCHS are now being used for eighth-grade students, relieving overcrowding at EJMS.

What about overcrowding in elementary and middle schools?

As is being done at EJCHS, the new high school will house eighth- through 12th-graders, providing relief at West Jackson Middle School. Like EJMS, WJMS would become a sixth- and seventh-grade school. In addition, repurposing space in the existing JCCHS facility will not only accommodate the Empower College & Career Center but also make space available for a proposed middle school STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) program that will serve all Jackson County School System students. This option would further relieve middle school overcrowding and, potentially, provide relief to elementary schools as grade levels are reorganized.

Will the existing JCCHS gym and other athletic facilities still be used?

Yes. Middle and high school students will be on this campus daily and will need and use these facilities. In addition, we never have enough gym or field space to accommodate all of our marching band and athletic activities, including competitive cheerleading. Having more athletic facilities will provide needed opportunities for all JCSS students, as well as possibilities for local recreation department use.

How does the former West Jackson Primary facility fit into the plan?

For the most part, this former school building remains unoccupied. Two tenants provide revenue that offsets some of the costs of maintaining the facility, but the school system is not obligated to long-term leases. In the event we reorganize grade levels, it is possible that this facility could be used for specific programs. We would, of course, evaluate enrollment growth and determine the safety and feasibility of returning this facility to use.

How will the bond affect Jackson County property owners?

Minimal impact is expected as the increase is projected to be less than one mil. Tax digest growth alone may offset the need for any increase in the rate. Our current bond indebtedness will be fully paid off in 2025 and the bond debt for this project eliminated in full by 2032.

What happens if the bond referendum is not approved by the voters?

If the referendum fails, we will adjust to accommodate growth and overcrowding on our existing campuses. In most cases, we would need to use portable classrooms.

Do enrollment projections support the need for additional classrooms?

Yes. Our projections show growth on the west side at about 8% annually. The east side continues to grow as well, but at a lower rate (2 %). Construction is underway in the last of the “PVC farms,” those subdivisions where site work was completed but construction was halted by the recession. In addition, numerous new subdivisions are opening up and more are planned. Growth, though cyclical, will be part of Jackson County’s future for many years.