



## Leander ISD May 2023 Bond Propositions

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is in the bonds?

- Prop A: \$698.33 million for a wide range of projects including school facilities, transportation, school closures, turf and an administration building
- Prop B: \$50.82 million for technology equipment and infrastructure
- Prop C: \$13.67 million for renovations to LISD's two performing arts centers

#### What is really needed?

The answer will vary by person, but it is clear the true need is less than \$600 million. Under a compressed time frame and often without full information, the LISD Citizens' Facilities Advisory Committee (CFAC) did a commendable job assessing the needs of the district and prioritizing the projects. The CFAC recommendations were **\$550M - \$601M**. Of those recommendations, **only \$416M were considered Tier 1: Academics and Safety, Critical to Student Success**.

#### So why is this bond so big?

While the LISD Board REMOVED some of the CFAC recommendations, they **added over \$160 million** dollars in projects that did not go through the CFAC process. These projects were from the Long Range Planning Committee which is composed of 100% Board members and staff. None of these projects were discussed with the community prior to calling the bond.

Further, the cost estimates for most of the projects are in some cases **double or triple what similar projects cost just a few years ago**. Members of the CFAC and others in the community have concerns that either the pricing of these projects are too high or that an audit is needed to ensure that the District is not paying too much for capital projects.

#### What are some of the projects from the Long Range Plan that were added to the bond?

- \$37 million to close an Elementary School and create a Professional Learning Center
- \$37 million to close an Elementary Schools and create a centralized Early Childhood Center
- \$87 million to close an Elementary School, convert it to a LEO / New Hope HS campus and then convert the LEO Campus to an Early Childhood Center
- \$7 million to design a facility for the Early College High School



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#### What are some of the issues with these projects?

- The Board NEVER discussed the closing of neighborhood schools with the community.
- The Board NEVER considered alternatives to closing these schools. Ideas they should consider include - opening enrollment to these high-performing LISD schools to neighboring communities (LTISD, AISD), converting only a wing or floor of the lower enrollment schools to another purpose, leasing a school to a Charter School or Preschool, etc.
- LISD does not need to spend \$37 million to convert an elementary school to an administration building (Professional Learning Center).
- LISD leadership has stated that the closures and repurposing are just ideas of what they might do with the facilities, not projects that have been well thought out or even voted on by the Board. The LISD Board of Trustees is asking for \$161 million so they can have the flexibility to decide how and when to spend it down the road. This is not fiscally responsible or sound project planning.
- The Board has not solicited input about the impact of moving Early Childhood Programs from a neighborhood school to a central location from parents who participate in Early Childhood programs.
- The Board is pushing ahead with the pursuit of Schools of Choice without ever finding out if the community wants or needs them. Schools of Choice are smaller, less efficient magnet-type schools that many feel will pull resources from existing community schools.
- Many of these projects are maintenance projects that should be paid for from the Maintenance and Operations tax revenue base which is now much larger due to the passage of Prop B in November 2022.

#### What was wrong with the CFAC Process?

- Items initially labeled "HVAC" were actually multimillion dollar complete school remodels
- "Dot" assignment ranking system that allowed certain members to unilaterally ensure their pet projects made the final list
- Time frame that severely limited their ability to thoroughly assess the needs of the community
- The addition of the Board's Long Range Plan projects which were not subject to the sub-committee process



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### **Why shouldn't we trust the Board when they say they will seek community input before actually spending money on these projects?**

1. When the 2021 Bond failed due to lack of faith in the Board. The Trustees concluded it was a lack of communication, not dissatisfaction with leadership, that led voters to vote "no".
2. As a result of the 2021 bond failure, the Trustees created a Long Range Planning Committee to develop ideas for long term projects. The Trustees did not include ANYONE from the community on this committee and never once sought community input on the Long Range Plan.
3. In November of 2022, Dr Gearing urged the board to take the time to pursue a process that would solicit community input and ensure potential bond proposals reflected community priorities. He said,

"Let's repurpose them [*the Citizens' Facility Advisory Committee, or CFAC*] and get them to help us engage in this extensive community listening project to help develop these options for long range facilities, including potential future bond Packages."

"I don't think we can do that in the timeline we have and get something on the May ballot. If we do that, we rush. And if we rush we don't really hear what the community has to tell us."

The board disregarded Gearing's advice.

4. With regard to the overall size of the bond, school Board Trustee Anna Smith, Place 4, stated during the process,  
"I want to go big or go home... Whether we go for \$720 vs \$850, I feel like there is no difference here."

This is not the attitude our elected leaders should have with regard to school funding and being fiscally responsible with taxpayer money.

### **What other issues should we consider before voting?**

1. The LISD Board could choose to come back to the voters with a right-sized bond as early as November 2023. Thus, the projects that are critical to student success only need be delayed 6 months if this bond fails.
2. Enrollment projections in the north are likely overstated
  - o Five (5) new Charter schools are opening in the LISD service area in the next few years. Valor alone will have 350+ students in the fall of 2023.
  - o School Choice is being debated right now by the Texas Legislature and, if it passes, will most certainly result in a drop in LISD enrollment.
3. Enrollment projections in the south are likely understated



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- Demographic projections do not account for regeneration (older families moving out and younger families moving in)
  - From 2019-2021 Four Points had an increase of 42% in the under 5 demographic
  - As many as 1800 new housing units are being developed in the area.
4. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is working on security requirements for all Texas schools. When completed, the state will provide the funds needed to complete these critical security projects. Thus, LISD will not have to fund these improvements with bonds.
  5. If Prop A is approved, any funds not used as intended may be repurposed for other projects by the Board of Trustees, not voted on by voters. The Board of Trustees will be able to re-allocate those funds to other projects. While they must submit their project and dollar amount to the Bond Oversight Committee (BOC) for review first, the Board appoints the Bond Oversight Committee.
  6. If Prop A passes, the Leander ISD taxpayers will have to service the debt for years to come. If we fall into a recession, and property values fall, the Board may increase the Interest and Sinking (I&S) tax rate to service the debt. The Board can increase the I&S tax rate by a majority vote, they do not have to seek voter approval.

For more information, please visit

Leander Area Republican Women -

<https://www.leanderarw.org/propositions>

Texas Parents United - <https://www.texasparentsunited.com/elections>

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