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FEATURED

2016 school bond projects completed

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Lancaster County School District passed its last bond referendum in 2016 for \$199 million. Seven years later, the school board and district are now drafting a new bond referendum, after completing most of the projects laid out in the last bond.

According to David Small, district director of facilities, when the 2016 bond was being drafted, a bond committee, consisting of two representatives from each area, went around to all the schools and determined the needs of each. The total cost of those needs was over \$240 million, but the board of trustees voted to keep the total under \$200 million.



Here's what the \$199 million bond paid for.

New facilities

Five new facilities were built as a result of the 2016 bond referendum. Andrew Jackson High School got a multipurpose and arts focus center, at an estimated cost of just over \$17.7 million. Buford and Lancaster high schools also got multipurpose centers. Buford's cost around \$14.2 million and Lancaster's cost about \$13.9 million.

Two new schools were also built — Van Wyck Elementary and Indian Land High. Van Wyck Elementary cost roughly \$24.4 million. Indian Land High was budgeted to cost about \$96.5 million, but due to rocks on the site that had to be removed, the project went over the estimated cost by about \$11 million.

“The board actually knew there was rock in there when they purchased (the land),” Dr. Jonathan Phipps said. “That’s before I came back here as superintendent.”

“Geo-tech reports from the civil engineer group were performed prior to purchasing the property, and that’s the process of basically digging holes throughout the whole property,” Small said. “The report showed small boulders all over the property.”

There were two properties available for Indian Land High to be built on, and the previous superintendent, Dr. Gene Moore, recommended the board move forward on the property with boulders. Small said the price difference between the two properties was substantial.

Renovations

Multiple existing school facilities were renovated. Heath Springs Elementary got three kindergarten classrooms, relocated the administration and media center offices and improved traffic site flow, costing a little over \$3.8 million. Kershaw Elementary got an administration addition and new front entry and enclosed the connecting corridor, costing a little over \$1.5 million.

Lancaster High received a new front entry and administration building off of Woodland Drive. The old administrative offices were repurposed into new classroom spaces. The existing career center spaces were converted for new Career and Technology Education (CATE) programs, and the project cost roughly \$7 million.

North Elementary received a new gym entry and handicapped ramp, as well as a new group restroom for the gymnasium, costing a little over \$77,000. South Middle’s media center was expanded, costing roughly \$796,000.

Erwin Elementary added walls between classrooms, costing just over \$61,000. Southside Early Childhood Center got new and expanded front canopies, and its staff toilets are currently being renovated, for just over \$1.8 million.

Technology, safety, modernization

Across schools, new cabling, wireless infrastructure and hardware were installed for roughly \$3.7 million. Doors, locks, fencing and canopies in some schools were also replaced, as well as re-routing traffic patterns at some schools for roughly \$7.7 million.

Specifically, Discovery School and Buford, Erwin, Heath Springs, Kershaw, McDonald Green and North elementaries; Andrew Jackson, A.R. Rucker, Buford and South middle schools; and Andrew Jackson and Buford high schools received safety or technology improvements to existing hardware and spaces.

Athletics, playgrounds, food services

Athletic upgrades included turf fields, lighting, fencing and press boxes. Turf fields were installed at Andrew Jackson, Buford and Lancaster high schools.

Andrew Jackson High got a new press box and upgraded softball and baseball fields. Buford High got a new press box, as well as a new scoreboard and batting cage for softball. Lancaster High got new softball field fencing and new baseball stadium lights.

Discovery School and Brooklyn Springs, Buford, Clinton, Erwin, McDonald Green and North elementaries got updates to existing playground equipment, and Heath Springs and Kershaw elementary both received new equipment. The total cost for both new and renovated playgrounds was just over \$1.2 million.

Multiple school kitchen renovations were also completed, as well as expansions, for about \$4 million. Brooklyn Springs, Clinton and Kershaw elementaries were slated for kitchen renovations.

Problems

Four projects listed in the original bond package could not be completed. The new media center at McDonald Green Elementary and the multipurpose center at Southside Early Childhood Center were not built due to the overage costs for the construction of Indian Land High.

A connecting road between Clinton Elementary and Barr and Meeting streets and a parking lot expansion were not completed. Civil engineer architects determined there was not enough space for the expansion.

The walkways between buildings at Brooklyn Springs Elementary could not be enclosed, due to egress building codes, which regulate how tall a structure can be.

“We tried to do all that; all of this was looked at over a couple months time period,” Small said. “From a construction standpoint, what we wanted to do over there could not happen because of egress building codes.”

Further details on each project can be viewed on the district’s website, by searching “bond” in the search bar on the home page.

COVID and rising construction costs contributed to price and timeline challenges. There were several projects, like a walking track, mentioned during the bond’s draft phase that were not included in the bond referendum that went to voters.

More projects to come

At the April 18 school board meeting, Small announced several capital projects that will be funded by the remaining 2016 bond money, about \$3.326 million.

That amount is not enough to cover the cost of the two remaining bond projects — the media center at McDonald Green Elementary and the multipurpose center at Southside. But it is enough for several smaller projects, which can be added because the bond was written with flexibility to add capital projects, as they come.

Those projects include padding for Indian Land High baseball and weight room; security systems at Lancaster High and A.R. Rucker Middle, fencing at various schools; baseball field bathrooms at Buford and Lancaster high schools; bathrooms and a greenhouse at the LCSD Career Center, intercoms at the Career Center and A.R. Rucker and Buford middle schools and Buford and Clinton elementaries; and fire alarms at Andrew Jackson High and North Elementary.

Haley