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FEATURED

# Walled Lake school district proposes \$316 million bond to fund major building upgrades

By Mark Cavitt [mcavitt@medianewsgroup.com](mailto:mcavitt@medianewsgroup.com) @MarkCavitt on Twitter Mar 6, 2019



Walled Lake Western High School, 600 Beck Road, in Commerce Township.

Mark Cavitt/The Oakland Press





A rendering of what Walled Lake Western High School in Commerce Township, Mich., would look like following millions worth of renovations and remodeling projects. Those improvements will be made if voters approve a May 2019 bond proposal totaling \$316 million.

Artist rendering: Walled Lake Consolidated School District

If approved, residents will actually see a decrease in property taxes paid to the school district, according to Kenneth Gutman, district superintendent.

Currently, residents are paying \$4.53 per \$1,000 taxable value of their home, annually, to help the district pay off its \$111,970,000 in outstanding bond debt. The approval of this new bond would see that millage rate decrease to \$4.13.

"We have a unique opportunity at this time where we can request a \$316 million bond without a tax increase that will actually result in a tax decrease," said Gutman. "The district currently has five outstanding debt obligations, four of which will be paid off within the next five years."

Gutman said the tax decrease is due to a combination of factors including the district's growing tax base and property values in addition to the refinancing, restructuring, and refunding of previous bonds.

"Walled Lake Schools has been financially diligent and vigilant," said Gutman. "Previous bonds that were initially going to be paid off in 30 years are being paid off in 20 and 25 years. The debt is being spread over more homes and businesses so the debt is less per home and business."

The Michigan Department of Treasury reviewed the district's bond proposal and recently granted its approval for a May 7, 2019 special election.

## MAJOR PROJECTS

**Dublin Elementary:** The school is the oldest in the district having been built in 1928. It will be replaced with a more modern facility that offers flexible learning spaces.

- 24 classrooms
- Early childhood extension
- Gymnasium
- Music room and art room
- Multi-purpose cafeteria and food service

- Support spaces for special education administration, custodial, and commons
- Site work such as parking lots/drives/drop-off paving, LED lighting, and playground/playfield construction

**Walled Lake Western High School:** The school will see new additions as well as major demolitions, renovations and remodeling to provide a more collaborative learning environment, modern cafeteria and common spaces, upgraded academic areas, updated athletic areas, new restrooms, and other improvements.

**New early childhood center:** The center will include 16 classrooms, a gross motor skills space, multi-purpose space, administration and support spaces, playground, flexible and collaborative furniture, and new security and technology features.



An artist rendering of a new early childhood facility in the Walled Lake Consolidated School District. The center will only be constructed if voters approve a May 2019 bond proposal totaling \$316 million.

Artist rendering: Walled Lake Consolidated School District

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS

In order to educate residents on the bond proposal, the school district is hosting community meetings through April. You can view a full list of meeting dates at: [http://wlcsd.org/downloads/district-bond/community\\_bond\\_meetings.pdf](http://wlcsd.org/downloads/district-bond/community_bond_meetings.pdf).

During those meetings, school district staff will give a presentation. A copy of that presentation can be found by visiting: [https://wlcsd.org/downloads/bond\\_2019/bond\\_2019\\_rev.\\_2-27.pdf](https://wlcsd.org/downloads/bond_2019/bond_2019_rev._2-27.pdf).

## LIST OF PROJECTS BY SCHOOL

You can find a full list of improvement projects broken down by building on the district's website: [https://wlcsd.org/downloads/bond\\_2019/building\\_projects.pdf](https://wlcsd.org/downloads/bond_2019/building_projects.pdf).

## MORE INFORMATION

A copy of the ballot language can be found here: [http://wlcsd.org/downloads/bond\\_2019/ballot\\_language.pdf](http://wlcsd.org/downloads/bond_2019/ballot_language.pdf).

Questions about the bond proposal can be sent via email to: [2019bondinfo@wlcsd.org](mailto:2019bondinfo@wlcsd.org). You can also download copies of bond materials, such as an informational video, presentation, and ballot language by visiting: <http://www.wlcsd.org/>.

MORE INFORMATION

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The Walled Lake Consolidated School District will ask voters to approve a 30-year, \$316 million bond to pay for building renovations and the construction of two new facilities.

If approved, the bond would pay for significant building changes at Walled Lake Western High School, Dublin Elementary, and the construction of a new early childhood facility. In addition, 18 other schools, and three buildings, will undergo various renovation and remodeling projects.

Improvement projects will include equity, infrastructure, program, technology, and security upgrades. District-wide updates will include window and roofing, HVAC systems, classrooms, ceiling, restrooms, electrical, furniture and various site work such as playgrounds, paving, and LED lighting.

"Our goal is to offer functional, equitable learning atmospheres across the district and to address a myriad of infrastructure needs," said Superintendent Kenneth Gutman. "Keeping our schools in good repair improves our children's learning environment and is linked to increased property values."

Mark Cavitt

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Mark Cavitt is a multimedia journalist at The Oakland Press and MediaNews Group in Michigan. His beat includes all Oakland County government offices, departments, boards, commissions and committees.