


Hillcrest Referendum FAQ

Important Links

1. [Trumbull Public Schools Master Plan Website](#)
2. [Community Forum - September 25, 2024 - PowerPoint Presentation](#)
3. [Community Forum - September 25, 2024 - Video of Presentation](#)
4. [Hillcrest Middle Schools Education Specifications](#)

Voting Procedures

5. I heard that Trumbull taxpayers are not responsible for the entire \$142 Million dollars, can you explain?
 - a. By Town Charter the referendum must include the total expected cost of the new building. However, Trumbull normally receives a reimbursement rate of 24.29% on new construction. Our legislators were able to have that reimbursement rate increased to 44% for the Hillcrest project and only for this calendar year. There are some ineligible costs (like interest payments) that are included in the \$142 million that are not reimbursable. Using round numbers, we anticipate that the 44% reimbursement rate will amount to about \$60 million, therefore, leaving the Trumbull taxpayers with a cost of approximately \$82 million. This \$82 million would be paid over 20 years. At the Hillcrest Forum held on September 25, 2024, it was shared that a property owner who owns a \$500,000 property would pay an average of \$330/year or less than a dollar a day.
6. What is the actual question that will be written on the ballot?
 - a. Shall the \$142,375,000 appropriation and bond authorization for the planning, design and construction of a new Hillcrest Middle School be approved?
7. Where will the question be located on the ballot?
 - a. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sots/electionservices/town_ballots/2024/nov-2024/ready-to-post/trumbull.pdf

		Trumbull Connecticut		State Election		November 5, 2024		Congressional District 4 Senatorial District 22 Assembly District 123 Voting District 6	
VOTE ON THE QUESTION(S)		<input type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO 1. "Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to permit the General Assembly to allow each voter to vote by absentee ballot?"			<input type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO 2. "Shall the \$142,375,000 appropriation and bond authorization for planning, design and construction of a new Hillcrest Middle School be approved?"				
OFFICE → PARTY ↓		1 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORS FOR VOTE FOR ONE	2 UNITED STATES SENATOR VOTE FOR ONE	3 REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS VOTE FOR ONE	4 STATE SENATOR VOTE FOR ONE	5 STATE REPRESENTATIVE VOTE FOR ONE	6 REGISTRAR OF VOTERS VOTE FOR ONE		
DEMOCRATIC PARTY		<input type="radio"/> 1A HARRIS AND WALZ	<input type="radio"/> 2A CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY	<input type="radio"/> 3A JIM HIMES	<input type="radio"/> 4A SUJATA GADKAR-WILCOX	<input type="radio"/> 5A THOMAS TESORO	<input type="radio"/> 6A JEAN RABINOW	Sheet 1 of 1	
REPUBLICAN PARTY		<input type="radio"/> 1B TRUMP AND VANCE	<input type="radio"/> 2B MATTHEW M. COREY	<input type="radio"/> 3B MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN	<input type="radio"/> 4B CHRIS CARRENA	<input type="radio"/> 5B DAVID J. RUTIGLIANO	<input type="radio"/> 6B TRACY S. VONICK	Be sure to read the instructions	

8. What explanatory text will be provided to voters on Election Day?

Cost

- Cost to taxpayers: \$82,580,000 representing a one-time 44% reimbursement of eligible expenses from the State of Connecticut
- Total cost: \$142,375,000.

New Building

- 145,884 square feet, allowing for the projected enrollment of 826 students.
- Includes new classroom technology to support innovative teaching and learning, flexible learning spaces, special education resources, safety and security upgrades, and an efficient HVAC system.
- Creates a new traffic flow for 3,400 individuals entering the campus from Daniels Farm Road.

[Full Text Version](#)

9. Do I need to register to vote in order to be able to cast my vote on the referendum question?

a. Yes

10. When will polls be open on Election Day?

a. **Tuesday, November 5, 2024 - 6:00 am to 8:00 pm**

Early Voting is available on:

- October 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30 and November 1, 2, 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- And October 29 and 31 from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.,
- All Early Voting is in the Community Room at the Library at 33 Quality Street

11. How do I know my polling location?

Follow this link for voting information including polling locations.

<https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2594>

Construction

12. If the referendum vote passes on Election Day, when will the new building be scheduled to open?

a. If all goes to plan, Fall of 2027.

13. What will happen to the current Hillcrest building while the new one is being built?

a. The new building would remain standing and used by the Hillcrest students.

14. Where will the new building be located on the campus?

a. The Master Plan identified 3 potential areas for the new building. The preferred location is south of the current building in the area called "The

Pit”. The final location will need to be decided by the Building Committee and the design engineers. Our goal is to make sure the final location considers the safety of our students, staff, and parents, as well as pulls the traffic away from Daniels Farm Road and draws it onto campus.

15. Why aren't we renovating the building as new like we did for Trumbull High?

- a. Our Master Plan considered both Renovate Like New and Build New. Given that the costs for Renovating Like New were similar to building brand new, it was decided by the BOE to build new. You can find more information on these costs [HERE](#) and in the chart below. Please note that the spreadsheet linked here did not factor in the increased reimbursement rate for Trumbull. This original document considered the normal 24.29% reimbursement rate for new builds, rather than the 44% we were allocated for this project.

COSTS SUMMARY			NEW CONSTRUCTION (24.29% State Reimbursement)		RENOVATE LIKE NEW (RNV) (34.29% State Reimbursement)		DELTA OF NEW vs. RNV
BUILDINGS		School Name	Total Project Cost	Cost to Trumbull	Total Project Cost	Cost to Trumbull	Cost to Trumbull
Enrollment							
Current	Highest						
514 <small>(53,660 GSF)</small>	528 <small>(71,516 GSF)</small>	Booth Hill Elem. (K-5)	\$64.3 M	\$49.5 M	\$60.3 M	\$41.1 M	\$8.4 M
448 <small>(46,430 GSF)</small>	479 <small>(64,879 GSF)</small>	Jane Ryan Elem. (K-5)	\$62.0 M	\$47.7 M	\$58.5 M	\$39.9 M	\$7.8 M
495 <small>(61,480 GSF)</small>	506 <small>(68,537 GSF)</small>	Daniels Farm Elem (K-5)	\$63.1 M	\$48.6 M	\$59.3 M	\$40.5 M	\$8.1 M
767 <small>(117,000 GSF)</small>	826 <small>(145,206 GSF)</small>	Hillcrest Middle (6-8)	\$134.9 M	\$103.8 M	\$126.9 M	\$86.6 M	\$17.2 M
~20 <small>(8,700 GSF)</small>	~20 <small>(9,500 GSF)</small>	REACH (6-8, 9-12)	\$7.6 M <small>(Regional: \$13.5 M)</small>	\$5.9 M <small>(Regional: \$2.9 M)</small>	(USE COSTS FOR NEW)	(USE COSTS FOR NEW)	-
~50 <small>(21,950 GSF)</small>	~50 <small>(21,950 GSF)</small>	Long Hill Admin.	\$13.5 M <small>(Hillcrest: \$5.43 M)</small>	\$11.4 M <small>(Hillcrest: \$4.56M)</small>	(USE COSTS FOR NEW) <small>(Madison: \$5.39M)</small>	(USE COSTS FOR NEW) <small>(Madison: \$4.53M)</small>	-
TOTALS			\$283.4 M	\$219.2 M	\$267.6 M	\$185.5 M	\$33.7 M
CIP for all buildings <small>(Annually over recurring 30-YR timeframe)</small>			\$10.2 - \$14.2 M EVERY YEAR <small>(Nearly 100% of cost carried by taxpayer: ~ 0% - 10% State Reimbursement)</small>				

Note: Reimbursement based upon published rates for 2023 from the DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES (DAS) - Office of School Construction Grants & Review (OSCAR). School Construction Reimbursement Rules FORM SCC-1000 - Does not include special legislation.

Status of Current Building

16. Why can't we add sprinklers to the current Hillcrest building?

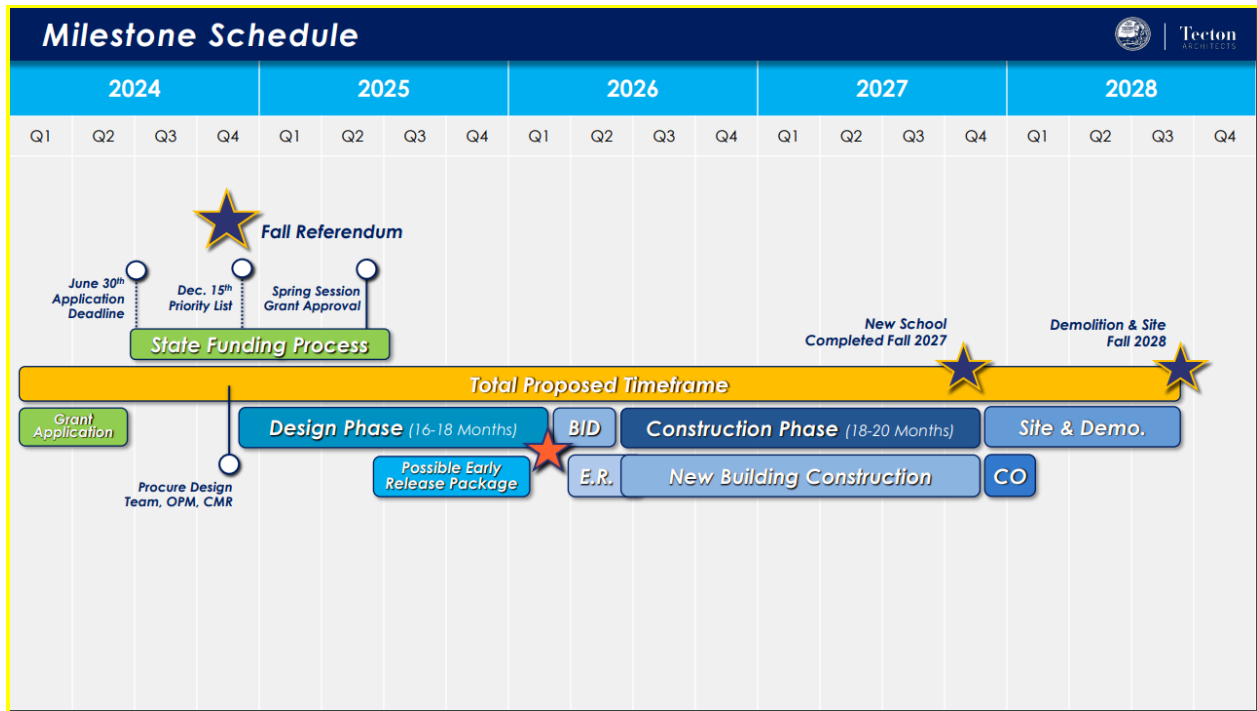
-
- a. Estimated cost to install new sprinklers and upgrade the fire systems in a majority of the building is estimated \$1.17M. Work is estimated to take 2 summers to complete.
17. Is the reason we need a new building because the current building is not being properly maintained?
- a. Hillcrest was originally built in 1966 and is 58 years old. The standard useful life for a building is 40-50 years before major renovation and construction is needed as materials and mechanicals degrade and need replacement. The need for a new building is not a question of proper maintenance being performed over 58 years, but a matter of a building that is being used 8 years past its maximum projected useful life.

Other General Questions

18. If the referendum passes, who will be responsible for the construction of the new building?
- a. The Town of Trumbull Charter requires a Building Committee be created for all major building and renovation projects. The Town Council has already named a Building Committee who meets these requirements. See the [Town of Trumbull Charter](#) pages 17 (v) and 41 (Section 1).
19. "When will it be presented to taxpayers how much this will increase property taxes? How much additional taxes will each home be paying to fund this?"
- a. This information can be found in the [Hillcrest Forum Presentation](#).
 - b. The presentation showed that a person who owns a \$500,000 property would pay less than a dollar a day to cover the tax increase for the new building.

Index Card Questions from Community Forum

20. What is the timeline of the project?



21. When would the Madison school be projected to start?

- The current master plan document identified Booth Hill as the second project. However, there has been support to renovate Madison Middle School or build a new Madison Middle School as the second project. It would be impossible to predict when a second project would start.

22. Can the bonding presentation be redone with the assumption of an LNR of Booth Hill or DFS following Hillcrest?

- Yes, the bonding presentation can be redone for whatever scenario is considered.

23. Is there a dedicated auditorium or cafetorium in the new building?

- There would be a space similar to an auditorium in the new building. However, this space is called a “flexible performance space and stage” in

the Ed Specs. You can find a description in the [Education Specifications](#) on slide 35.

24. What other projects are pending that would increase taxes besides Hillcrest?

- a. There are no other school projects pending at this time.

25. Will the cost for the other schools' construction overlap with this cost to taxpayers?

- a. The twenty-year bonds for Hillcrest construction would be issued in three distinct tranches: \$25,000,000 (9/01/2026); \$27,580,000 (9/01/27); and \$30,000,000 (9/01/2028). If construction of other schools is approved, most likely the cost will overlap Hillcrest's cost.

26. What is the backup plan if it does not pass? The school needs help! - If the referendum does not pass, then the following work must be completed to keep the existing building operational and safe:

- a. Exterior fascia and masonry - \$1.9M
- b. Interior replacement of flooring, casework, interior walls, ceilings - \$2.6M
- c. Replacement of all windows and storefronts - \$1.3M
- d. Plumbing replacements - \$710K
- e. Replace and upgrade electrical equipment and lighting - \$3.9M
- f. In sum, over \$10 million just to begin, and without a reimbursement rate as provided for a new building. These changes would only update some of the most needed infrastructure elements of the building and would make no improvements to the learning spaces. There is also the potential for a lot of unknown costs.

27. If the project goes over budget, will you still maintain the level of excellence in the schools with the same annual school budget? Will class size stay the same/lower? Will programs not get cut? Will supplies and resources like furniture and materials not get cut?

- a. This is a capital project and is not connected to the annual budget for the yearly operations of the Trumbull Public Schools. Therefore, going over budget on the building should not impact our daily operations or annual

budget to run the schools. Nonetheless, it is very important to us that we remain under budget on this project.

28. How many people have to vote yes for this to pass?

- a. Only a simple majority of “Yes” votes is required for the issue to pass. There is no minimum vote required.

29. How will construction impact traffic? In particular, dropping off and picking up students.

- a. The companies awarded this work will be responsible for taking all safety and traffic measures into consideration as they construct the new building. I cannot predict the actual impact to traffic at this time.

30. Will a modern school like this offer programmatic advantages that are unfair to Madison students?

- a. Two of the main program upgrades for the new building will be the science classrooms and the “performance and stage” space. The current lab spaces at Madison Middle School are adequate to complete the written curriculum. Additionally, Madison already has an auditorium space. Finally, the opportunity for flexible spaces in the new building will provide greater opportunities for small group instruction. There will certainly be many additional enhancements given that this is new construction, but the Trumbull Public Schools curriculum can be implemented with fidelity in both spaces. Additionally, some areas of a new Hillcrest would not be exclusive to the students in that building. For example, the new planetarium would be a resource for all students in the Trumbull Public Schools.
- b. Hillcrest and Madison will continue to offer the same courses for our middle school students. Hillcrest’s current ability to offer 21st Century STEM learning opportunities is limited based on the space and design of the building. Madison Middle School was the former location of Trumbull High School. The design of that building was and is more conducive to a larger population, and has designated areas that allows for a modern science program, private space for academic and social-emotional

intervention, and additional classrooms for STEM learning. A new Hillcrest would provide similar opportunities for its students.

31. Your financial models use an interest rate of 3.5%. If rates decline 10bps, about how much would the total project decrease?
- Between \$900K - \$1 Million
32. Is solar power part of the new building?
- The total project cost incorporates funds to work towards a net zero building. This would include the potential use of geothermal energy and solar energy plus energy efficient systems.
33. Is the 44% reimbursement rate from Connecticut locked in or is it contingent?
- The 44% is good for this referendum only; otherwise, it would revert to 24.29%.
34. Is the public referendum on November 5th binding?
- Yes
35. How does this look in the budget? For example, is the \$81 mil going to be repaid as \$3 mil per year for the next 30 years?
- The bonding will be in three different issues: \$25,000,000 (9/01/2026), \$27,850,000 (9/01/2027), and \$30,000,000 (9/01/28). These will be twenty-year bonds, and will not be level payment bonds, but level principal payment bonds. The bonds would amortize similar to a residential mortgage, so payments will be declining over the life of the bonds.
36. Is there a chance the legislature denies our grant? If so, what happens then?
- It is not a grant, but a reimbursement. The legislature has already approved the 44% reimbursement rate. The legislative body has already agreed to the project. The last step before the project can get started is a supportive referendum vote.

37. A school built 60 years ago obviously did not have the same security needs in mind. Can you compare/contrast how security would be improved in a school built today?

- a. As a part of the school construction grant process and review, the project (if approved by the community) is required to comply with the School Safety Infrastructure Criteria (SSIC). This criteria outlines several safety strategies for the site and building design along with operational guidelines to maintain safe school environments. **Information on the SSIC can be found here:**

https://portal.ct.gov/das/lists/all-required-forms-regarding-plan-review-and-approval/school-safety-scg-series-7000-series-forms?language=en_US

b. Summary on Safety Strategies

Since the construction of many of Connecticut's school buildings during the mid-20th Century, school safety design has evolved significantly, reflecting changing societal challenges and advancements in design. School districts, local jurisdictions, state governing bodies and designers all work closely together to create learning environments that are both safe and welcoming for students, staff and visitors. In Connecticut, the School Safety Infrastructure Council (SSIC), as cited above, has defined a set of criteria for the design of school building projects. These comprehensive guidelines outline requirements for nine primary areas of school infrastructure design, including the site perimeter, parking areas and vehicular/pedestrian routes, recreational areas, communication systems, building exterior, interior, roofs, critical assets/utilities and other secondary areas. Additionally, the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) have become integral in school design, with strategies focused on natural surveillance, territorial reinforcement and access control. Conscientious layout of space and compartmentalization can further strengthen safety by improving visibility, enabling controlled access and containing potential threats. Finally, building systems and material selection have also advanced substantially, with more sophisticated access control and surveillance systems,

shatter-resistant glass, and durable, low maintenance materials to deter vandalism and crime.

38. Is it true that Madison would relocate to old Hillcrest while Madison is rebuilt?

- a. A decision like that has not been made. I currently see three possibilities as it relates to this question. First, Madison gets a brand new building as well and therefore the students would stay in “old” Madison until the new one is built. Second, Madison is renovated while the students are in the building. This often means renovating one section of the building at a time. A third option could be to use “old” Hillcrest as swing space.

Design of New Building

39. Why is a pool not included in the design of the new Hillcrest Middle School?

- a. For security reasons, a community pool was not considered for the new building. If there was a community pool on school property, the use of the pool by the community would be limited to outside of the school day. It is our belief that the community would prefer a pool that is available throughout the day to all of its residents.
- b. In addition, pools are ineligible for reimbursement which would make the cost of the project far greater.