



Student First



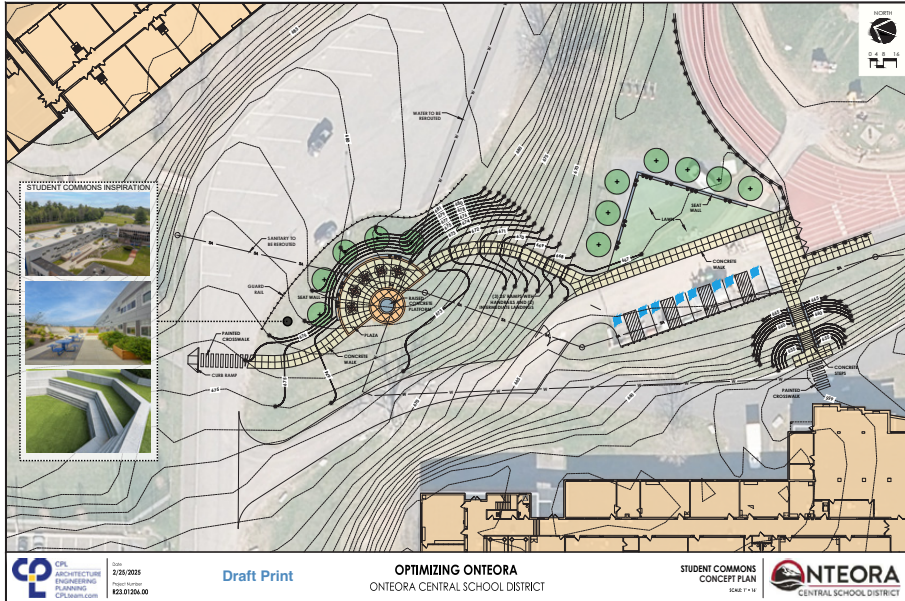
Staff Forward



Fiscally Responsible



With Community



Voters Asked to Consider Proposition 2 for Central Campus Upgrades to Optimize Onteora:

FUNDING STRUCTURE ANTICIPATED TO HAVE NO TAX LEVY IMPACT

In March, the Onteora Central School District Board of Education unanimously approved a tax neutral \$70.5 million Capital Project proposition designed to create a modernized K-12 centralized campus in Boiceville that was designed to enhance learning for all of our K-12 students. The project has the added benefit of being possible with **no anticipated increase** to the tax levy, as well as reducing long-term costs into the future.

The Capital Project, which will be listed on the May 20 School Budget Vote ballot as Proposition 2, was designed over a series of facilitated public forums and visioning sessions that began over a year ago, in which our District administrators, architects, and engineers listened closely and then brought the hopes, dreams, and imaginations of the participants to life in their concept designs. These meetings, which were open to all interested community members, were facilitated by Sharon Lipovsky of Point Road Studios in Woodstock. She also conducted additional focus group discussions with students, staff, and administrators.

"The collaboration really reflected our shared values," explains Superintendent Victoria McLaren, "We centered on putting students first, supporting staff, and being fiscally responsible — all while fostering connections with our Onteora community."

Driving the decision to move to a central campus was the desire to ensure our students receive the best education the community can provide. A significant consideration in this decision was the impact of changing enrollment. In September of 2004, there were 2,111 students enrolled across four buildings. Today, the District serves just over 1,000 students. Other considerations include the effects on teaching and learning, social/emotional impact on students, staffing needs, aging facilities, and budget.

"The Board has emphasized from the start that this move is not just about the numbers, but rather about ensuring that every student in our District receives the best possible education with the resources available. The central campus proposal is rooted in this directive," said McLaren.

She also added that although she's excited for the expanded opportunities a central campus can provide, she also knows that there is a great sadness in the closing of Woodstock Elementary School, and in closing Phoenicia last year. "I remind myself often, though, it is not the bricks and mortar or the street address that make Onteora the amazing place it is, but rather the people that are a part of this District...the staff, the students, and the community who take such pride in our schools."

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE: An Optimized Onteora

After collecting the initial ideas, feedback, and revisions of the participants in our series of community forums, three general themes emerged. These themes shaped the concepts and designs that were incorporated into the project.



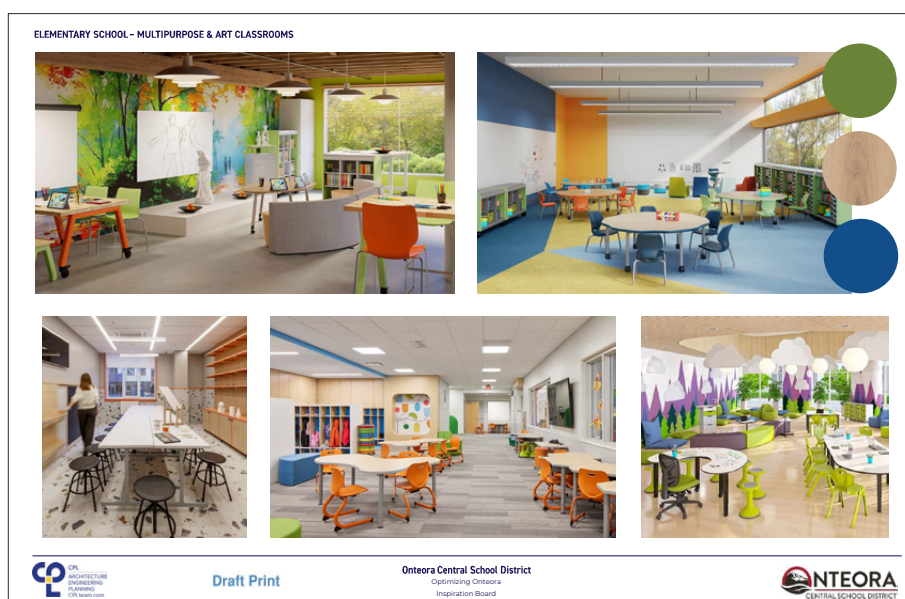
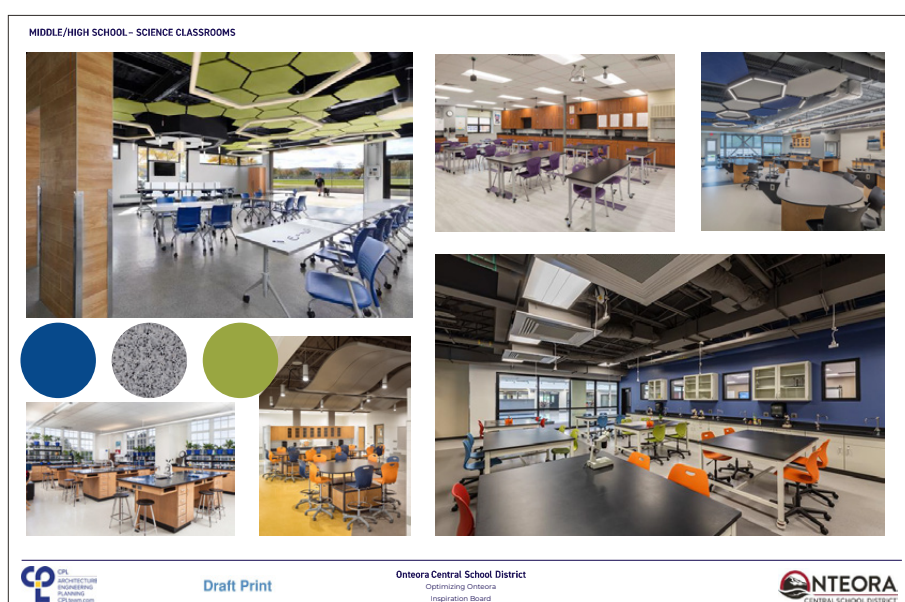
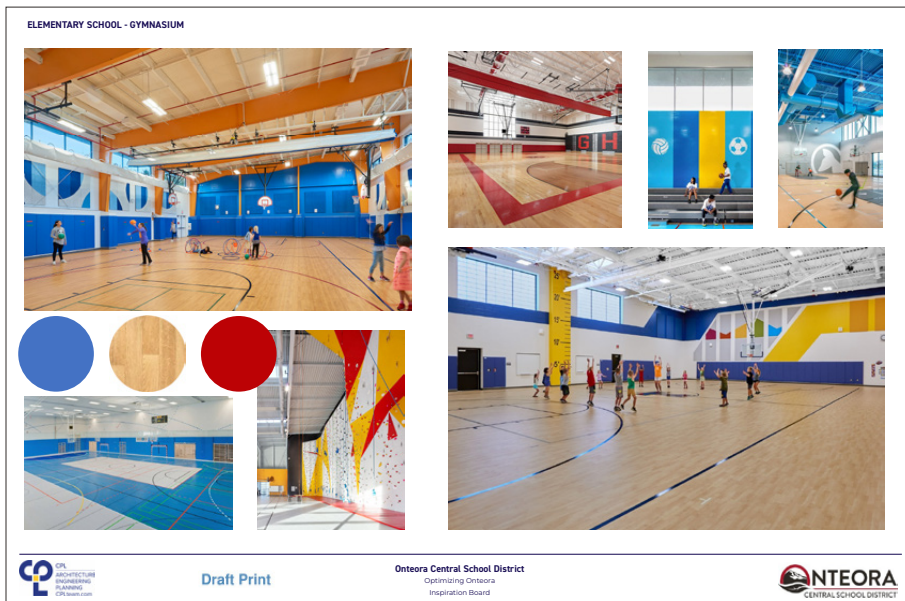
Learning spaces
that inspire creativity
and growth



Healthy environment
for a sustainable
future



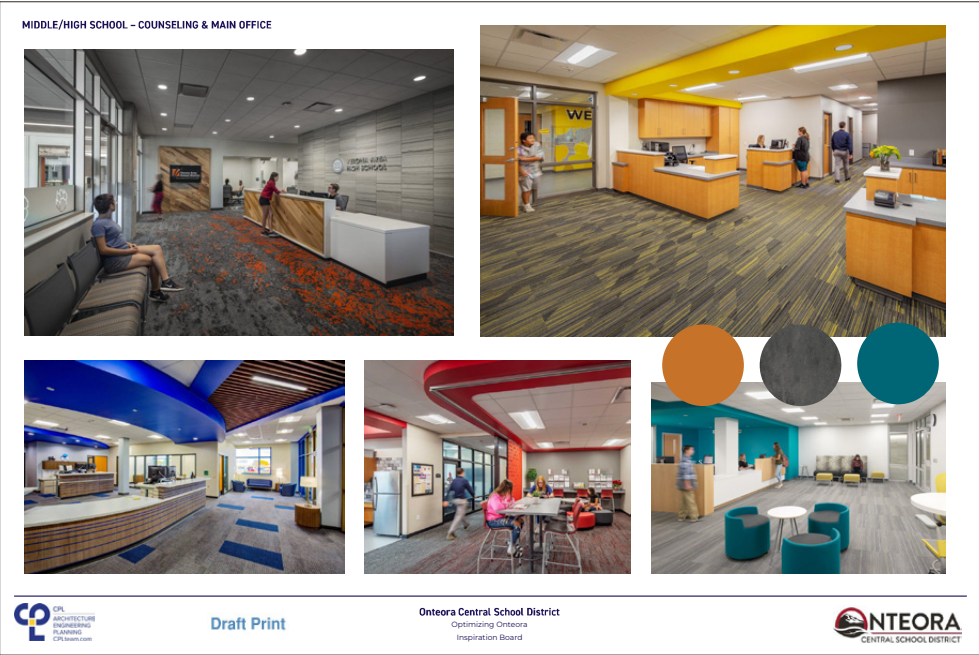
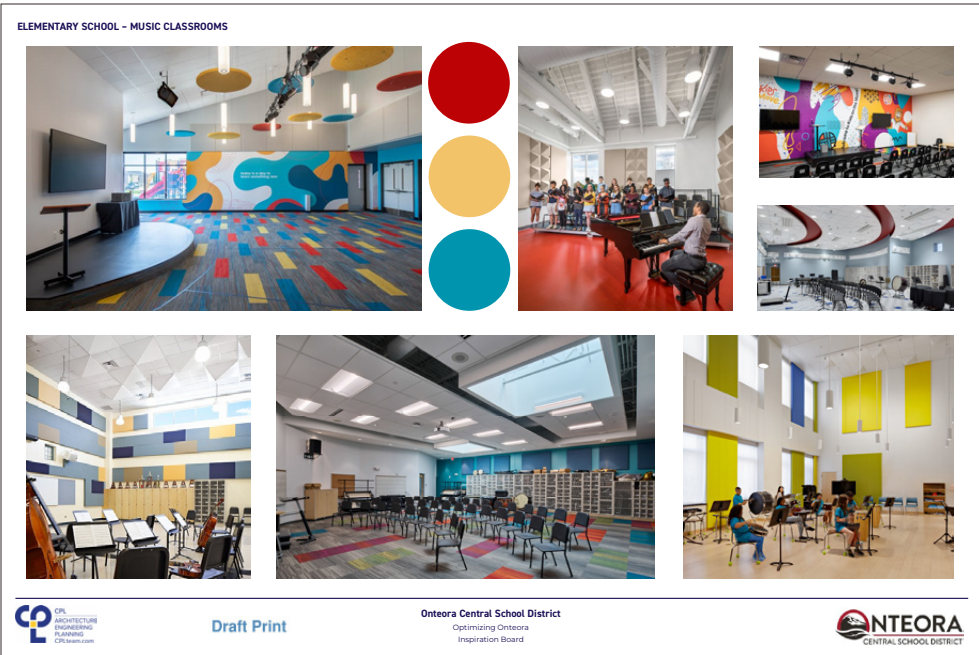
Catskills-inspired
school campus



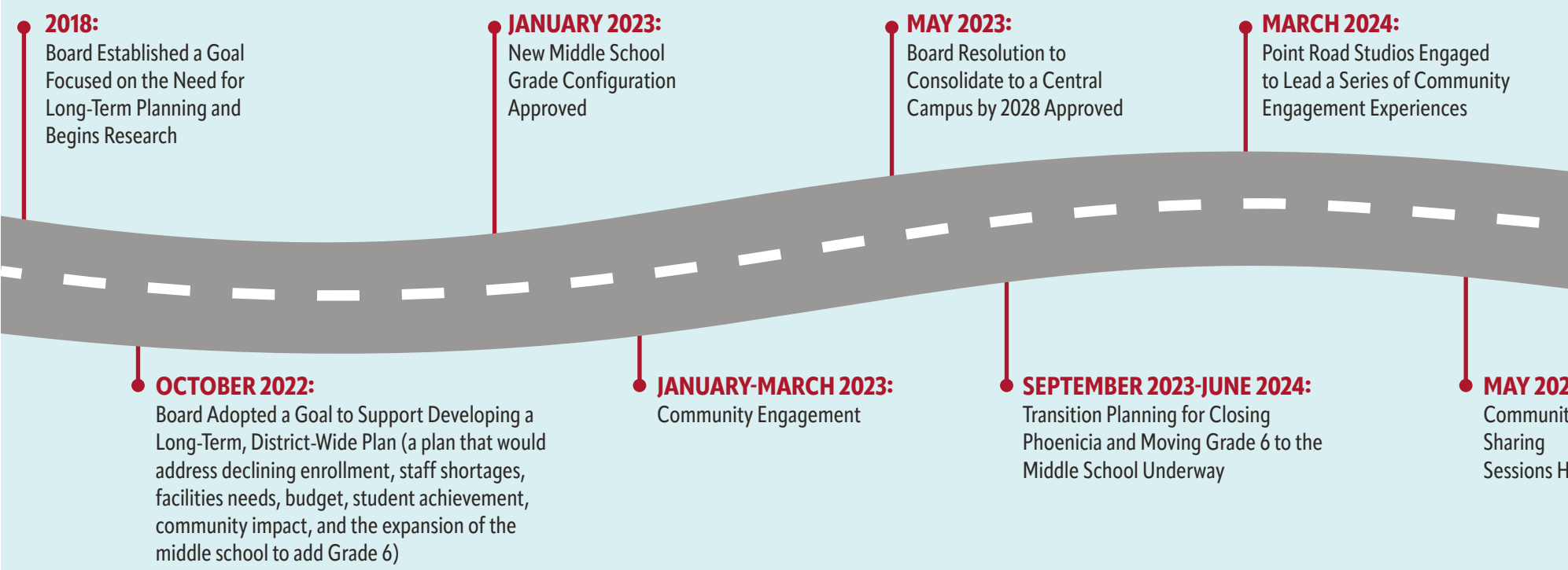
The vision came to life in the following proposed updates:

- **Additional classrooms** in the elementary school that include **in-class bathrooms** for our youngest students, a **new gymnasium and cafeteria**, **expanded visual and performing arts classrooms**, a **welcoming lobby** that can be used as an **adaptive use space**, and a **new intentionally designed security entrance**.
 - Relocation and **expansion of play space at the elementary school** that will connect students to the woodland, nature paths, garden, and establish new recreation areas.
 - **Space for student-led gardens** and expanded green spaces and **outdoor classrooms**.
 - **New science classrooms** at the High School that will honor the academic requirements of students and provide the state-of-the-art equipment for rigorous scientific coursework.
 - **Refurbished auditorium** to ensure an up-to-date and inspiring space for students to perform and experience arts performances.
 - **Redesigned counseling center and nursing offices** at the Middle/High School that will create a nurturing space to **promote student wellness**.
 - **Upgraded athletic fields, lights, and grounds**, to promote year-round play and greater access for student-athletes.
 - Improved resources for outdoor school gatherings, including **separate entrances to restrooms and hookups for food trucks**.
 - **New drop-off loop and entrance** to the elementary building with a security vestibule to enhance student safety and create a **barrier between traffic and students**.
- **Additional parking and improved traffic flow** at the Middle/High School.
 - **Pedestrian zone in the center of campus** to create a more peaceful, safe, and naturalistic environment and connection between the two school buildings. Cars and buses will move on the exterior of the campus, with separate vehicle entrances for the elementary and middle school/high school buildings.
 - **Shared resources across campus** that not only create operational and cost efficiencies, but more importantly expand opportunities for student and staff access and foster deeper connections across all grades and experiences. For example:
 - ▶ An art gallery in the new elementary school lobby can be used as exhibition space for older students to display art
 - ▶ Elementary students can perform on stage in the Middle/High School building
 - ▶ Modified sports teams can practice in the enlarged elementary school gym, which also offers more indoor play space when the weather is inclement
 - **Improved spaces for faculty and staff** to collaborate, work independently, and connect virtually.
 - **Infrastructure updates**, such as electrical, plumbing, HVAC, efficient windows, and more that support a healthy environment for a sustainable future.
 - **Adaptive meeting spaces** for students, staff, and community groups.

AND MORE!



A Look Back at the Journey to this Capital Project



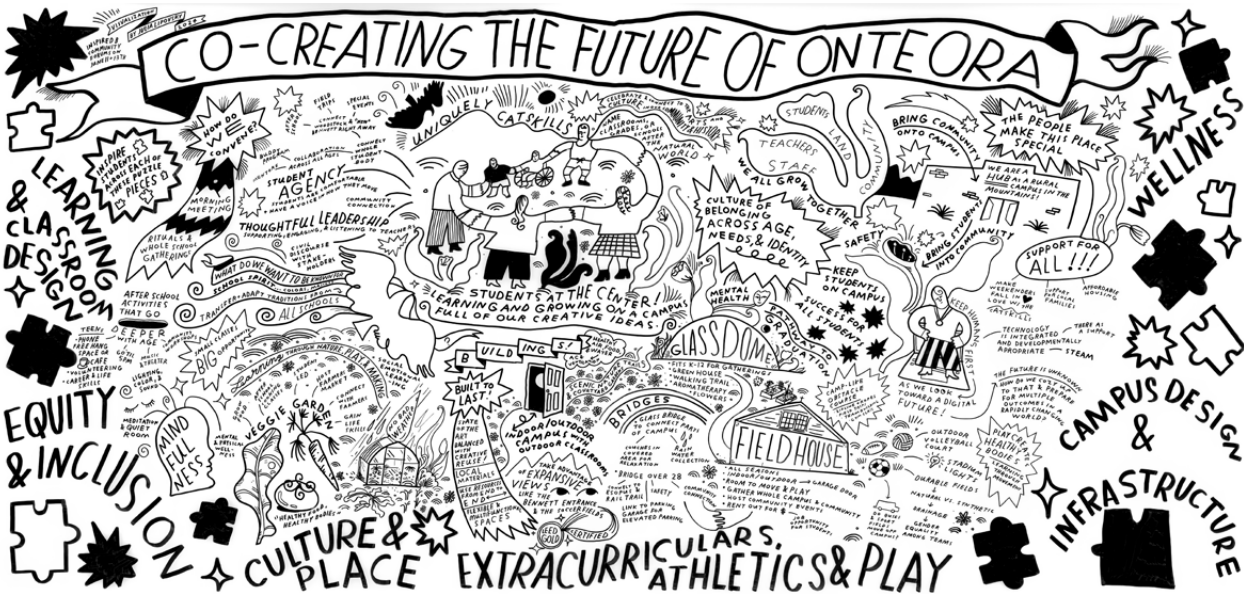
How can we fund this project without an increase on the tax levy?

Our District leadership has worked closely with its financial advisors to strategically structure the \$70.5 million project so it can be funded **without an anticipated increase in the tax levy**.

To accomplish this, we will first apply \$15 million that is saved in our voter-approved Capital Reserve (a savings mechanism for projects like this one) and cash already on hand, which will reduce the level of borrowing to \$55.5 million and save on interest costs. Borrowing will be done through bonds in increments as phases of the project need funding. The bonds will be repaid over 20 years, starting in 2028.

Each year of the repayment, we will receive approximately \$1.3 million of State Building Aid. If we factor in an expected annual savings of more than \$3 million achieved through the efficiencies of a central campus, we anticipate being able to repay the bonds **without increasing taxes**.

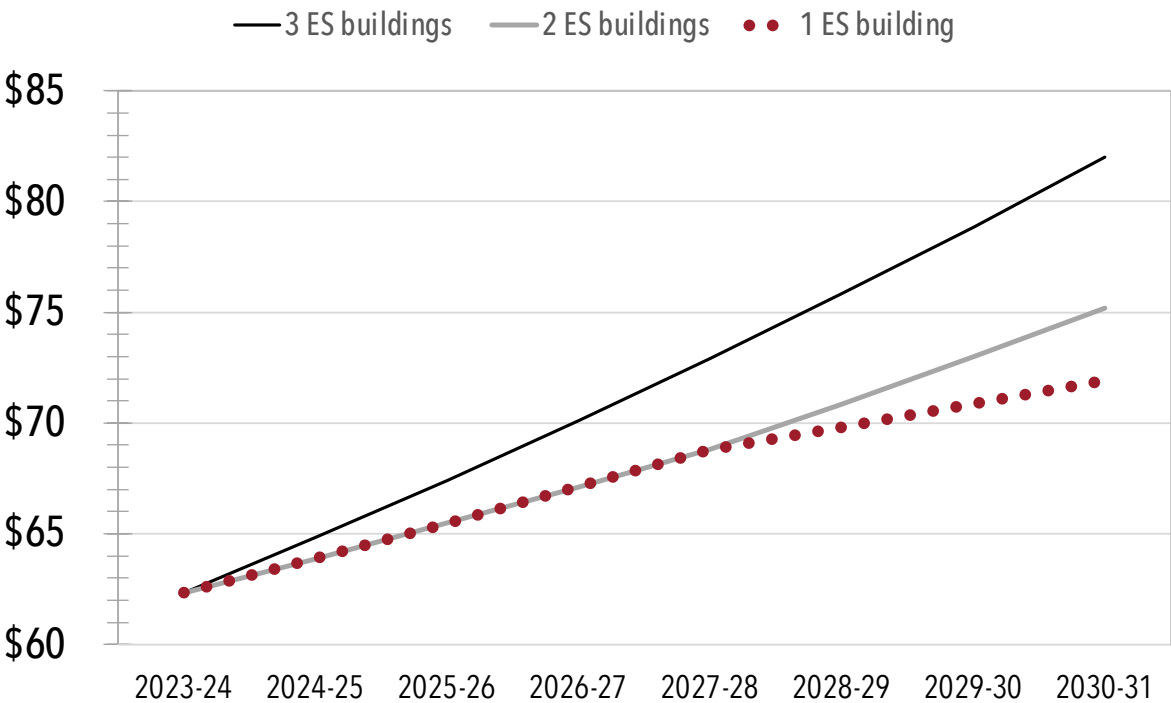
In addition, the cost savings of consolidating to a central campus will continue to grow and help offset future budget increases — which



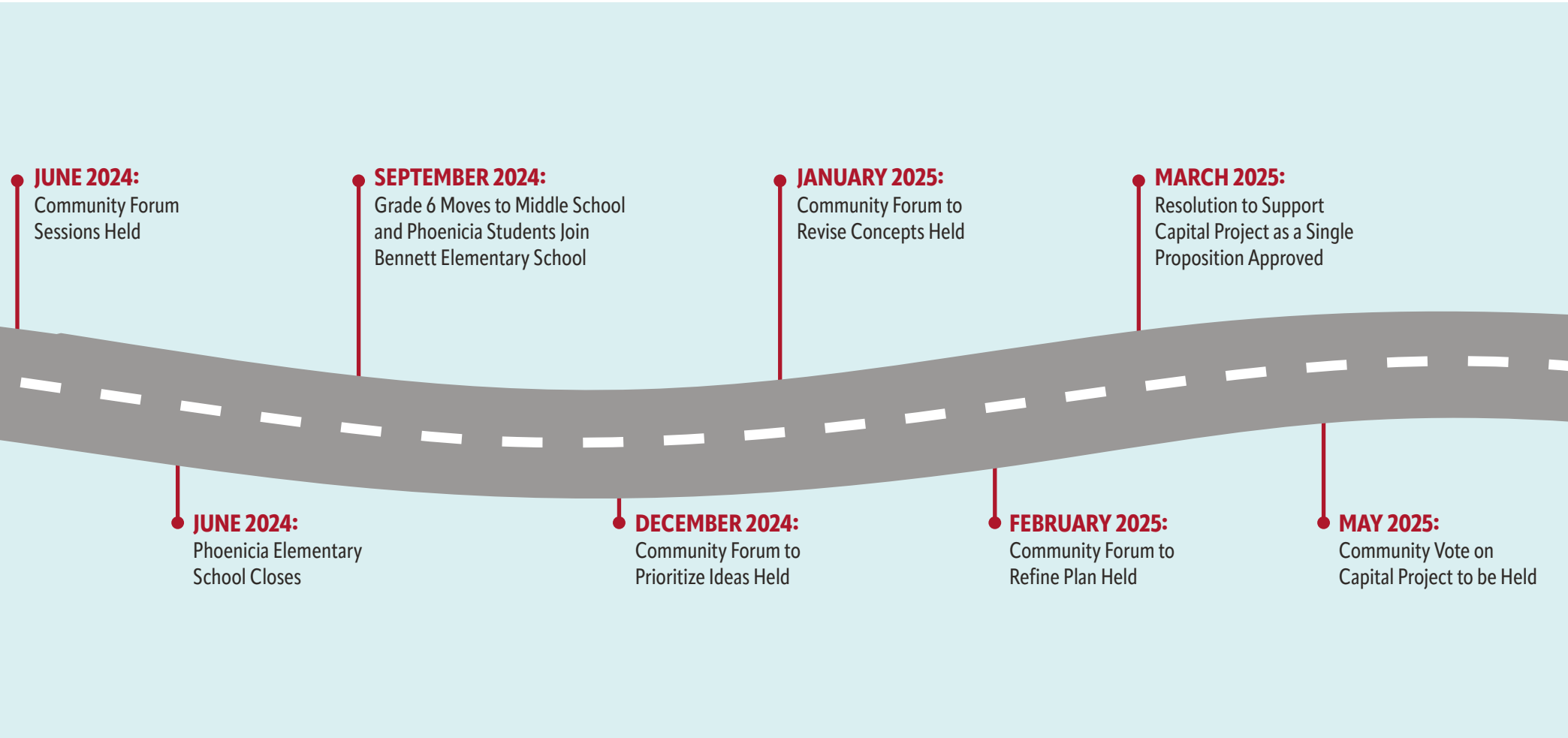
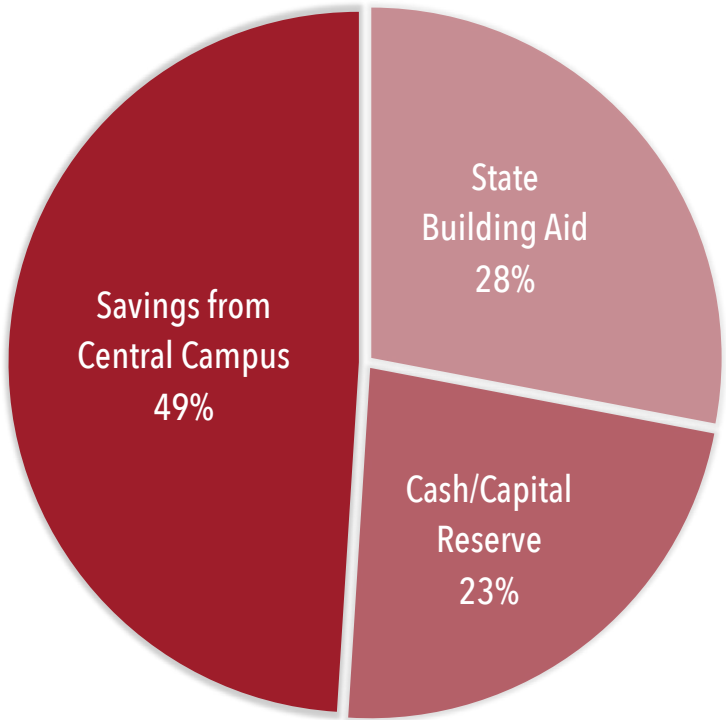
A visual distillation of the passions, hopes, and dreams shared at the community forums.

is especially important as we anticipate significant changes to the New York State Foundation Aid formula and a possible reduction in federal funding. The loss of these existing revenues could force the closure of Woodstock in a manner that is reactive and does not include the benefits of a thoughtful Capital Project plan designed with the voices of diverse stakeholder groups.

PROJECTED SAVINGS OF A CENTRAL CAMPUS



HOW IS THE PROJECT FUNDED?



What happens after a successful vote?

If passed, we will begin to work with our architectural and construction professionals to develop the final designs. This process will take about a year and will include faculty, staff, and students in the design process. The designs will then be submitted to the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for approval. Once NYSED approves, a competitive bidding process will be executed. After bids are awarded, work can begin. Construction will be phased in a manner to create minimal disruptions to teaching and learning, with nights, weekends, holidays, and vacation times being used for updates to student-occupied spaces. The project is anticipated to be complete by September of 2028.

Community Engagement Continues

In addition to the logistics planning that happens after a successful vote, we also will remain committed to working closely with key stakeholders and subject matter experts to refine the campus design with input. We will continue to show up alongside our community to honor the legacy of Woodstock Elementary School and support students, staff, and families through this transition. Guided by our mission, we will approach the future use of closed school buildings with care and in collaboration with the community. Throughout this process, we will keep you informed with updates on the campus plans, share the building schedule, and create meaningful opportunities for community dialogue.



The community was invited to attend a series of sessions led by Sharon Lipovsky of Point Road Studios in Woodstock to offer input into the priorities for a central campus design.



WE'RE HERE FOR QUESTIONS

Email your questions or comments to optimizing@onteorak12.ny.us or call Superintendent Victoria McLaren at 845-657-6383.

LEARN MORE ON OUR WEBSITE

Visit www.onteorak12.ny.us



Answers to Some Common Questions

We have a full section of questions and answers on our website, but here are a few of the most frequently asked. Visit www.onteorak12.ny.us/optimize to find more information.

Will rejecting the proposition prevent the closure of Woodstock Elementary School?

No. If the vote fails, the Board and administration will analyze data from a planned exit poll to determine what next steps should be taken to realize a central campus. In the past year, we've been made aware that it is highly likely that changes will be made to the New York State Foundation Aid formula in which Onteora is predicted to soon lose a significant amount of funding. Although the loss of Foundation Aid was not a consideration when this journey began, it is very much a part of our current realities. The loss of Foundation Aid could drive the need to consolidate in the very near future. The District has the opportunity to prepare for a likely scenario of funding cuts by creating a central campus that is both tax neutral and was imagined through a community visioning and design process. Voters are encouraged to complete the exit poll when they vote on May 20.

When will Woodstock Elementary School Close?

All K-5 students would come together at the reimagined elementary school in Boiceville after the central campus upgrades are complete. Given that renovations are anticipated to be completed by the start of the 2028-29 school year, we expect Woodstock Elementary School to close at the end of the 2027-28 school year.

What is happening with our closed school properties?

Our hope is for school buildings that are no longer in use to continue to serve and benefit the community. While each property has unique considerations, our priority is to explore options that preserve their value as local assets.

PHOENICIA: We initially agreed to sell Phoenicia to the Town of Shandaken for \$1. There are some limitations to doing so, so a lease is also being explored. Either option allows it to remain as a community resource, which is a priority. These conversations are ongoing.

WEST HURLEY: This property has been under contract since 2017. The purchaser is working through various issues, but we still anticipate that this sale will close and this property will return to the tax rolls and provide housing.

WOODSTOCK: Future uses would be explored if the Capital Project is approved. While we have no immediate plans, we do know that restrictions included in the deed only allow school or residential use, and using it for additional housing would be a benefit to our community. The purchaser's options are limited to only these two uses unless they are able to successfully gain a deed alteration.

How will the integration of Bennett and Woodstock Elementary Schools be managed?

We view the integration as the creation of a new school and not the absorption of one school into another. Considerations include updating culture markers like the school name. In preparation for the elementary school integration, we will partner with building leadership to create a thoughtful and well-communicated transition plan for students and staff at both Bennett and Woodstock Elementary Schools. Staff reassignments will be done thoughtfully and should there be the need for any reductions, we will make them through attrition wherever possible. It is our priority to ensure that all students and staff feel connected to their new school.

VOTE MAY 20!

Vote on the annual school budget and Capital Project and elect two members to the Board of Education.

TUESDAY, MAY 20 FROM 2 PM - 9 PM
at Woodstock & Bennett Elementary Schools

Applications for Early Mail Ballots are also available online!