Edina Public Schools Referendum Proposal: Project Scope & Financial Analysis (November 2026)

Executive Summary & Strategic Capital Breakdown

Edina Public Schools has finalized a comprehensive $118.65M referendum framework to address physical security, technology funding, special educational continuum gaps, and critical facility bottlenecks across the district. Developed over a 24-36-month planning cycle (2023–2026) involving facility audits, demographic studies, and scientific community surveys, the proposal delivers targeted solutions without relying on speculative district-wide enrollment growth.

To assist the School Board in evaluating the package for Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Review & Comment filing deadlines, the financial and programmatic capital structure is organized around three primary allocations:

Core Financial Allocation Architecture

Approximately 75.6% Allocated to Safety, Security, and Infrastructure: The primary share of the referendum framework directly funds physical security enhancements, capital technology protection, secure public facilities, and necessary staffing. This includes the $15.0 million District-Wide Safety and Security Infrastructure Bond and the 1.4% Capital Technology increase.

Approximately 21% Allocated Across Six Identified Building Projects: Targeted physical additions and internal reconfigurations across six district facilities resolve acute functional bottlenecks, establish local Setting III Special Education classrooms, prioritize French and Spanish immersion pathways, and reduce high school floating teacher room-sharing.

Approximately 3.4% Allocated for Future Land Acquisition*:* Statutory authorization to acquire land ($14.0 million) for future district development. This structure carries **no tax impact for district taxpayers if the land is not purchased**.

1. Safety, Security & Infrastructure Allocation (~75.6%)

Beyond physical security and digital infrastructure, the proposal's safety and technology investments directly fund dedicated personnel to directly support students and staff with behavioral incidents as well as specialized technical needs like cybersecurity. Shifting these critical safety, security, and technical staffing expenses out of the operating budget insulates the General Fund, preserving classroom dollars from escalating fiscal burdens.

Physical Safety & Security Infrastructure Bond ($15.0M)

Addresses physical life-safety enhancements across all district facilities based on expert security assessments. Upgrades include such things as district-wide public address systems, standardized thumb-turn door locking hardware, cellular signal amplification at Edina High School, expanded security camera coverage, and reinforced entrance access controls.

Capital Technology Levy (1.4% / ~$2.38M Annual Operating Protection)

Establishes a 1.4% Capital Technology Levy to protect General Fund classroom instruction. By shifting eligible technology infrastructure, cybersecurity systems, safety software, and technical support staffing out of the operating budget, the levy preserves general education dollars while maintaining district digital infrastructure over a 10+ year horizon.

2. Six Building Projects (~21%)

Allocated across six building projects, approximately 21% of the referendum capital directly resolves critical facility bottlenecks driven by specialized learning requirements, secondary language immersion transitions, an increased demand for Special Education services (+718 active IEPs from FY15 to FY25), and modernization of Kuhlman Stadium.

Building Project Site	Scope & Spatial Addition	Estimated Investment	Primary Operational Deficit Resolved
South View Middle School	23,400 sq. ft. Addition (9 Classrooms)	$25.0 Million	Accommodates incoming Countryside Spanish Dual Language (SDL) transition (~135 students across grades 6–8 starting 2028–29), expands Setting III Special Education and other special education spaces, and provides additional space for Kids Club programming.
Valley View Middle School	6,600 sq. ft. Addition (3 Classrooms)	$13.0 Million	Provides 3 additional classrooms, including dedicated classrooms for Setting III behavioral space to serve high-need special education students locally in-district.
Creek Valley Elementary	9,000 sq. ft. Addition	$12.2 Million	Establishes dedicated intervention (Title I, ML, Talent Dev.), health, and administrative spaces, and addresses audit findings, enhancing safety and security.

Edina High School (EHS)	Internal Space Reconfiguration	$11.5 Million	Reallocates interior square footage to create 7–10 new teaching stations (reducing 23 floating teachers who lack dedicated rooms) and modernizes certain STEAM/Science-related classrooms.
Concord Elementary	4,000 sq. ft. Addition	$10.5 Million	Completes deferred 2022A COP commitments, adding specialized student support rooms, a 10-person confidential IEP team conference room, modernized food service receiving logistics, and expanded Kids Club space.
Kuhlman Stadium Facility	10,000 sq. ft. North-End Facility	$17.45M	Integrated stadium security plaza, permanent indoor restrooms, ADA physical accessibility, ticketing infrastructure, and visitor management.

Key Programmatic Driver Highlights

Special Education In-District Capacity: Active IEPs grew from 12% to 20% of enrollment over the past decade. Dedicated Setting III spaces at VVMS, SVMS, and Concord allow the district to serve students locally rather than relying on costly out-of-district placements (such as Intermediate District 287).

Immersion Feeder Protection: Provides required room capacity to host incoming Countryside Spanish Dual Language cohorts at SVMS (~45 students per grade entering 2028–29) without crowding out general education electives.

EHS Floating Teacher Solution: Reduces room sharing for 23 floating teachers across 8 academic departments by converting underutilized interior space into 7–10 instructional rooms without triggering City sewer expansion caps.

3. Strategic Land Acquisition (~3.4%)

To preserve future flexibility for district facility development, the proposal includes statutory authorization for land acquisition ($14.0 million authorization).

Fiscal Safeguard & Tax Impact Conditions

Conditional Tax Impact: Property tax adjustments are strictly tied to land acquisition.
Zero Tax Impact: If the district does not execute a land purchase, there is $0 tax impact on district property owners for this authorization.
Strategic Horizon: Prevents prime municipal land from being permanently lost to private commercial developers while preserving long-range facility planning options for Edina Public Schools.

4. Governance & Financial Decision Matrix

To meet MDE Review & Comment filing timelines for a Spring 2027 election, the Board can evaluate six distinct governance options:

Option 1: Full Strategic Referendum Framework (*Presented as Option 3 at the September 14 Work Session, and deemed to be the Board's preferred option to explore*)

Overview: Proceed with the comprehensive, balanced package that the Board supported exploring.

Scope & Components:

Safety, Security & Technology: ~$15M Safety Bond + 1.4% Capital Tech Levy increase (~$2.38M annually)

Instructional Capacity & Modernization: Edina High School internal reconfiguration (~$11.5M), South View Middle School Addition (~$25M), Valley View Middle School addition (~$13M),

Creek Valley Addition (~$12.2M) and a Concord Elementary Addition (~$10.5M).

Strategic Asset Preservation & Land: Land acquisition for future development ($14M) and Kuhlman Stadium safety & security upgrades and modernization (~$17.45M).

Estimated Total Capital Investment: ~$118.65M (Estimated tax impact: ~$14 per month on a median $800,000 home).[1]

Operational Problems Resolved:

Subject to stakeholder feedback and final design, provides dedicated classroom space for 7–10 additional teachers, reducing the number of "floating teachers" to 13–16.

Establishes dedicated on-site Setting III Special Education spaces, supporting CEIS disproportionality reduction goals while strengthening programming, reducing the need for Setting IV referrals, and supporting successful student transitions back to district schools.

Provides dedicated middle school classrooms for French Immersion and Spanish Dual Language students.

Fulfills deferred 2022 COP commitments at Concord.

Secures 5+ acres for future development.

Protects General Fund operating dollars by cost-shifting eligible staffing, security and technology expenses into the Tech Levy.

Trade-Offs & Governance Considerations: Represents the highest total dollar ask of options presented previously, but falls directly within the tax tolerance verified by the August/September 2026 Morris Leatherman community survey.

Option 2: Targeted & Phased Implementation

If the Board determines that a comprehensive package exceeds current community appetite or feels like they would like more or different information

[1] Includes additional seating at Kuhlman Stadium (~$2,450,000)

before deciding on some or all of the facility recommendations, the Board could select one of three targeted, scaled-back options:

Option 2A: Safety & Security Focus Only

> **Scope: $15M of initial infrastructure related expenditures + 1.4% Capital Technology Levy to sustain investments over the next 10+ years**
>
> **Estimated Capital Investment:** ~$15.0M.
>
> **Problems Resolved:** Provides additional staffing to support students and provide technological expertise (i.e. cybersecurity), upgrades physical life-safety systems (i.e. PA systems, thumb-turn locks, EHS cellular amplification, security cameras) and protects General Fund operating dollars via the Tech Levy.
>
> **Unresolved Risks & Deferred Needs:** Leaves 100% of physical classroom space deficits unaddressed. EHS continues with 23 floating teachers; Special Education students remain in out-of-district placements; middle school immersion programs face severe space bottlenecks.

Option 2B: Safety, Security & Strategic Land Acquisition

> **Scope:** $15M of initial infrastructure related expenditures + 1.4% increase to Capital Technology Levy, and Strategic Land Acquisition ($14.0M).
>
> **Estimated Capital Investment:** ~$29.0M Bond.
>
> **Problems Resolved:** Addresses immediate physical security, protects General Fund operating capacity, and secures 5+ acres for future development.
>
> **Unresolved Risks & Deferred Needs:** Provides zero classroom or facility relief for K-12 buildings, leaving EHS, South View Spanish Dual Language, and elementary deficits unmitigated.

Option 2C: Core Consensus Package (Safety, Tech Levy, Land & High-Need Facility Additions)

> **Scope:** $15M of initial infrastructure related expenditures + 1.4% Capital Technology Levy to sustain investments over the next 10+ years + Land acquisition ($14M), EHS internal reconfiguration ($11.5M), and targeted

middle school Special Education/immersion additions at Valley View ($13M) / South View ($25M).

Estimated Capital Investment: ~$78.5M.

Problems Resolved: Addresses top safety, operating fund protection, land preservation, high school floating teachers, and high-priority Special Education/immersion bottlenecks.

Unresolved Risks & Deferred Needs: Defers elementary additions (Creek Valley and Concord COP fulfillment) and Kuhlman Stadium safety & security and modernization to future capital cycles.

Option 3: Maintain Status Quo / No Referendum Action

Overview: Defer all referendum authorization and take no capital package to voters in May 2027.

Estimated Capital Investment: $0.

Problems Resolved: Zero immediate tax impact on Edina property owners.

Unresolved Risks & Operational Consequences:

General Fund Erosion: Without a Capital Tech Levy, technology and security operational costs continue draining General Fund dollars.

Escalating Out-of-District Costs: Lack of local Setting III Special Education suites requires ongoing, costly tuition and transportation payments to District 287.

Operational Degradation: 23 EHS teachers continue sharing spaces and do not have their own classroom space; Security and instructional space deficits remain at Creek Valley Elementary School.

Option 4: Process Pause & 18-Month Comprehensive Re-Study

Overview: Pause current referendum planning and initiate an extended 18-month re-evaluation process aimed at placing a referendum on the Fall 2028 ballot.

Estimated Capital Investment: Delayed.

Problems Resolved: Provides additional time for Board deliberation, comprehensive facility audit, and secondary community engagement.

Unresolved Risks & Operational Consequences:

Construction Inflation Penalty: Because a Fall 2028 referendum would shift project bidding and construction start dates by approximately 2–3 years, 4%–5% annual construction inflation would add an estimated $6–10M to a $100M package for identical scopes of work. At an estimated 4%–5% annual construction inflation rate, delaying a $116M infrastructure package by 24 to 36 months adds an estimated $9.5 - 18.3M in escalated building costs for identical scopes of work.
Loss of Strategic Land Opportunities: A 18-month delay risks losing prime 5+ acre parcels currently available in Edina to private developers.

Compounding Space Bottlenecks: Pushes high school floating teacher relief, middle school SDL arrival (2028–29), and Special Education facility solutions out to 2029–2030 at the earliest.

Action Requested

If the Board wishes to maintain the option for a May 2027 referendum date, Board feedback is requested to confirm their governance option, authorizing administration to compile and submit Review and Comment documentation to the Minnesota Department of Education by the December 22, 2026 statutory deadline.