



# LEWISTON-ALTURA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Lewiston-Altura Community Members,

The Lewiston-Altura Public School District provides well-rounded excellent education and extracurricular experiences for our students. As a result, our students have experienced great successes both in and out of the classroom. We are proud of:

- Our **early childhood programs provide excellent care** and developmentally appropriate education activities that prepare students for kindergarten success.
- Our **quality before and after school care** for elementary students.
- Our **elementary students consistently perform significantly higher** than the state average in reading and math on state standardized tests.
- We have invested in a **new elementary science curriculum** that emphasizes experiential learning and problem solving.
- Our high school students benefit from **strong core instruction, a variety of electives, and post-secondary and concurrent high school and college credit courses**. Recent data analysis of our students' performance confirmed that local non-public school students are generally strong math students, but they are not exceeding the skill level of students who attended Lewiston-Altura in grades 6-8.
- Our commitment to **comprehensive services to support students'** special education needs, physical health needs, social learning, drama, large group instruction, and school and community presentations and events

To ensure ongoing success and fiscal responsibility, District leadership has spent the past two years defining our priorities as we update our **long-range strategic plan to guide decision making and assure long-term success for the District**. The timeline to the right highlights the key steps we have taken. This process included looking carefully at District operations and school facilities. The District has been experiencing significant budget challenges impacted by declining enrollment and aging facilities. In addition, the District's operating levy of \$52/pupil unit is due to expire in fiscal year 2026 and is significantly less than the state average of \$850/pupil unit. In April 2021, the District conducted a comprehensive facility assessment to identify needs and better understand how to right-size the District for the future.

The study identified the need for many updates including:

- ✔ Improve traffic flow and separation of buses, vehicles, and pedestrians at both schools
- ✔ Secure main entrances that monitor and regulate visitor access at both schools
- ✔ Classrooms need to be updated and expanded to provide space for both large and small group instruction as well as the integration of technology
- ✔ Building systems, including remaining heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), plumbing, and electrical, are at the end of their service life and require replacement
- ✔ The schools' windows are inefficient and in need of replacement
- ✔ The schools' exterior finishes need to be repaired to address water infiltration
- ✔ The high school science and art classrooms and Career and Technical Education Space (Shop) need to be updated and expanded to provide improved space for project-based learning and job-like experiences
- ✔ A performance space is needed for music, band, drama, large group instruction, and school and community presentations and events
- ✔ A bus garage is needed to secure and protect the buses from the elements as well as allow space for needed maintenance and repairs

Over the next few months, we will continue to gather input and ideas from the community as we consider going to referendum (voter-approved support) to assist in funding school operations and facility projects. Please take the opportunity to engage in this important planning process that will impact our communities for decades.

**Cardinal Pride is strong! Together, we can make it even stronger!**

Sincerely,

Superintendent

2021

Facility assessment of all District buildings to identify maintenance projects and building system needs

Review of school space needs to look for operating efficiencies

School Board begins visioning sessions

District begins process to update strategic plan to guide work of the District for the next five years

Community-wide survey on overall District needs, priorities, and performance

2022

Community-wide engagement sessions held to update community on facility assessment findings and gather feedback from citizens

District assembled a community facility task force made up of community members, parents, and staff to explore potential projects and consider funding options to update schools

School Board votes to close Altura School because there is now adequate space for the 5th and 6th graders to be at the elementary and high school; to save operating expenses; and eliminate the need to make a significant investment in facility improvements to a third school

2023

School Board develops comprehensive Strategic Plan to address student success, staffing, financial, facility, and community engagement goals

Facility projects and operating levy options are narrowed for possible referendum

Community engagement session updates residents on process and gathers feedback on options to-date

Board to deploy community survey to gain input from all citizens on potential operating and bond referenda

# Funding Options

As the District explores how best to address budget deficits and update and expand facilities, we are considering one or more types of voter-approved referendum, an operating levy and/or a bond.

## OPERATING LEVY

When communities support an Operating Levy, they are providing the District general funds to use for teachers' salaries, textbooks, co-curricular programs, transportation, computers, utilities, and the general operation of the District.

## WHY IS THE DISTRICT CONSIDERING AN OPERATING LEVY?

The District's current Voter-Approved Operating Levy of \$52/pupil unit is due to expire in fiscal year 2026. The average operating levy in Minnesota for fiscal year 2021-22 was approximately \$850/pupil unit.

In the past three years, the District has filled some budget gaps with federal and state pandemic dollars. However, these are one-time funds that will not be available to the District in the future. As enrollment declines, the District receives less revenue from the state to maintain curriculum, course offerings, and staff. Approximately \$255,000 of annual operational savings will be used to close the Altura building and downsize two sites. However, additional funds are still needed to adequately provide quality education, maintain current opportunities for students, and reduce future budget cuts. These are priorities that the community, staff, and students identified in the 2021 community survey.

## BOND REFERENDUM

A Bond Referendum provides school districts dollars to only be used for significant improvements to facilities and building infrastructure. Bonds can be used for major construction such as renovation, building an addition, building new schools, or for projects such as addressing repairs or replacing building infrastructure, finishes, and systems.

## WHY IS THE DISTRICT CONSIDERING A BOND REFERENDUM?

The elementary school and the high school are both aging and have infrastructure and renovation needs. Addressing facility needs will reduce annual maintenance and operating costs, allowing the District to re-direct the savings to student programming. Additionally, updating our facilities will ensure the buildings will be safer and provide improved educational spaces for 21st Century learning into the District's future.

## HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF ELEMENTARY & HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

**1966**

High School Built

**1975**

Elementary School Built

**1996**

Successful Bond Referendum:

- High School Classrooms and C Gym Addition
- 3rd and 4th Grade Wing and Lower Level Additions

**2008**

Failed Bond Referendum

**2008/2009**

Early Childhood Addition, Paid for With District's Existing Funds

**2010**

High School Partial HVAC Upgrades, Using Health and Safety Levy Authority

**2014**

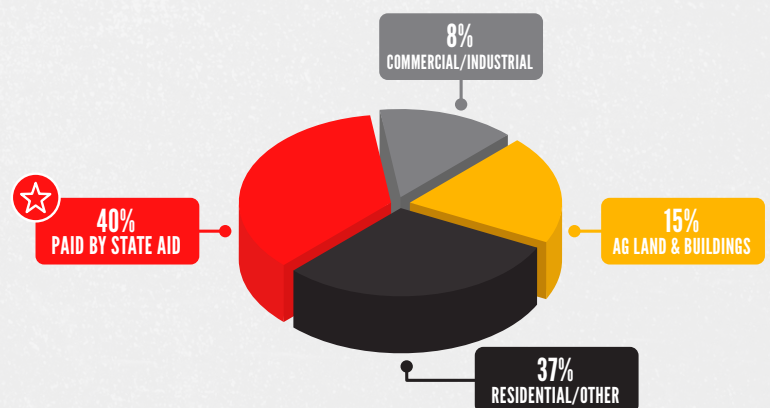
Successful Operating Levy Renewal

**2017**

Elementary School HVAC Upgrades, Using Health and Safety Levy Authority

## STATE AID WILL REDUCE TAX IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL LAND

The District's facility projects would **qualify for the School Building Bond Agricultural Credit**. This credit, approved in 2017 and enhanced in 2019, reduces property taxes paid on agricultural land for school improvements by 70% for taxes payable in 2023 and beyond. **Due to the School Building Bond Agricultural Credit, the state's share of the tax burden of a bonded project benefiting the Lewiston-Altura Public School District would be approximately 40%.**





# Proposed Facility Updates and Additions

As the District considers how best to make updates and improvements to our schools, a facility task force, made up of parents, community members, and staff, reviewed the facility assessment and educational needs of the District. The group prioritized the projects based on these needs. The District will continue to engage with the community through meetings and a community-wide survey to ensure the projects and cost to taxpayers align with Lewiston-Altura residents.

The project options will be shared in detail on the community survey and can be found by scanning the QR code. The options are as follows:

## OPTION 1: ACADEMICS

Completes building updates and highest priority academic projects which:

- Creates secure entrances and improves traffic patterns to improve safety
- Addresses deferred maintenance needs
- Replaces failing building systems
- Updates classrooms and support spaces

## OPTION 2: ACADEMICS PLUS

Completes ALL of the projects in Option 1 and:

- Enlarges and reconfigures some high school classrooms to meet size guidelines and create small group learning spaces
- Builds larger science classrooms to improve spaces for students to complete labs and group projects
- Expands and improves existing art room

## OPTION 3: ALL-IN: ACADEMICS PLUS, ARTS, AND ACTIVITIES

Complete ALL of the projects in Options 1 and 2 and:

- Renovates the gym into an auditorium
- Builds a new gym

### AN AUDITORIUM FOR THE ARTS

The District regularly hosts student band and choir concerts, plays, and other performances. These events are held in the gyms with bleacher or folding chair seating, and limited lighting and acoustical equipment. Rehearsals and other performance preparations are limited due to using an unsecured stage that is also easily accessed by users of the cafeteria or gym. Production choices are limited because of our restricted stage size and support spaces. This limits the depth of benefits for students from not experiencing more complex and engaging drama and musical performances.

The proposed auditorium would be used for student assemblies/events, music performances (band/choir), plays, and large group academic presentations. It would also be used for community events with visiting musicians, speakers, or larger audiences for Fools Five, Heartland Days, or other community activities.

### ADDITIONAL GYM SPACE FOR ACTIVITIES

The existing gyms at the high school are undersized and the lack of space requires the wrestling team to practice in the lower level of the elementary school. Junior high school teams must travel to the elementary school for practices in the fall (volleyball), winter (basketball), and spring (baseball and softball until the outdoor fields are ready).

A proposed activities gym will eliminate the need to transport high school students to the elementary school for practices as well as enable the District to have indoor spring practices in spaces more adequately designed for indoor throwing and hitting without damaging lights and walls. An additional gym would also enable the District to host tournaments, which would generate revenue for both the District and community.

Using the camera on your smart phone, scan the QR code below or visit the website link to learn more about the Facility Options!



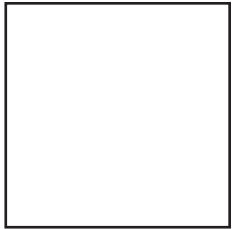
[www.lewalt.k12.mn.us/](http://www.lewalt.k12.mn.us/)





## Lewiston-Altura Public Schools

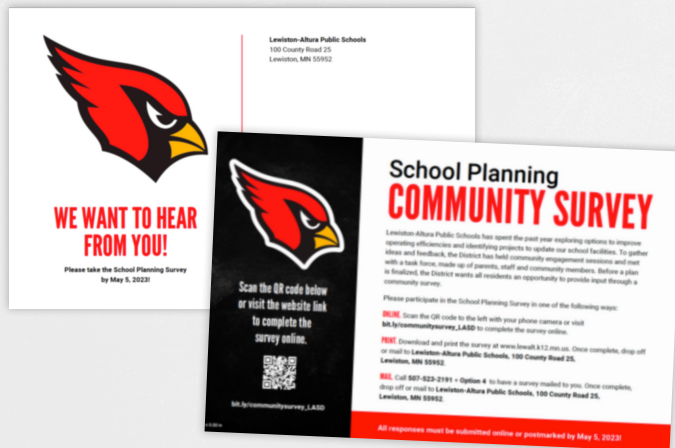
100 County Road 25  
Lewiston, MN 55952



### Community-Wide Survey Coming Soon

A postcard inviting community members to participate in a community-wide survey will soon be mailed to District residents. The survey will ask the community's level of support for an operating referendum as well as for input on potential projects and level of financial support for a bond referendum.

**Watch your mailbox for the postcard to arrive soon!**



**Building A Caring, Adaptable, Respectful, Determined, Successful Community**