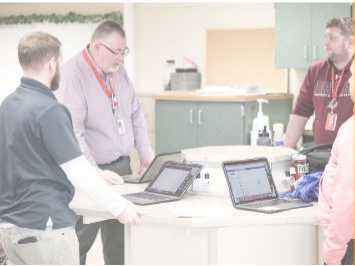


**SPARTA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
November 27, 2023**

*Anthony Scholze, President;  
John Hendricks, Vice President; Amy Lopez, Clerk;  
Pat McKenna, Treasurer; Colin Burns-Gilbert, Director; Todd Wells, Director; Ashley Berendes, Director*



## **2A. Community Survey Report presented by School Perceptions**



# Sparta Area School District

Community Survey Report

November 27, 2023

# Contents



**Background Info**



**Survey/Respondent  
Information**



**Results & Analysis**



**Wrap-up/Questions**





**Our mission is to help educational leaders gather, organize, and use data to make strategic decisions.**

- Founded in **2002** to provide independent research
- Conducted over **10,000** staff, parent, and student, and community surveys for school improvement
- Helped more than **900** districts navigate the strategic planning and referendum planning process



# Survey Deployment Process

- Residences in the district were mailed a survey.
- Parents and staff were also emailed a survey participation link.
- All surveys include a one-time-use access code.



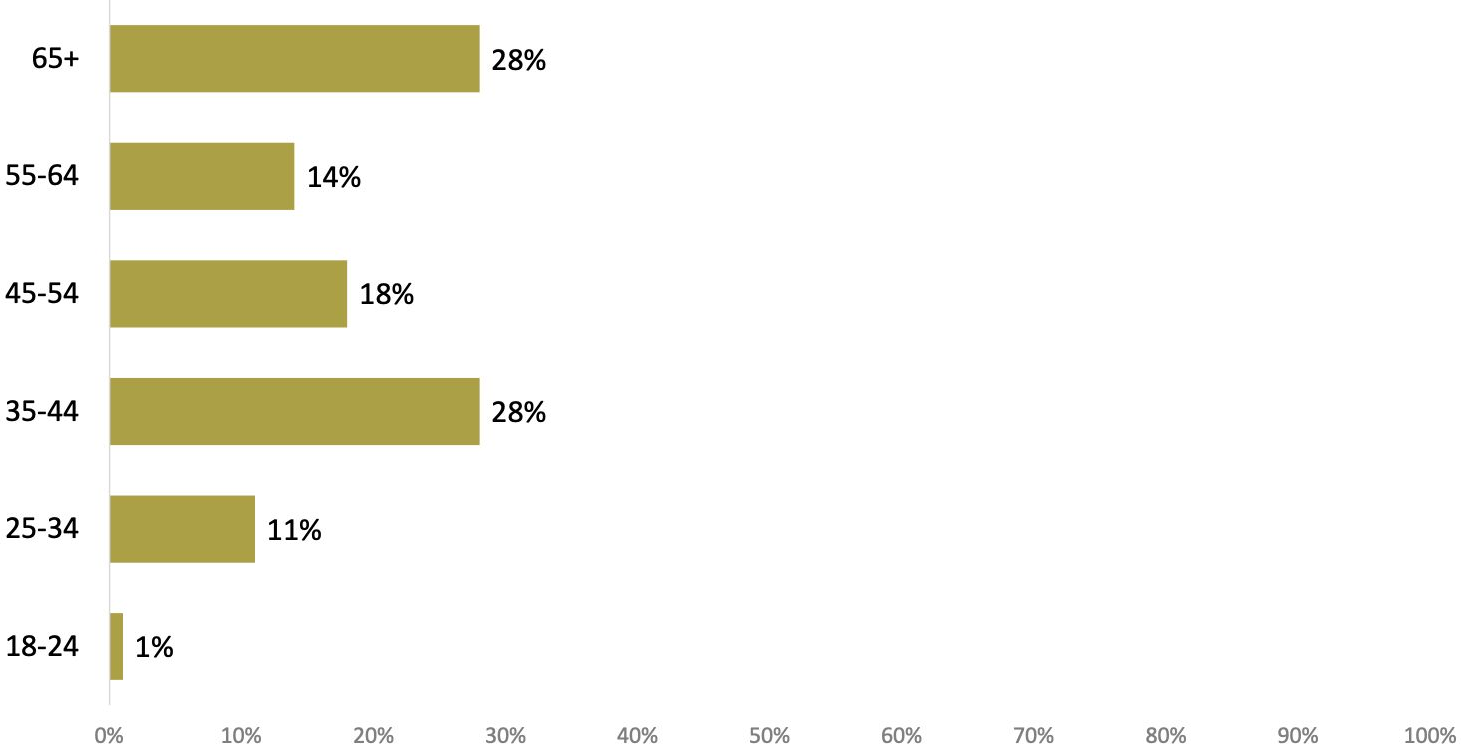


# Survey Information

- **November 6, 2023** survey deadline
- **1,149** total respondents (2018: 1,236 respondents)
- **14.4%** response rate
- **+/- 2.95%** margin of error

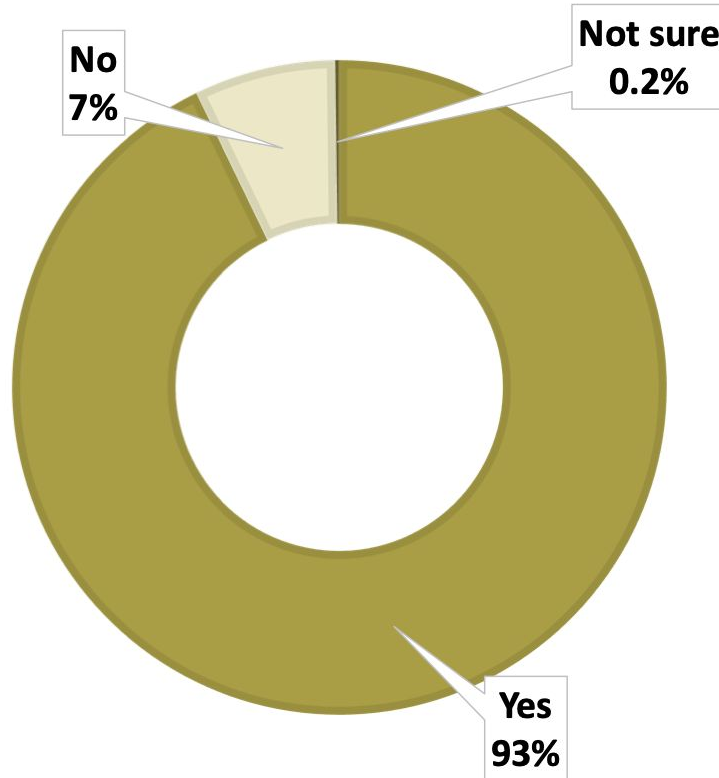


# What is your age?

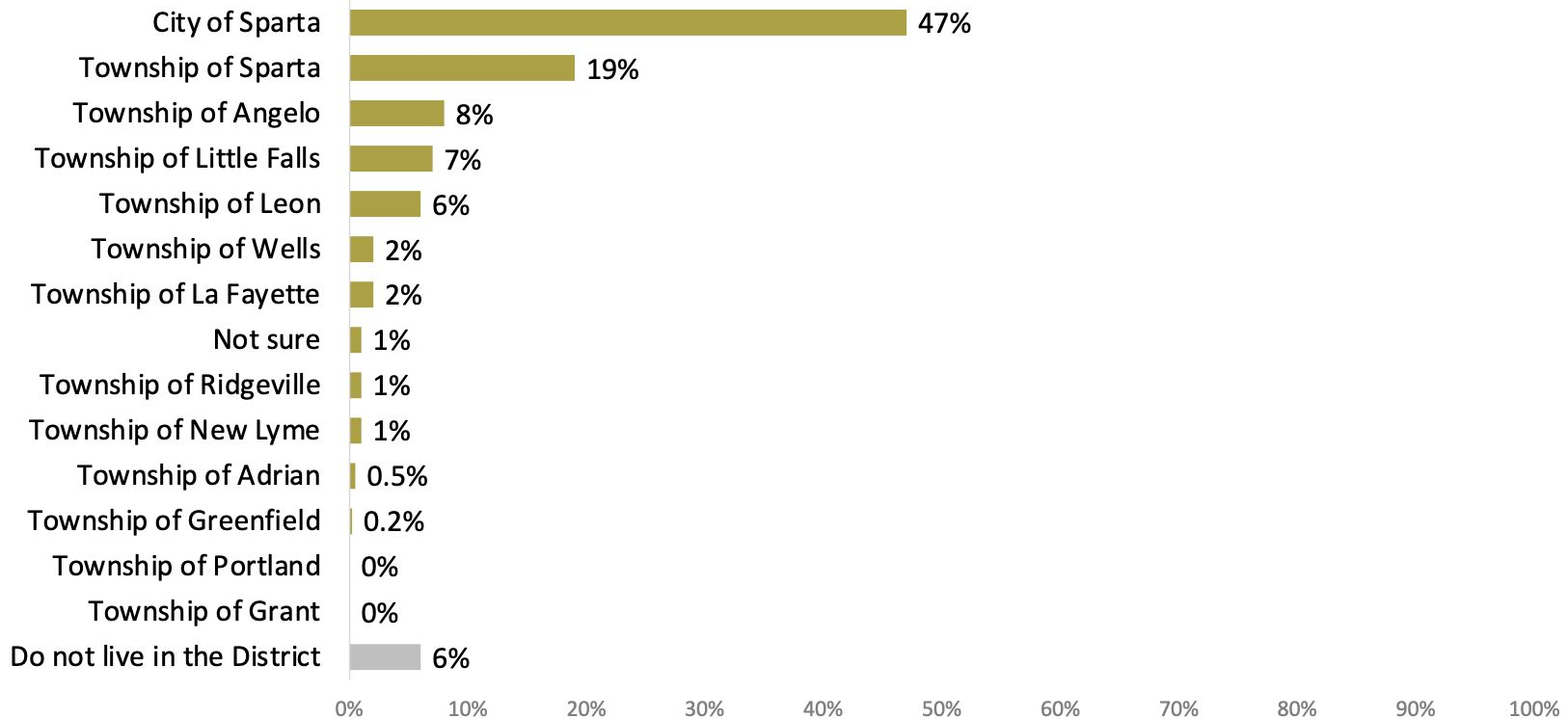




# Is your primary residence in the Sparta Area School District?



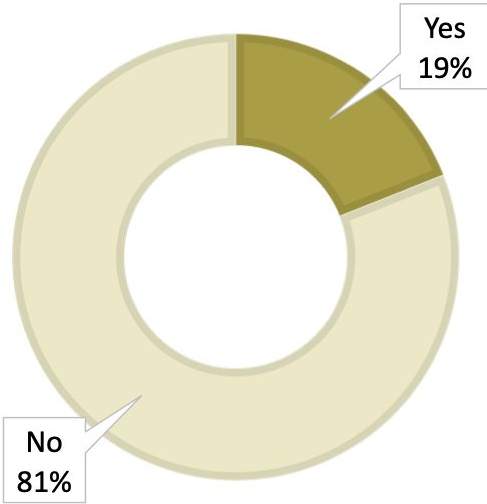
# In which municipality do you live?



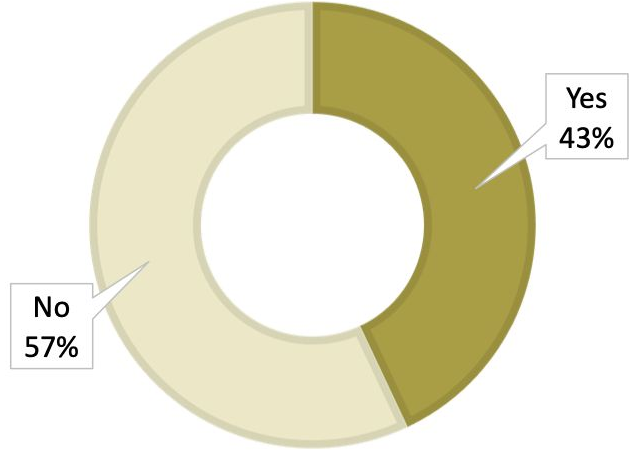
# Respondent Information



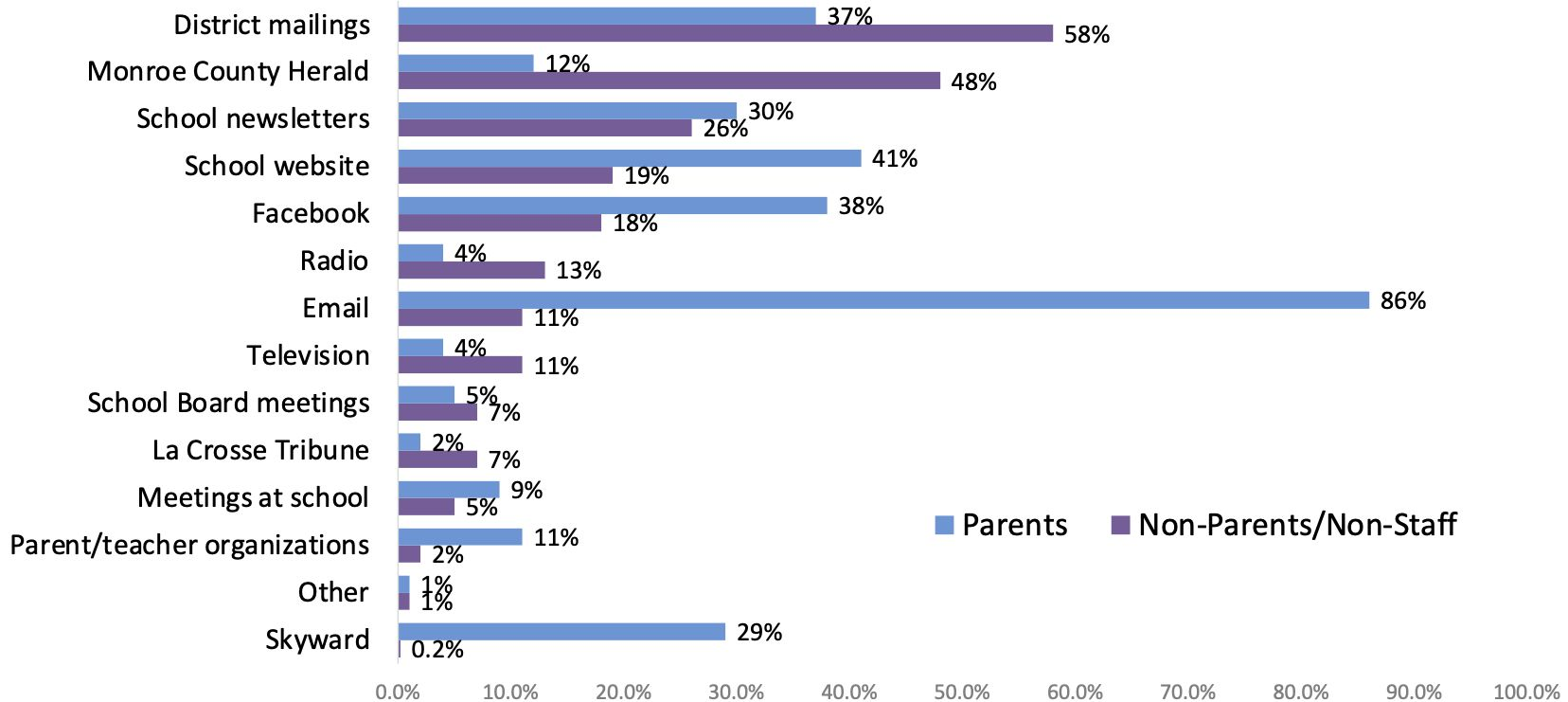
Are you an employee of the Sparta Area School District?



Do you have children attending a school in the District?

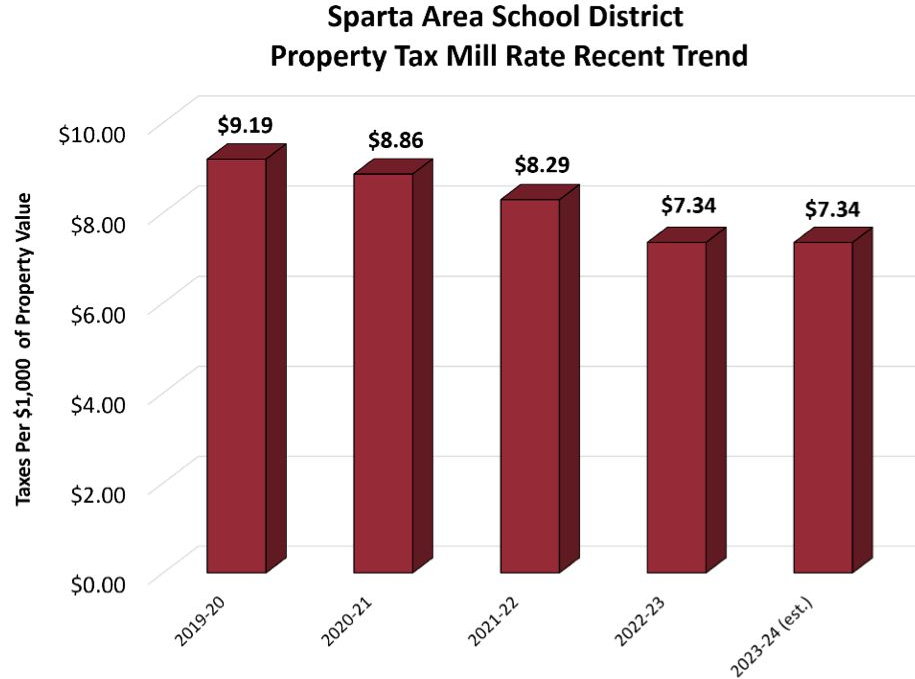


# How would you like to receive school/District information?



# Financial Background

The District has taken the opportunity to pre-pay referendum debt, saving more than \$4.4 million in interest expenses. We are on pace to be debt-free by 2026, which is 12 years ahead of schedule. These actions will lessen the tax impact of a new referendum. As seen in the chart, the tax mill rate (which is used to calculate a school district's share of local property taxes) has declined by 17% over the past 5 years.



# Referendum Funding



There are two types of referendums voters can approve to provide schools with additional funding.

1. A **capital (facilities) referendum** allows a school district to issue debt (take out a loan) to pay for major facility improvements. This is the type of referendum voters in our district supported in 2018 to build a new elementary school and update the other elementary schools.
2. An **operational referendum** is used to fund daily operations such as compensation, safety and security systems, utilities, technology, building maintenance, busing, and learning materials. Voters supported this type of referendum, providing \$750,000 annually, between 2007 and 2020.

Last year, voters did not support a \$2.1 million operational referendum. To balance the budget, we reduced staff positions, reduced programs, and closed one building. Even though the state budget included a small increase for Sparta, our federal funding will decrease by over \$2 million next year. **Therefore, we are forecasting a budget shortfall in the foreseeable future.**

# Referendum Funding

Next year, the District may consider asking voters to consider a \$750,000 operational referendum for each of the next 3-5 years to:

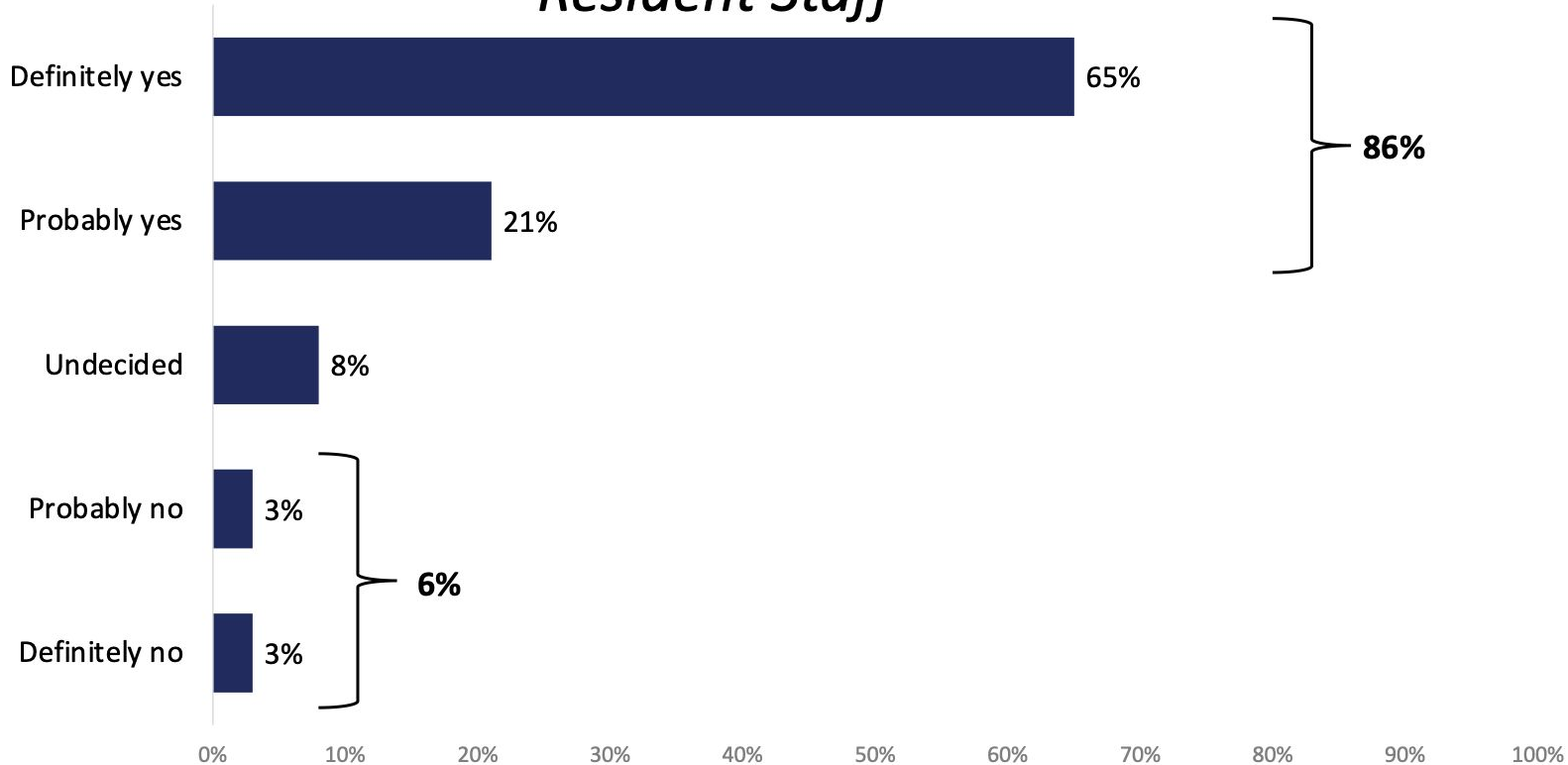
- ✓ **Maintain Current Programs and Class Sizes**
- ✓ **Retain Staff:** We need to remain competitive for staff wages and benefits, which affects our ability to attract and retain high-quality staff. Our teacher compensation is below average in comparison to other districts in the area.
- ✓ **Pay for Increasing Operational Costs:** This includes learning materials, utilities, building maintenance, busing, technology, and safety/security systems.



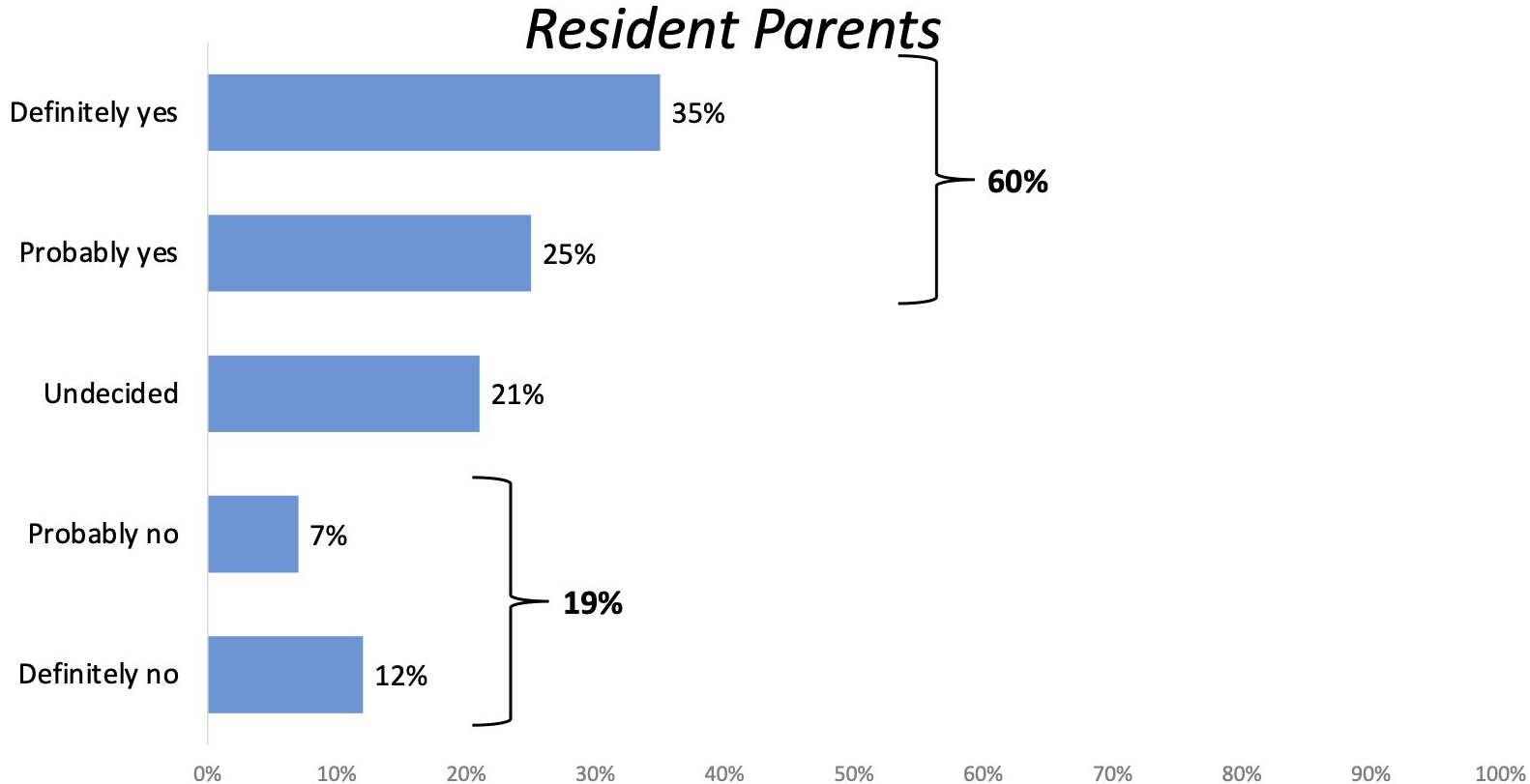


# Would you support a \$750,000 operational referendum?

## *Resident Staff*

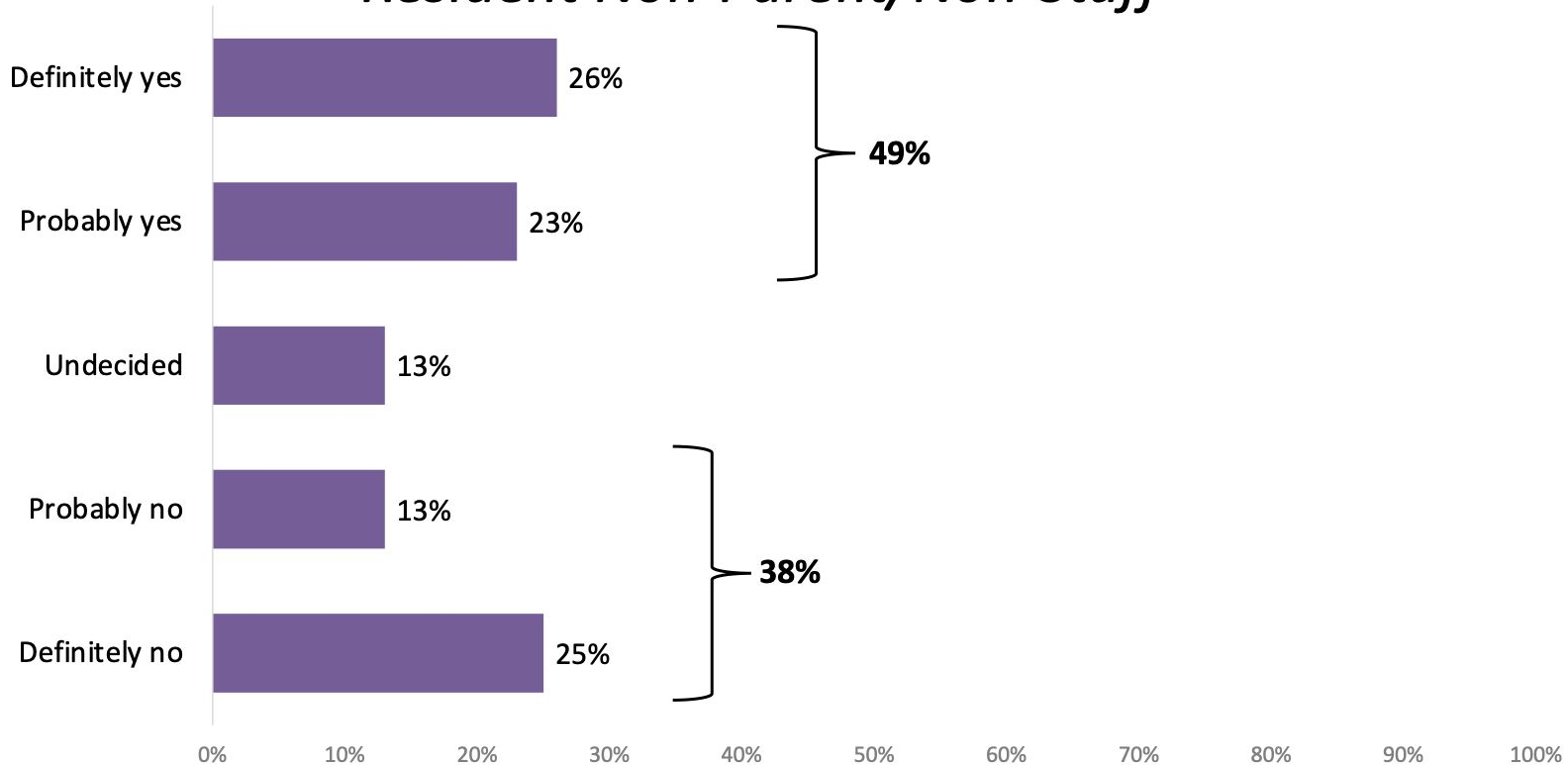


# Would you support a \$750,000 operational referendum?

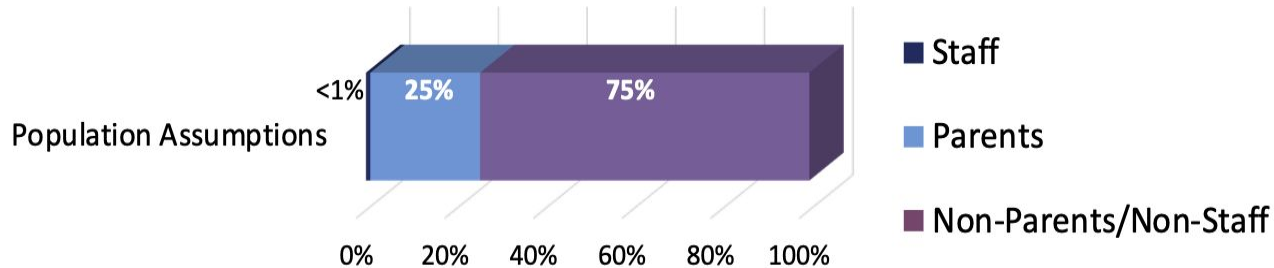


# Would you support a \$750,000 operational referendum?

## *Resident Non-Parent/Non-Staff*



# Additional Analysis: Would the \$750,000 operational referendum be supported?



Weighted support for *Definitely yes* and *Probably yes*:

$$0.25 (60\%) + 0.75 (49\%) = \underline{\underline{51.75\%}}$$



# Facility Challenges



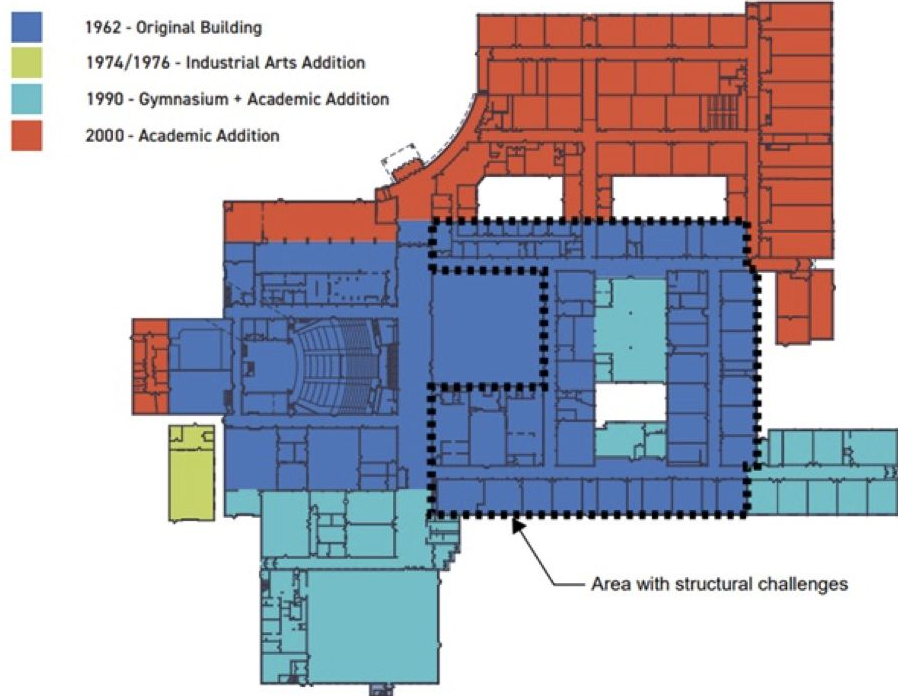
Recently, architects, engineers, and construction professionals completed a comprehensive study of the condition, capacity, and classroom quality of each school, except for Herrman Elementary.

Each school has pressing needs, with the most urgent issues at **Sparta High School**, where portions of the building are more than 60 years old.

The biggest challenge is a section of the building where ceilings are sagging and exterior walls are bowing. **A structural engineer determined there is no immediate threat to staff and student safety.** However, if this area of the school is to be used for the long term, this section needs to be torn down and rebuilt.

Over the past several months, the District held several community listening sessions. During these meetings, some asked if now is the time to consider building a new high school. However, this cost would nearly exceed the maximum amount the District can borrow per state law.

# Facility Challenges



# Facility Challenges



## **Other district-wide major building issues include:**

- Updates to the main entrances to properly monitor and control visitor access at the high school as well as Meadowview and the Montessori School.
- Some of the major building systems (HVAC, plumbing, electrical, etc.) at each school are original and need repair/replacement.
- Roof sections at the high school and Montessori School need to be replaced.
- The high school tech. ed. (shop) classrooms/labs lack space and equipment to properly train students for jobs and careers in our region.
- The high school auditorium stage and support areas need expansion and updates.
- The high school locker rooms are on the lower level and not handicap accessible.
- The high school kitchen is too small, which limits menu offerings, staff work area, and storage.
- Updates are needed to the high school agriculture lab and greenhouse.



# Facility Master Plan

We need your input to determine how many projects, if any, should be completed at this time.

## **Project 1 (Base Plan):**

**1A.** Demolish the structurally challenged portion of the high school and build a two-story addition with classrooms, special education areas, and a library.

**1B.** Build the main office with improved security, as well as space for art classrooms and locker rooms.

**1C.** New tech. ed. (shop) area for welding, metals, and manufacturing classes.

**1D.** Site updates, including parking.

The project would also replace the high school's roof, update plumbing, heating, ventilation, and A/C equipment, and address ADA accessibility issues.

## **In addition, the base plan would:**

- ✓ Repair/replace (where needed) roofing, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, masonry flooring, exterior windows, exterior doors, flooring, and ceiling tiles in the other schools, except Herrman.
- ✓ Create a dedicated bus pick-up/drop-off lane on-site (currently on the road) to better separate vehicles and pedestrians and improve student safety at Southside Early Learning Center.
- ✓ Remodel the main entrance/office at Meadowview to better monitor and control visitor access.

***Estimated cost: \$87 million***



# Facility Master Plan

In addition to the Base Plan (Project 1), the following projects are in the facility master plan. Each could be completed while construction crews are on-site, saving money in the long run.

## Project 2:

**2A.** Renovate other tech. ed. (shop) areas.

**2B.** Renovate the auditorium/expand seating.

**2C.** Replace the Alton Ask Gym floor and bleachers.

***Estimated cost: \$10 million***

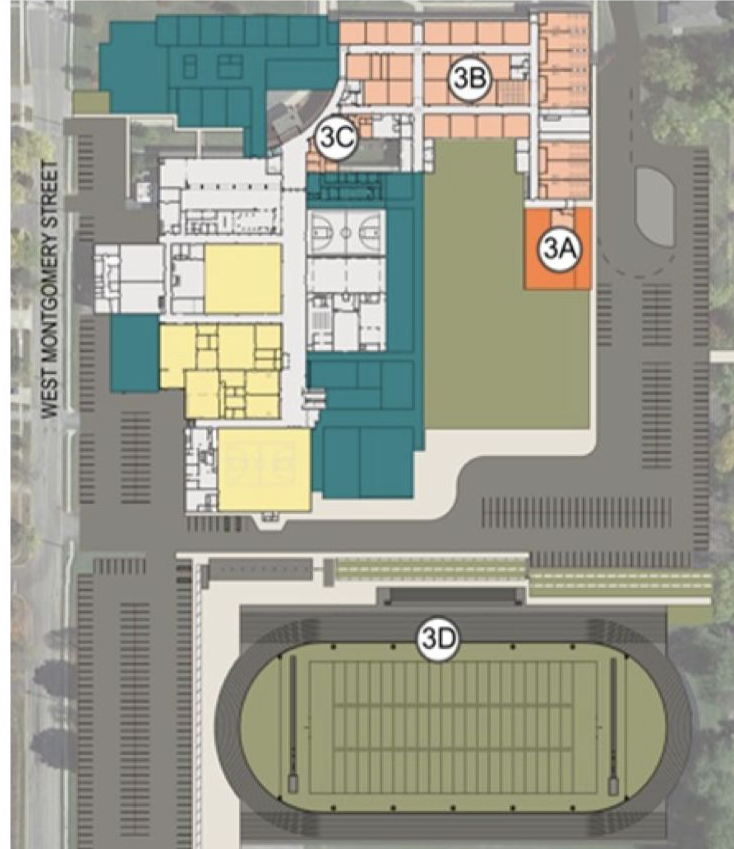


# Facility Master Plan

## Project 3

- 3A.** Expand agriculture classrooms and replace/expand the greenhouse.
- 3B.** Upgrade classrooms and science labs.
- 3C.** Renovate/reconfigure the existing main office to provide space for Student Services (school counseling, health services, etc.)
- 3D.** Replace the track and field.

***Estimated cost: \$10 million***



# Facility Master Plan

## Project 4

- 4A.** Build a larger/more functional kitchen and serving area to address overcrowding.
- 4B.** Renovate the existing cafeteria/kitchen into larger/more functional band and choir classrooms.
- 4C.** Renovate the existing band/choir area into auditorium support spaces (such as dressing rooms and set construction).
- 4D.** Renovate the stage and expand the performance area to better support the growing fine arts program and larger productions.

***Estimated cost: \$18 million***





# Facility Master Plan

## Project 5: High School Gym and Fitness

**5A.** Build a three-court gym with a fitness area. The District lacks gym space to meet school and community needs. As a result, practices are being held early in the morning and late at night throughout the school year, and community access for youth and recreational programming is very limited.

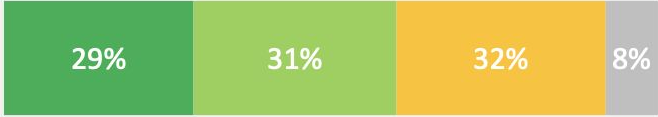

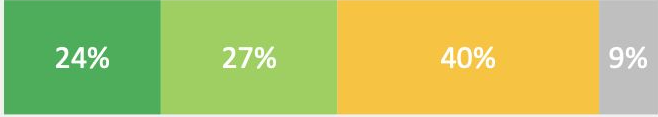
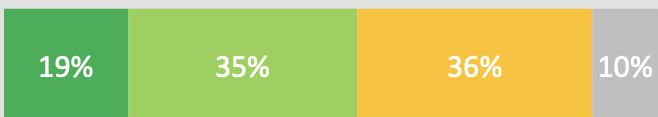
**5B.** Renovate existing gym space into dedicated gymnastics and wrestling areas. The gymnastics team practices offsite in a city-owned building, which is too small for all events and hosting competitions. The wrestling area is only accessible by stairs.

**Estimated cost: \$15 million**



# Additional Project Support

Priority score is calculated based on High=3, Medium=2, Low=1

<b>Project 4</b> (Kitchen, cafeteria, band and choir, and stage)		Priority Score = 1.96
<b>Project 2</b> (Tech ed., auditorium seating, gym floor and bleachers)		Priority Score = 1.95
<b>Project 5</b> (Gym and Fitness)		Priority Score = 1.82
<b>Project 3</b> (Ag and science classrooms, office, track and field)		Priority Score = 1.82

High, Medium, Low, Not sure



# Funding Support

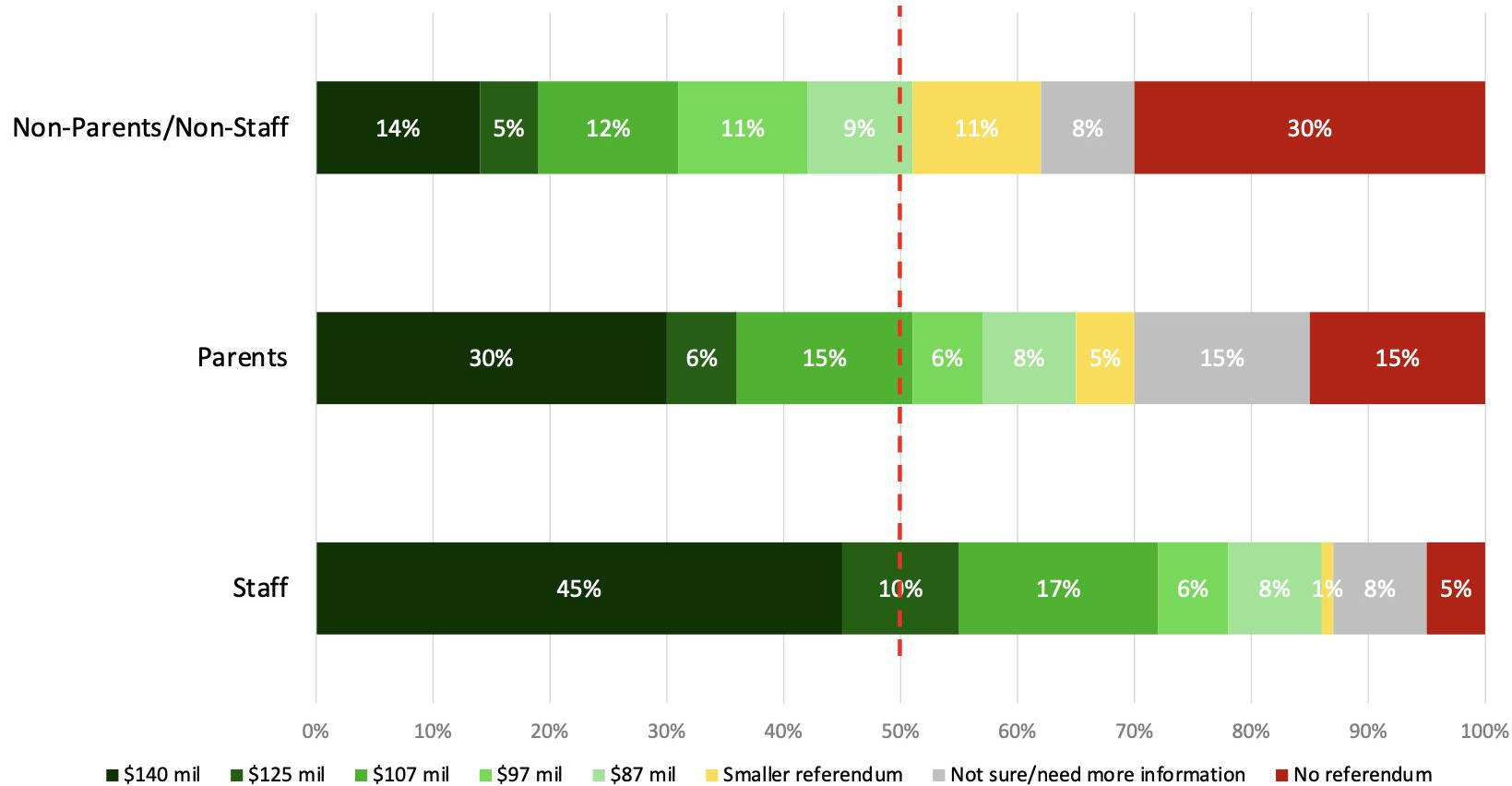
The total cost to fund the master plan is \$140 million. **We realize doing all of the projects at one time may not be realistic.** Therefore, we will establish a plan based on the community's priorities.

POTENTIAL FACILITY REFERENDUM AMOUNTS					
Referendum amount	\$87 million	\$97 million	\$107 million	\$125 million	\$140 million
Property tax mill rate increase	\$.12	\$.37	\$.64	\$1.10	\$1.45
Estimated annual tax increase per \$100,000 of property value	\$12	\$37	\$64	\$110	\$145

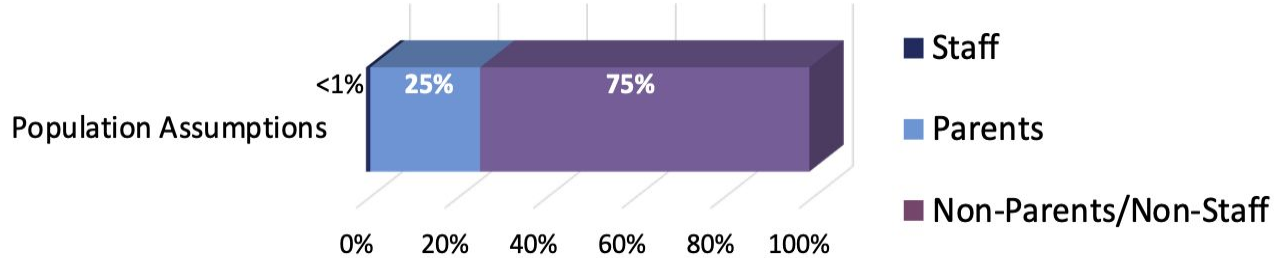




# What referendum amount would you support?



# Additional Analysis: Would the \$140 million capital referendum be supported?

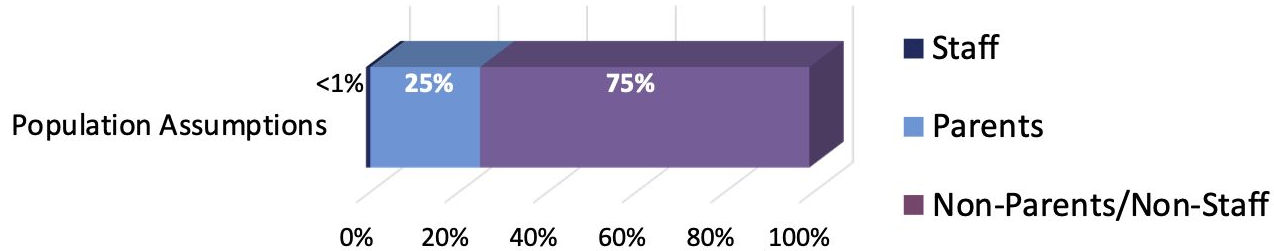


Weighted support for *Definitely yes and Probably yes*:

$$0.25 (30\%) + 0.75 (14\%) = \underline{\underline{18.00\%}}$$



## Additional Analysis: Would the \$125 million capital referendum be supported?

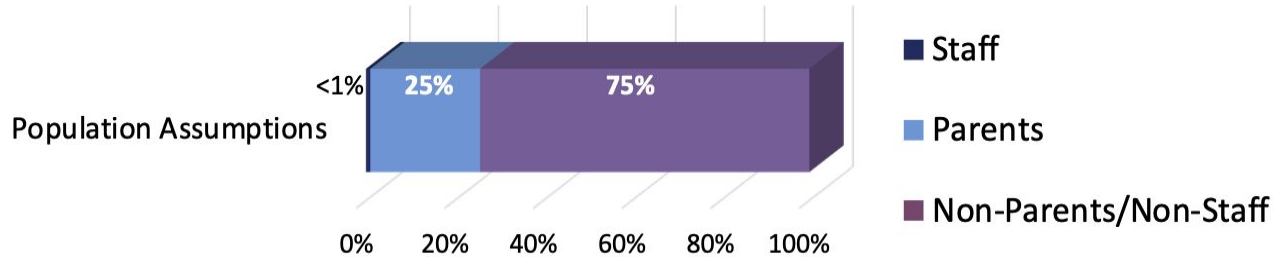


Weighted support for *Definitely yes* and *Probably yes*:

$$0.25 (36\%) + 0.75 (19\%) = \underline{\underline{23.25\%}}$$



## Additional Analysis: Would the \$107 million capital referendum be supported?

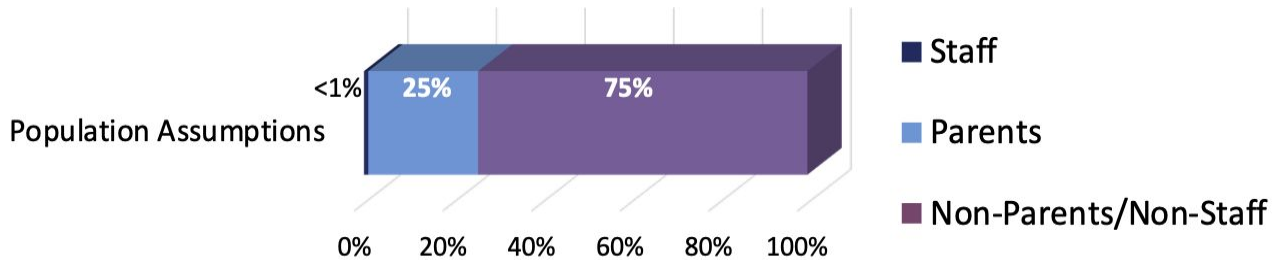


Weighted support for *Definitely yes* and *Probably yes*:

$$0.25 (51\%) + 0.75 (31\%) = \underline{\underline{36.00\%}}$$



## Additional Analysis: Would the \$97 million capital referendum be supported?

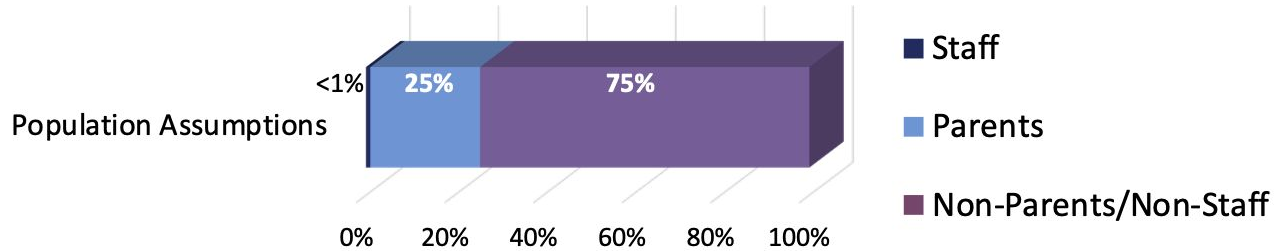


Weighted support for *Definitely yes* and *Probably yes*:

$$0.25 (57\%) + 0.75 (42\%) = \underline{\underline{45.75\%}}$$



## Additional Analysis: Would the \$87 million capital referendum be supported?

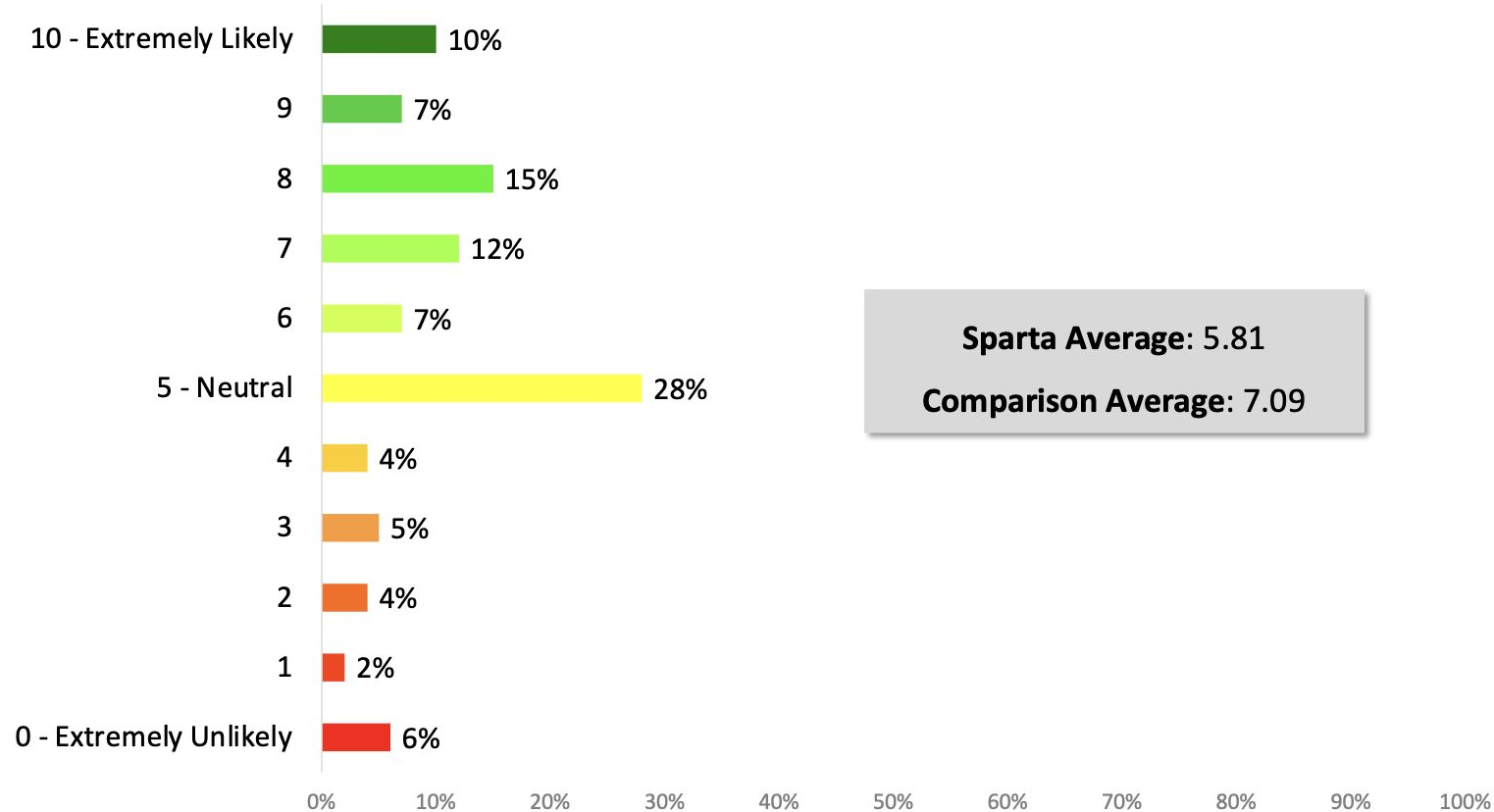


Weighted support for *Definitely yes* and *Probably yes*:

$$0.25 (65\%) + 0.75 (51\%) = \underline{\underline{54.50\%}}$$



# On a scale of 0 – 10, how likely would you be to recommend the District to a friend or family member?





# What did we learn?

- If held today, a \$750,000 operational referendum to maintain current programs and services would be close, but likely supported.
- If held today, the community would likely support the \$87 million capital referendum.
- Of the other facility projects tested, project 2 (Tech ed., auditorium seating, gym floor and bleachers) and project 4 (Kitchen, cafeteria, band and choir, and stage) tested slightly more favorably than project 3 (Ag and science classrooms, office, track and field) and project 5 (Gym and Fitness). However, there was not funding support for any of these projects at this time.





# SCHOOL PERCEPTIONS

*Measuring what matters*

262.644.4300 | [schoolperceptions.com](http://schoolperceptions.com)

