



## Frequently Asked Questions Ripon Unified School District

### **How are Ripon Unified School District schools doing?**

Ripon Unified School District (RUSD) is committed to providing the highest quality education in the San Joaquin Valley in safe and modern learning environments for students and teachers. Ripon USD covers over 50 square miles of territory and serves over 3,300 students in prekindergarten through high school in seven local schools.

### **What is the state of our local schools?**

Many local schools were built 60 to 85 years ago and need basic repairs and upgrades to protect student safety and support quality education. Aging classrooms have leaky roofs, faulty electrical systems, and deteriorating plumbing and restrooms. Student safety and campus security improvements are needed, including upgrading smoke alarms, fire safety systems, safety lighting, and fencing.

### **How has the District assessed current classroom and facility needs?**

To identify needed repairs and upgrades and to prioritize improvements based on urgency and importance, Ripon USD assessed each of its school facilities and developed the Facilities Master Plan (FMP) Ripon El (K-8), Ripona (K-8), and Ripon High School, which was completed and approved in 2015 and updated in 2020. This process was guided by architects and school facility experts with extensive input from local parents, teachers, staff, and community members.

### **What needs has the Facilities Master Plan identified?**

The FMP identifies urgent improvements needed at local schools, with a focus on Ripon USD's oldest schools that have the greatest need for repairs and upgrades. In total the FMP identifies \$83 million of necessary upgrades and improvements. To view the complete FMP, please visit [tinyurl.com/RiponUSD-FMP](http://tinyurl.com/RiponUSD-FMP).

### **What types of repairs and improvements are most needed at our local schools?**

Ripon USD has developed specific plans for the repair and upgrade of aging classroom, science labs, career technical facilities, technology and other school infrastructure, including:

- Repairing or replacing deteriorating roofs, plumbing, gas lines, sewer lines and electrical systems
- Upgrading older schools to stay current with health codes, building safety codes, and improve access for students with disabilities
- Improving student safety and campus security systems including security fencing and cameras, emergency communications systems, smoke detectors, fire alarms, and sprinklers
- Providing classrooms, labs, facilities, and technology needed to support high quality instruction in math, science, arts, and engineering for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Replacing aging and outdated portables with permanent classrooms

**Some of Ripon USD’s schools are much newer than others. Do the facility plans account for the different needs at different schools?**

Yes, the identified improvements at each school reflect the age and condition at each school. For example, Parkview, Weston, and Colony Oak K-8 schools were constructed within the last 25 years and do not have the same need for urgent repairs and upgrades as the oldest schools that are 60-85 years old. Thus, the plan for improvements prioritizes the more urgent needs at Ripon K-8, Ripona K-8, and Ripon High School.

**How does Ripon USD plan to address these repairs and improvements?**

Because the State does not provide adequate funding for facility improvements, local schools cannot maintain modern classrooms, school infrastructure and technology without local funding. Ripon USD is therefore considering placing a local school facility improvement bond measure on the November 2024 ballot to provide locally controlled funding to repair and upgrade local schools. By law, these funds could only be used for local improvements in Ripon USD and cannot be taken away by the State or diverted to other purposes.

**How much would a potential measure cost?**

While no final decisions have been made, the District is considering a \$32 million school improvement bond measure to address the highest priority needs. This would cost property taxpayers in the District approximately \$35 per \$100,000 of assessed (not market) value while bonds are outstanding.

**How would a school improvement bond measure impact the overall amount we pay to support local schools?**

Approval of this measure is not projected to increase tax rates beyond the rates already approved by voters. In 2012, Ripon USD voters approved a bond measure that funded the construction of the newer schools. Thanks to careful fiscal management, the tax rate required to repay these bonds is less than the amount approved by voters. The proposed new school improvement bond measure is projected to bring the total tax rate up to the \$35 per \$100,000 levy amount approved by voters in 2012 to generate additional funding to repair and upgrade Ripon’s oldest schools.

**Could this funding be taken by the State?**

No funds could be taken by the State or used for other purposes. All funds from the school facility improvement bond measure would benefit Ripon USD facilities only.

**Didn’t Ripon USD attempt a bond measure a few years ago?**

Significant upgrades and improvements are needed at Ripon USD’s older schools and are beyond what can be accomplished by our maintenance team and within our regular maintenance budget. Ripon USD has been planning for upgrades to these schools for several years and attempted to pass a bond measure in 2018, but narrowly fell short of voter approval. Since then, the facility needs have only become more urgent and continuing to wait to make these upgrades makes projects more expensive to complete.



### **How do we know funds from the measure would be spent wisely?**

By law, a school facility improvement bond measure would require fiscal accountability protections and local control, including:

- All funds would be controlled locally to repair and upgrade Ripon USD schools only and could not be taken away by the State
- An independent citizens' oversight committee, mandatory annual audits, and public disclosure of all spending would ensure all funds are spent as voters intended
- A detailed project list outlining the specific use of funds would be required
- No funds could be used for administrators' salaries

### **Would passage of this measure help Ripon USD qualify for state matching funds?**

Yes, passage of this measure could help provide the local matching funds needed to help Ripon USD qualify for state matching funds that would otherwise go to improve schools in other communities. In certain cases, for every dollar in local matching funds contributed by a local school district, the State will provide \$2 in state matching funds.

### **I don't have children attending local schools. How does this impact me?**

Even if you do not have school-age children, supporting quality education improves the quality of life in our community and protects the value of our homes.

### **What level of support is required to pass a bond measure?**

More than 55% of those voters who cast a ballot on the measure must vote "Yes" in order for it to be approved.

### **Who is eligible to vote on the measure?**

All registered voters in the Ripon Unified School District would be eligible to vote.

### **How can I share my thoughts or learn more?**

For more information, please visit [riponusd.net/localfunding](http://riponusd.net/localfunding). To provide feedback, please contact [facilities2024@riponusd.net](mailto:facilities2024@riponusd.net).