

BOND FACTS

Remember
to vote

**April 22,
2025**



A New Meridian Middle School

Originally constructed in 1938, Meridian Middle School is no longer able to keep up with today's safety standards and the needs of modern education. The school faces safety challenges including unconnected buildings, many exterior entrances, and non-reinforced concrete walls which lack rebar. A new school would comply with modern safety codes, including seismic requirements, and meet accessibility standards creating a safer space. Energy-efficiency would be built into the design, ensuring comfortable classrooms year-round that would improve student focus and learning.

Estimated Cost of New Construction for Meridian Middle School

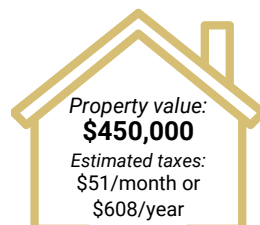
Site Development for new MMS	\$2,580,000
New MMS Building (Construction Costs)	\$42,400,000
Demo Existing MMS Buildings (excluding west gym)	\$950,000
New Grass Playfields at MMS	\$1,600,000
Inflation Escalation to 2027	\$10,250,000
Contingency & General Conditions	\$9,200,000
Taxes & Non-fixed Furnishings	\$19,940,000
Total Estimated Construction Cost	\$86,920,000
OSPI School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP)	-\$16,020,000
Total Bond Cost for MMS Replacement Building	\$70,900,000

All cost estimates are based on square footage requirements

Our community is growing, and in order to honor our community's previous investments, we are recommending Meridian Middle School be rebuilt as a 5-8 school, incorporating the existing west gym. This would alleviate overcrowding at Irene Reither Elementary and create additional capacity at Meridian Middle School. If voters approve the bond, a design committee will involve families, students, staff and community members.

WHAT'S THE COST?

The total bond cost of the project is \$70.9 million. If approved by voters, the tax rate would increase by \$1.35 per \$1,000 of assessed value.



Estimated bond tax amount examples by property value.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why rebuild instead of remodel?

Due to the non-reinforced concrete walls in the existing main building, a remodel would require us to make structural improvements to meet current seismic codes. Due to the work that is required to do so, our architect estimates that a renovation will cost approximately the same as a rebuild.

Why can't we fundraise for these projects, find other funding, or save money up over time?

While fundraising might work for smaller projects, it is not feasible for large-scale projects like building a new middle school. Additionally, state regulations limit how much we can save in our general fund, preventing us from accumulating the necessary funds over time. In Washington, bonds are the mechanism provided by the legislature for communities to finance new school construction.

Tax Exemptions

Some senior citizens and people with disabilities may be eligible for property tax exemptions, visit: whatcomcounty.us/177/Assessor or call 360-778-5050 to learn more.

How to Vote

Voters within Meridian School District will receive a ballot in the mail in early April to vote on the bond. Ballots must be mailed and postmarked, or returned to a drop box by 8 p.m. April 22, 2025. Drop box locations can be found on the Whatcom County Auditor's website.

Can you explain the difference between levies and bonds?

In education, "levies are for learning, and bonds are for building." Levies fund educational programs and services not fully covered by the state, bridging a critical funding gap. They are short-term (2, 4 or 6 years) and need a 50% voter approval. In Meridian, levies make up nearly 20% of the budget, with two active collections. Bonds fund building-related expenses like modernization and new construction. They can only be used as voted on. They have longer terms (10 to 40 years) and require a 60% supermajority to pass. Meridian has one active bond repayment which expires in 2030.

How do modern facilities improve student learning?

New school facilities improve learning by optimizing lighting, acoustics, and air quality, supporting diverse teaching styles, and incorporating advanced technology and safety features. They provide appropriate spaces for STEM, arts, athletics and Special Education, boosting morale and engagement. Investing in modern facilities ensures students and educators have the resources they need to succeed.

What are the other school funds as part of our property tax?

The state collects property tax in school state tax 1 and 2. These are not controlled or collected by school districts. The state reallocates this money to fund operational costs of school districts based on formulas calculated by the legislature in relation to school district enrollment and need.

What is happening with the skills center and the new District Office?

The early learning center and skills center are not part of any bond effort and are not funded by local or state school taxes. These centers will serve students throughout the region. The early learning center will be built where the current District Office is, requiring staff relocation. A new District Office with classrooms for the skills center, also state-funded, may be operational next year. These funds cannot be used for the Meridian Middle School project.

Why is 50 percent approval not enough?

In Washington, school construction bonds require a 60% supermajority to pass.

Who can answer questions about the bond projects?

The district bond leads are:

- Dr. James Everett (360-318-2151)
- Lisa Gilchrist (360- 318-2159)
- Robert Kratzig (360-318-2281)
- Jay Yeager (360-318-2156)

You can also speak to our school principals or talk to a member of the Facilities Task Force. Additional information including the task force membership list can be found on our website.

CONTACT US

Meridian School District
360-398-7111

www.meridian.wednet.edu/bond/