



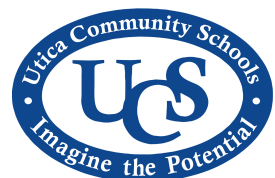
# UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

**May 2, 2023 Election Information**  
**No Current Tax-Rate Increase Bond Proposal**  
**&**  
**Non-Homestead Operating Millage Proposal**



---

[WWW.UTICAK12.ORG/SAFETYANDSUCCESS](http://WWW.UTICAK12.ORG/SAFETYANDSUCCESS)





### **When is the election?**

**The election will be held on Tuesday, May 2, 2023. The polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Absentee ballots will be available after March 23, 2023, and can be cast through Election Day.**

### **What is on the ballot?**

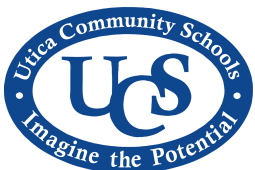
**There will be two proposals on the ballot: a non-homestead operating millage proposal which will allow UCS to collect its full share of State Aid; and a no tax-rate increase (over the current debt millage) \$550 million bond proposal designed to update and renovate schools and educational facilities across the Utica Community Schools.**

### **Why is the non-homestead proposal on the ballot?**

School districts in Michigan must levy 18 mills on non-homestead property to receive their full share of State Aid. This millage rate is subject to “rollbacks” per the Headlee Amendment to the Michigan Constitution.

UCS’s non-homestead levy has been rolled back to 16.75 mills. As a result of rollbacks, this year, UCS will lose \$2.85 million in State Aid. Projections are that the school district will continue losing State Aid, and the revenue loss will be about \$4 million annually by 2024/2025.

On May 2, UCS will propose a non-homestead operating millage that will levy the 18 non-homestead mills required to allow the district to receive its full share of State Aid. The ballot proposal has been structured to provide long-range financial stability for UCS by asking voters to approve a two-mill cushion against any future rollbacks. Because non-homestead operating millages cannot exceed 18 mills, no portion of this two-mill cushion will be levied unless there are future rollbacks that prevent UCS from receiving its full share of State Aid.



**Does the non-homestead operating tax requirement apply to all Michigan school districts?**

Yes. The State of Michigan requires all school districts to levy an 18-mill tax on non-homestead property (primarily businesses, second homes, rental property, and vacant land) to receive their full share of State Aid.

**Does the non-homestead operating tax apply to the home in which I live?**

No. This tax does not apply to the homes in which UCS residents live (also known as primary residences or homesteads).

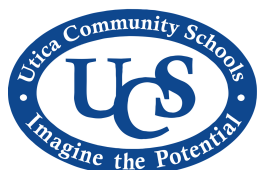
**If the non-homestead operating tax does not apply to taxpayers who live in their primary residence, why do they get to vote on it?**

Quite simply, that is the law. In 1994, the Michigan Legislature adopted a school funding law that allows all registered voters to vote on non-homestead operating millages.

**Why is the bond proposal on the ballot?**

UCS' strategic plan calls for renewed attention to upgrading, renovating, and constructing educational facilities.

As indicated in the UCS strategic plan, the May 2 facilities bond proposal is phase one of a process that will continue in future years when additional projects can be completed without a tax-rate increase (over the current debt millage).



## If the \$550 million bond proposal is approved by voters, what will happen?

All bond projects would be completed over the next ten years without an increase in the current tax rate.



Regarding student safety, UCS has worked closely with local law enforcement agencies. Their assessment of UCS schools and school facilities indicates that UCS should add additional layers of security to all school buildings. For example, it has been recommended that the school district create additional layers of security to limit access for exterior entry points at main entrances and corridors, such as shatter-resistant glass.



Regarding parking lots and student drop-off/pick-up areas, parking lots across the school district that were built on average 54 years ago do not accommodate how traffic patterns have changed or the number of cars at drop-off and pick-up times. This has become a significant safety concern. Bond revenue will be used to upgrade parking lots and pick-up and drop-off areas across the school district.



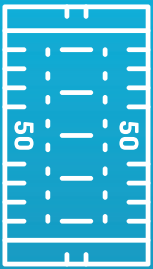
Regarding elementary school playgrounds, UCS proposes to upgrade playgrounds at all elementary schools to ensure that they are safe and comparable between schools.



Regarding long-range facilities planning, UCS will continue implementing its long-range facilities improvement program. This program continuously identifies items that need to be upgraded or replaced, including school roofs, boilers, and other building infrastructure items as they reach the end of their life expectancy. This is also the case for the UCS bus fleet, the largest such fleet in Michigan.



Regarding both safety and student success, significant renovations and building replacements, additions or new construction are proposed for facilities at the elementary level. Further evaluation will occur to determine the extent and locations based on the age of the facility, safety needs based on the school's physical layout and enrollment trends. In partnership with our parents, the review will feature input from a long-standing citizens committee (Enrollment Distribution Advisory Committee) that is comprised of representatives from each elementary school. Our comprehensive, systematic planning will continue through this spring with district leadership making a recommendation to the Board of Education in the fall of 2023.



Regarding athletic facilities, UCS proposes to improve athletic facilities at all high schools. The stadium renovations would feature changes to improve fan experiences and may include increased capacity, renovated restrooms, and concession areas. In addition, the installation of artificial turf at high school fields is intended to improve the instructional use and durability of these practice and playing fields.



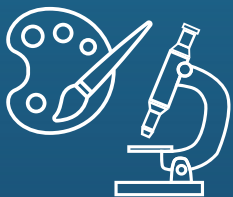
Regarding academic academies, UCS proposes expanding its Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to offer specialized academies at all four high schools. Currently, the district offers the Stevenson Center for Manufacturing, Automation and Design Engineering (MADE) and Utica High School Health and Human Services (HHS) academies. The district is planning expansion in the areas of construction trades and automotive fields to support industry needs and high paying jobs available in our region.



Regarding one-to-one technology for its students, UCS proposes using bond revenue to support replacement and upgrades to instructional technology.



Regarding junior high media centers, three junior high schools have had their media centers renovated with a more welcoming and modern design. They are equipped with areas for group collaboration, areas for studying or silent reading, and natural lighting. UCS proposes creating comparable facilities at UCS junior high schools by renovating media centers at the remaining four junior high schools.



Regarding science and art classrooms, UCS proposes renovating science and art classrooms at all high schools to provide additional space to accommodate the instructional needs of these programs.



Regarding performing arts centers and auditoriums, lighting and sound system upgrades will be provided to support student instruction and community performances.



Regarding UCS's early childhood programming, UCS proposes creating two early childhood education centers. One would be located to serve children in the north half of the school district; the second would be located to serve children in the south half of the school district.



**Where do I find a list of projects that will be completed at each school if the bond proposal is approved?**

Go to [www.uticak12/.org/safetyandsuccess](http://www.uticak12/.org/safetyandsuccess).

**How were the bond proposal projects identified?**

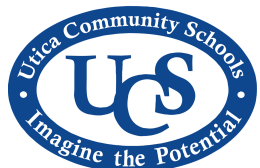
As part of Utica Community Schools long-range facilities plan, UCS staff worked with architects and engineers to conduct a thorough assessment of school district facilities. Facility needs were then prioritized and reviewed by students, staff and community members in a series of focus panels. In addition, UCS commissioned an online survey to solicit input regarding the proposed projects. The survey was open to all UCS staff and all residents of the school district. This staff and community input was considered in finalizing a bond proposal.

**Will voter approval of this bond proposal accommodate all facility needs of UCS?**

No. An evaluation of facilities needs earlier this school year identified a possible \$1.4 billion in needed improvements across our 40 facilities. The May 2 bond proposal addresses the highest priority needs. UCS considers this bond election as phase one of a multi-phase initiative. As soon as UCS can address second priority needs without a tax rate increase, UCS would then consider introducing another bond proposal for voter consideration.

**If the non-homestead proposal and the bond proposal are approved by voters, how will property values be affected?**

Research indicates that school districts with sufficient financial support and facilities that are in good repair tend to have higher than average property values.



## What is a bond proposal?

A bond is a state-approved funding process for a set scope of projects. When voters approve a bond proposal, the school district sells bonds in the authorized amount and uses the bond sale proceeds to pay for those projects in the bond proposal. Bonds are typically set up to be paid back in 15-30 years.

In many ways, the bonding process is like a homeowner obtaining a mortgage and making payments over a period of years. The UCS bond proposal length is 15 years.

### Bonds can be used for:

- Constructing new school buildings
- Constructing additions to existing school buildings
- Remodeling existing school buildings
- Energy conservation improvements
- Site development and improvements
- Athletic and physical education facility development and improvements
- Playground development and improvements
- Refunding debt (if new present value savings can be demonstrated)
- Direct bond program costs such as professional fees, election fees, issuance costs, qualification fees, insurance fees, final audit costs
- School bus purchases
- Purchasing loose furnishings and equipment (including administrative technology)
- Technology purchases limited to hardware and communication devices that transmit, receive or compute information for pupil instructional purposes only. The initial purchase of operating system and customized application software is allowed if purchased with the initial hardware.

### Bonds cannot be used for:

- Salaries, service contracts, lease payments, installment contracts, and supplies
- Repairs, maintenance, or maintenance agreements
- Purchasing automobiles, trucks, or vans
- Portable classrooms purchased for temporary use
- Uniforms
- Textbooks
- Upgrades to an existing computer operating system or application software
- Computer training, computer consulting, or computer maintenance contracts



SUCCESS



SAFETY

**Can any of the bond proposal funds be used for employee salaries or operating expenses?**

No. Bond proposal funds cannot be used for employee salaries. They also cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs or other operating expenses. Bond proposal funds must be used only for purposes specified in the ballot language, and as required by state law, they must be independently audited.

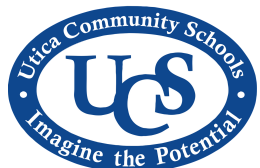
**What is the exact ballot wording for the May 2 non-homestead millage proposal?**

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
COUNTY OF MACOMB  
STATE OF MICHIGAN

REPLACEMENT OPERATING MILLAGE PROPOSAL

This proposal would, replace, restore and extend the authority of the School District to levy the statutory limit of 18 mills on all property, except principal residences and other property exempt by law, which currently expires with the School District's 2024 tax levy and allow the School District to levy the statutory limit of 18 mills on all property, except principal residences and other property exempt by law, in the event of future Headlee rollbacks under the Michigan Constitution of up to 2 mills. The authorization will allow the School District to receive revenues at the full per pupil foundation allowance permitted by the State.

Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property, except principal residences and other property exempted by law, in the Utica Community Schools, County of Macomb, State of Michigan, be increased to 20 mills with 18 mills being the maximum allowable levy (\$18.00 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation), for a period of twenty (20) years, 2023 to 2042, inclusive, as a replacement of the current operating millage which will otherwise expire on December 31, 2024 and a restoration of the portion of the previously authorized millage rolled back as a result of reductions required by the Headlee Amendments to the Michigan Constitution? This millage if approved and levied, would provide estimated operating revenues to the School District of \$41,229,000 during the 2023 calendar year.



YES ☐

NO ☐

**What is the exact ballot wording for the May 2 school improvement bond proposal?**

**UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
COUNTY OF MACOMB, MICHIGAN**

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT BOND PROPOSAL**

Shall the Utica Community Schools, County of Macomb, State of Michigan, borrow the principal sum of not to exceed Five Hundred Fifty Million Dollars (\$550,000,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds, in one or more series, for the purpose of defraying the cost of:

- Rebuilding and constructing additions to School District buildings creating a safe and secure modern learning environment for students;
- Constructing replacement elementary school buildings and other facilities, remodeling School District buildings, structures and other facilities, and equipping, furnishing, reequipping and refurnishing School District buildings, athletic fields, playgrounds and other facilities;
- Acquiring and installing technology equipment and technology infrastructure in School District buildings and other facilities, including for health, safety and security;
- Acquiring, preparing, developing, or improving sites for School District buildings, structures, athletic fields, playgrounds, or other facilities and purchasing school buses?

YES ☐

NO ☐

The debt millage required to retire all bonds of the School District currently outstanding and proposed pursuant to this ballot is expected to remain at or below 3.50 mills. The estimated millage that will be levied to pay the proposed bonds in the first year is 1.52 mills (which is equal to \$1.52 per \$1,000 of taxable value) for a -0- mill net increase over the annual debt millage levied in 2022, and the estimated simple average annual millage rate required to retire each series of bonds is 2.08 mills (\$2.08 per \$1,000 of taxable value), and the maximum number of years any series of bonds may be outstanding, exclusive of refunding, is not more than 20 years.

If approved by the voters, the repayment of the bonds will be guaranteed by the State under the School Bond Qualification and Loan Program (the "Program"). The School District currently has approximately \$162,410,000 of qualified bonds outstanding and approximately \$0 of qualified loans outstanding under the Program. The School District does not expect to borrow from the Program to pay debt service on these bonds. The estimated computed millage rate required to be levied to pay the proposed bonds may change in the future based on changes in certain circumstances.

(Under State law, expenditure of bond proceeds must be audited and bond proceeds may not be used to pay teacher or administrator salaries, repair or maintenance costs, or other School District operating expenses.)



**A YES vote typically means that a voter supports a ballot proposal. Is that the case in this election?**

Yes. Voters who support the UCS non-homestead proposal and the bond proposal should vote YES; Voters who oppose the proposals should vote NO.

**What will happen if voters do not approve the non-homestead operating proposal?**

UCS will continue to lose increasing amounts of State Aid. This loss affects the school district's general fund budget and, hence, the education of all UCS students.

**What will happen if voters do not approve the bond proposal?**

The bond projects cannot be completed as proposed.

**Who can vote in the May 2 election?**

Residents of UCS who will be 18 years of age or older on Election Day and are registered to vote can vote in this election.

**Where can I get information about voting (such as how to register, where to vote, and absentee voting)?**

Go to the Michigan Voter Information website ([www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote)) or call your local Clerk's Office.

**Do I need to update my voter registration?**

You need to update your voter registration if you have changed your name or address since the last time you voted. You can do this at any Secretary of State Office or your local Clerk's Office.

**Can I vote by absentee ballot?**

Registered voters do not need a reason to vote by absentee ballot. You can request an absentee ballot application from your Clerk's Office or by going online to [www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote) and clicking on Absentee Voting in the left column.

**Absentee ballots will be available to voters after March 23 and can be cast through Election Day.**



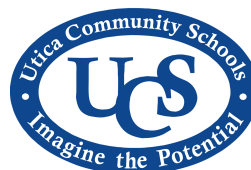
**Where can I get more information about the bond proposal?**

- Go to [www.uticak12.org/safetyandsuccess](http://www.uticak12.org/safetyandsuccess)
- Call any UCS Principal
- Contact the ballot proposal hotline at 586/797-1054 or email [questions@uticak12.org](mailto:questions@uticak12.org).

**Where can I voice my opinions—pro or con—about the non-homestead proposal and the bond proposal?**

Simply scan the QR code below or go to [www.research.net/r/UCSballotproposalsurvey](http://www.research.net/r/UCSballotproposalsurvey) to complete a brief survey.

**The online survey is open to all staff and community members and can be accessed 24 hours a day.**



**WWW.UTICAK12.ORG/SAFETYANDSUCCESS**