

# THE D301 TAXPAYER'S TOWN HALL GUIDE



D301 \$195 Million  
REFERENDUM



# The Referendum Question

“Shall the Board of Education of Central Community Unit School District Number 301, Kane and DeKalb Counties, Illinois, build and equip a new high school building, including construction of career technical education labs, fine arts spaces, a college/career center, special education classrooms, collaborative spaces and secured entryways and installation of emergency response systems therein, build and equip an athletic stadium, a field house and athletic fields on the new high school site, improve said site and issue its bonds to the amount of \$195,000,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?”

The overall referendum proposal includes:

<b>WHAT WILL THIS OPTION INCLUDE?</b>	<b>FACILITY DESCRIPTION</b>	● 2,400 student high school on Rohrsen Road with ability to built out to 3,000 capacity	\$--?
		● NEW Football / Soccer / Lacrosse stadium (turf)	\$--?
		● Baseball and softball competition fields	\$--?
		● Field house & competition gym	\$--?
		● Auditorium & cafeteria for 3,000 students	\$--?
<b>WHAT WILL IT COST?</b>	<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>\$195,000,000</b>	
<b>WHAT ELSE HAS TO BE DONE?</b>	<b>OTHER MOVEMENT</b>	● Move 6th/7th/ 8th to existing high school	\$-?
		● CMS becomes early childhood center	\$-?
		● PK becomes Grade School (K-5)	\$-?

For context, the high school currently has 1,444 students. With the new 20-classroom addition complete this fall, CHS will have the capacity for up to 1,900 students. Currently, all elementary schools have mobile units and Prairie Knolls Middle School is nearing capacity.

The Central CUSD301 is proposing the construction of a new 450,000 sqft high school at the cost of \$195 million, if approved, by the taxpayers of the community citing expected significant growth of student enrollment and an increase in the types of programming available at the high school.

This guide provides a list of questions we believe should be answered for the taxpayers prior to the referendum vote on March 19, 2024. We encourage you to attend a town hall meeting and ask the questions that are relevant to you.

# QUESTIONS

## DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND DATA

- Why did the District not undertake a professional demographic and growth study as other surrounding districts have done when considering expansion?
  - If such a study was completed by a qualified consultant, why have those results not been made available to the public?
  - Why was a FOIA request for such information denied by the District as being "too voluminous"?
- Why did the District not undertake a **district-wide** facility master plan to identify issues, alternative solutions, and priorities prior to proposing a new high school, as other surrounding districts have done? If a master plan was completed by a qualified consultant, why have those findings and recommendations not been made available to the public?
- Four "considerations" were developed for presentation to the community in the fall of 2022 leading to the present referendum proposal.
  - How were these considerations developed, and by whom?
  - How were the three community members who are on the referendum steering committee chosen, and by whom?
  - Why did those community members not reach out to the broader community to gather feedback, concerns, and suggestions to bring back to the discussion?
- Why were the meetings of the referendum steering committee not open to the public?
  - Why were the dates, times, and minutes of those meetings not posted online for the community to access and review other than via FOIA request?
  - Why were the activities of and conclusions drawn by the steering committee not made available to the public other than via FOIA request?
- How much has been spent by the District to date on architectural and engineering services for the new high school design? How much more is budgeted for expenditure prior to the election? Where do these funds come from?
- The presence of flood zones at the Rohrssen Road property is easily determined by viewing publicly available online information on flood zone maps from FEMA. Why did the District not know of these issues sooner than the October 2023 board meeting? If the district relied on consultants to understand and advise of any potential issues, who are those consultants? Are any of them still working for the District?
- Should the referendum pass, who will be responsible for any increased costs of the project due to any errors or omissions in the construction documents prepared by the design professionals? If it is not the District, is this responsibility specified in the appropriate party's contract(s) with the District? Who will be responsible for any increased costs of the project due to conditions discovered once under construction that should reasonably have been foreseen prior to construction? If it is not the District, is this responsibility specified in the appropriate party's contract(s) with the District?

- Should bid results exceed the District's budget for the work, what will happen? Who will be responsible for the cost of modifying designs and bid documents to conform to budget requirements if the project bids come in over budget? If this delays the project in some way, who is responsible for the consequential costs of the delays (i.e. labor and material cost increases from the time of original bid to potential re-bid?)
- We understand that it is common to adjust scope and features of building designs as they are further developed and costs become more fully known. If the project is reduced or changed in size or scope due to budget considerations at any point in the design and planning process, how will such decisions be made if they are required? When and how will the public be informed of such reductions or changes? Will this occur before the referendum vote?

## NEW HIGH SCHOOL DESIGN & SITE

- The site recently purchased by the District appears to have large variations in elevation and topography in multiple places according to topographical data shown in the Kane County GIS system. What is being done to manage the site conditions and make the site appropriately level for the proposed design and associated parking and athletic fields? Have such changes been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? ***Please provide proposed scope of changes and estimated budget.***
- The preliminary plan shared with the public features a four-story atrium area in the classroom wing. How are security, acoustic, fire protection, and life safety code compliance for atrium spaces being addressed in the design? Have such considerations been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? ***Please provide scope of requirements, methods used to achieve code compliance, and estimated budget for same.***
- Are there any provisions for a future orchestra program in the plan? Would they use the band room or another space?
- How was the size of the proposed auditorium determined? It appears to be larger in seating capacity than those of most high schools in the area.

## EXISTING/CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL

- Information provided by the District indicates that CHS cannot be further expanded beyond the classroom addition currently under construction. If this is the case, why was one consideration presented in the focus groups to expand classrooms, auditorium, and cafeteria space for \$58.3 million? What has changed such that this is no longer possible?
- Regarding the small size of the CHS auditorium, would it be possible to demolish the existing auditorium at CHS and construct a larger auditorium and lobby in its place? Has the feasibility of this been explored by District consultants? If so, ***please share their findings*** as Considerations B, C, and D provided that this could be done.
- The existing high school property extends west of the westernmost entrance drive into the Plato Road campus. This property area appears to be large enough for additional parking and any required stormwater management and is not indicated by FEMA as in a flood zone. Is there a reason why additional parking cannot be constructed in this location to address parking needs at the high school? Has the feasibility of this been explored by District consultants? If there are site conditions such as unsuitable soils that would preclude this option, ***please provide geotechnical reports verifying such conditions.***



- Consideration C stated the 20-classroom addition would bring the high school capacity up to 1,900 students from 1,400 students. Since the classroom addition currently under construction will provide more capacity than needed for some time, can existing spaces in the school be improved to better serve instructional needs of special needs students and CHS faculty if the referendum does not pass (or while the new school is built if it does)?
- What specific changes to the CHS building are needed for the building to function as a middle school as currently proposed? Have such changes been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? **Please provide proposed scope of changes and the estimated budget.**
- If CHS is converted to a middle school as currently proposed, how will the recently built field house be programmed for middle school use?
  - If it is not utilized at its current rate because of fewer grades attending the building, will the field house have increased availability for other community groups and sports leagues?
  - How much more availability of the facility for outside groups will the District commit to if the referendum passes?
  - How will the district balance community use versus district use, particularly during school hours where use of the facility by non-student participants could create significant security concerns?
  - How will costs to cover maintenance and other expenses be covered by these outside community groups?
- If CHS is converted to a middle school as currently proposed, the building may not be at capacity of 1,900 students for some time based on the District's projections. How will the costs of heating, cooling, and maintaining temporarily unused and underutilized portions of the building be paid for if District expected growth does not materialize?

## CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Portions of the building are several decades old. While older buildings may be structurally sound and code compliant at the time of their construction, there is an increased possibility of the presence of hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead paint in such structures. Has the building had an environmental assessment to determine the presence of any such materials? If so, what materials are present? Will these materials be abated if the structure is converted to an early childhood facility? Have such changes been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? **Please provide proposed scope of changes and estimated budget.**
- Is there a cost difference in continuing to operate an older facility like CMS that has older infrastructure and lower insulation values as compared to the District's newer schools or a brand new facility constructed to current code requirements? If so, does the District plan to upgrade any such elements as part of the conversion to an early childhood center to make the building more energy efficient? Have such changes been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? **Please provide proposed scope of changes and estimated budget.**
- What specific changes are needed to the CMS building are needed for the building and site to function as an early childhood as currently proposed? It would seem that at a bare minimum restroom facilities and direct exiting from each classroom as required by codes would need to be considered. Have such changes been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? **Please provide proposed scope of changes and estimated budget.**
- If CMS is converted to an early childhood center as currently proposed, the building may not be at capacity for some time. How will the costs of heating, cooling, and maintaining temporarily unused and/or underutilized portions of the building be paid for if District expected growth does not materialize?

- Why is the District asserting that the existing CMS building must remain in place? It would seem that demolition of the existing CMS building would allow for a **significant eastward expansion of the existing high school campus** including more parking, a new football/soccer field, and potentially a pool adjacent to the existing field house.
  - A new replacement, purpose-built middle school and/or early childhood center could then potentially be built on the Route 47 site instead of a new \$195 million high school while simultaneously removing an aging physical plant from the District, lowering future operating costs. Is there a specific reason that this is not possible or not being considered?

## PRAIRIE KNOLLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

- What specific changes are needed for the PKMS building and site to function as an elementary school as currently proposed (such as modified bathrooms, installation of a playground, etc.)? Have such changes been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? **Please provide proposed scope of changes and estimated budget.**
- Conversion of this building to an elementary school will presumably require attendance boundaries for each elementary school in the district to be redrawn.
  - How many students will be moved from their current buildings as a result of this conversion?
  - Has a proposed boundary map for each elementary school been developed yet indicating which homes will be changing schools? If not, will it be developed prior to the referendum vote? If so, can it be shared with the public so parents understand how this conversion may affect their families?
  - How many elementary students will become “walkers” versus “bus riders” due to proximity to Prairie Knolls Middle School if you live in the Providence subdivision?
- If improvements are made to PKMS as indicated above to accommodate new grade levels that result from this change that result in the facility having newer and/or different features than the other elementary schools, will the other elementary schools be similarly improved to ensure an equitable experience and conditions for all elementary school children across the district? (For example, PKMS has a substantially larger LRC, stage, and dedicated science labs that the other elementary schools do not). If so, have such changes been budgeted for as part of the \$195 million referendum? **Please provide proposed scope of changes and estimated budget.**

## MISCELLANEOUS

- The website says “we are only able to use the funds for what is worded in the referendum ballot”. The referendum wording makes no mention of the improvements needed to convert Prairie Knolls Middle School to a K-5 school, nor Central Middle School to an early childhood center. Why are these improvements specifically excluded from the referendum language?
- At the November 2023 Board Meeting, the board approved a resolution that says “this resolution allows us to capture some capital expenses spent within the last 60 days of approving the referendum with referendum dollars.” This would indicate referendum funds CAN be used for non-referendum expenditures and obviously the district already has some expenses in mind.
  - Which projects the district intends to reimburse itself through referendum funds and in what amount?
  - What policy governs how the district may access those funds? What qualifies for reimbursement and what total limit has been established to protect those referendum dollars for the actual referendum project itself?

- In the November meetings the district stated it uses a Student Yield Factor of .8 to calculate the possible new students that may come with new home construction. The community would like to see what numbers were used to calculate this factor.
  - The November meetings showed the potential development of 1,575 homes in our district with no timeline attached other than “5-20 years”. We now know that at least two of those developments were approved many years ago for a developer that has been bankrupt since 2011 and who still holds the land. This cuts the expected number of new homes down to 814. Of those 814, there is no signs of breaking ground or development for 214 of them (Trinity Chase). Why are we still using the same numbers for this referendum when clearly the growth that was presented in November 2022 is not happening now?
- In the recent slides on the referendum website, the district chose to use enrollment numbers from the Illinois State Board of Education reporting done at the beginning of each school year. Why is the district not sharing and utilizing their actual year-end numbers from each school year as the metric for historical growth?
  - The market conditions of the pandemic created statistically significant anomalies that would lead any good data analyst to normalize the data for those years or exclude them from any analysis. Why has the district chosen to keep them included in historical growth numbers rather than look at the most immediate 2 years of history given the drastic change in the economy and housing market?
- Elementary Schools house six grades all the time: K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th. No matter what level of growth occurs, elementary will always be hit hardest because six grades are housed per school. With an average class size of 300-400 students, compression will always be reflected in elementary faster and more often than middle or high school. This is confirmed by the district's own slide showing of the 14 mobile units currently in use, 13 of them are at our elementary schools. Clearly we need new elementary school space and our growth will always be felt in grades K - 5 more than any other grade cohort.
  - Why did the district wait so long to address compression in our elementary schools? And why is their solution a new 450,000 sqft high school and retrofitting existing buildings rather than the less expensive new elementary school option?
- On the district's page “Enrollment Challenges” various numbers are presented. The numbers used for 2023 and 2024 make it appear we have grown by 136 students (2.8%), however, according to the official [December 2023 Enrollment Report](#), we have grown by only 75 students (1.6%). December enrollment numbers are 22 students higher than the report delivered at the December board meeting (meaning 22 new students enrolled between December 18 - December 31). Why the different numbers?

## **ARCHITECTURAL & ENGINEERING SERVICES & EXPENSES**

- How much has been spent by the District to date on architectural and engineering services for the new high school design? How much more is budgeted for expenditure prior to the election? Where do these funds come from?
- Has the District's architectural firm ever designed a ground-up new high school building before? What other new high schools has the firm designed?
- Architectural fees for public school projects can range between 5 and 9 percent of the construction cost of the work, as opposed to an open-ended hourly arrangement. What fee percentage has been negotiated with the District's architectural firm for this work? Although it is understood that design firms for public projects should be chosen based on qualifications rather than fees alone, does the District know that the fee they will pay for such a large scope of work is fair and reasonable?
- Should the referendum pass, is the District's architectural firm capable of producing quality construction documents in the time frame required to construct the project given their other project commitments for their other clients? How many licensed architects are on staff at the firm who will be dedicated to this project?

## **ROOM FOR YOUR QUESTIONS AND NOTES**



# ABOUT US



**We are not an anti-tax effort!** We are a group of parents and residents that support appropriate tax investments for high-value returns on education in our community and who want our district to operate with transparency and accountability. We are committed to strong fiscal responsibility, ensuring that every decision is backed by appropriate due diligence, supported by independent data analysis, spearheaded by competent leadership and developed with significant community feedback. This balanced approach allows us to address the district's needs effectively while also reflecting the voice of the community. If you have additional questions you think should be added to this list, please send them to us for addition at our e-mail address below.

2024 CENTRAL 301 REFERENDUM - TOWN HALL MEETING SCHEDULE			
DAY	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Wednesday	January 24	7:00 PM	Lily Lake Grade School
Wednesday	January 31	7:00 PM	Burlington United Methodist Church
Thursday	February 8	7:00 PM	Central High School
Saturday	February 10	10:00 AM	Prairie Knolls Middle School
Monday	February 12	7:00 PM	Country Trails Elementary School
Thursday	February 15	7:00 PM	Prairie Knolls Middle School
Monday	February 26	7:00 PM	Virtual Town Hall (Requires Online Registration)

**Thank you for using your voice! It takes all of us working together in a unified voice to bring change. We are Building A Better District -- Together!**



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Our Board of Education meets on a monthly basis. Citizens may make a “public comment” at the beginning of each meeting. We need YOU to show up and speak to the Board of Education in January, February, and March and let them hear your thoughts on the upcoming referendum vote.

- Meetings are held at the Central Administration Building at 275 South Street, Burlington, IL 60109. Meetings start promptly at 6 PM.
- Arrive no later than 5:45 PM to sign up to make a public comment. The sign up forms are in the foyer of the administration building. Public comments may be 2 to 3 minutes in length. Please note the Board does not respond to public comment, but it’s important to have your voice on record!
- Once your comment is done, you are free to go home. You’re under no obligation to stay for the meeting, although we encourage everyone to stay in touch with what is happening in our district.
- Make your own comment or feel free to use the example below.

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***Dear Members of the Board:***

***As a taxpayer and voter inside the CCUSD 301 district boundaries, I am invested in the responsible growth and development of our district. I am concerned about the district’s current plans for a new high school and the request for \$195 million to fund it without an independent outside enrollment forecast and facilities analysis. I call upon my Board of Education to halt any further development plans for a new high school until you commission these reports through a reputable demography firm and share those findings with us, the taxpayers, in the interest of transparency, engagement, and communication. This will ensure that any decisions made will be based on comprehensive data rather than assumptions or incomplete data. It also allows our community to hold the district and the members of the board accountable for these decisions, should you choose not to plan according to the results of such appropriate due diligence.***

***Until such time as this independent analysis is commissioned and presented to the community with complete transparency and the ability to have two-way dialogue over the results, my vote on any referendum will be a firm “NO”.***

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**Thank you for speaking up! It takes all of us working together in a unified voice to bring change. We are Building A Better District -- Together!**



**D301**  
**Show Your**  
**Work**

# VOTE NO D301!



We are Building A Better District. **We are not an anti-tax effort!**

We are a group of parents and residents that support appropriate tax investments for high-value returns on education in our community and who want our district to operate with transparency and accountability. We are committed to strong fiscal responsibility, ensuring that every decision is backed by appropriate due diligence, supported by independent data analysis, spearheaded by competent leadership and developed with significant community feedback. This balanced approach allows us to address the district's needs effectively while also reflecting the voice of the community.

- We **agree** we need to address capacity issues in our elementary schools.
- We **agree** we may need to build a purpose-built school in the near future (most likely not a new high school).
- We **disagree** that a new high school with capacity for up to 3,000 students is needed.
- We **disagree** with converting PKMS to a K-5 building.
- We **disagree** with converting CMS to an Early Childhood Center.
- We **disagree** that the appropriate processes have been followed and analyses performed to arrive at the decision to ask taxpayers for \$195 million to fund a new 450,000 sq.ft. high school.
- We **disagree** that the community should spend \$195 million without the benefit of an independent Enrollment Forecast and Facilities Analysis by an outside demography firm that supports such an expenditure and this specific expansion plan.
- We **disagree** that the community should approve \$195 million without a budget showing how the funds are earmarked for spending so the community can hold the district and Board of Education accountable for that spending.
- We believe other options exist at a lesser cost to the taxpayers of our community.

Visit us at [www.BuildingABetterDistrict.org](http://www.BuildingABetterDistrict.org) to learn more about how our community is Building A Better District -- *Together!*



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