

Remember Me 

# Albuquerque Journal

## **\$575 million in APS bonds would fund technology, construction**

By [Kim Burgess / Journal Staff Writer](#)

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Over half a billion dollars to fill construction and technology needs at Albuquerque Public Schools is at stake in a coming bond and mill levy election that has received extra scrutiny after the superintendent's ouster and concerns about early voting.

On Feb. 2, voters will decide whether APS receives \$575 million earmarked to build two new schools, renovate aging buildings, upgrade technology and improve security.

Construction projects would take the bulk of the money: \$316 million. An additional \$100 million is budgeted to replace old computers, interactive boards and Internet infrastructure, such as routers.

If the bond and mill levy are approved, property taxes will not increase. If they fail, taxes will decrease.

Acting Superintendent Raquel Reedy stressed that the focus is giving students the best possible learning environments.

“Bottom line, this is a wonderful opportunity for our kids,” she said. “It is about the kids and it is about the future – and really this is going to be generations of kids.”

Major projects include:

- Northwest K-8 School, \$50 million: This new school on the West Side is designed to alleviate crowding at Painted Sky Elementary School and Jimmy Carter Middle School. Students in kindergarten through eighth grade would engage in project-based learning and use curriculum that incorporates technology.
- Family School West Side, \$8.4 million: A second new West Side school, one with an unusual educational model that allows kids to mix classroom time and home schooling. Desert Willow Family School in the northeast uses the same approach and is so popular it has a long waiting list.
- APS District Health Clinic, \$4.9 million: APS employees who work at least 30 hours per week would be able to use the proposed clinic. The bond money would cover design and construction; operations would require an additional \$1.5 million per year.
- Montgomery Complex Professional Development and Meeting Facility, \$12.1 million: Hundreds of teachers are trained at the complex every week, but the infrastructure is crumbling and out of date. For instance, bathrooms are still child-sized, a holdover from the building's former life as a school. The plan is to raze it and build a new training center.
- High school gym upgrades, roughly \$60 million: New athletic complexes are planned at Highland, La Cueva, Manzano and Rio Grande high schools to improve facilities and comply with Title IX, which requires gender equity.

If approved, the bond will generate \$200 million in construction work in a year and a half – \$10 million per month for the local economy.

But APS has hit some bumps in selling the bond to voters frustrated by former Superintendent Luis Valentino's short, scandal-ridden tenure. Valentino had come under fire amid revelations that his handpicked deputy superintendent was facing child sex assault and assault charges in Denver.

After three closed-door board meetings, Valentino stepped down Aug. 31 with an \$80,000 settlement and positive letter of reference.

The Rev. Trey Hammond, senior pastor at La Mesa Presbyterian Church and co-chairman of Albuquerque Interfaith, has been stumping for the bond but said he is worried.

He compared the current mood to that of 2002, when then-Superintendent Brad Allison resigned with a \$380,000 buyout after public alcohol problems. An APS bond that came up for a vote shortly afterward didn't pass – an unprecedented failure.

“The situation today is dangerously comparable to what happened in 2002 in terms of turmoil at APS, and the public is frustrated,” Hammond said. “You get motivated people who are angry – they will come out and vote a bond down. That doesn't punish the bad adult behavior at all. What it does is punish the children and what could have happened if that bond had passed.”

APS also recently took heat for not including an early voting site in the northwestern part of the city, an oversight the board addressed by approving two additional sites at its meeting Wednesday night.

Board Vice President Analee Maestas said the district has made mistakes but is working hard to improve.

“We should be held accountable by our community, by our parents, by our students,” she said. “Have we made mistakes? Absolutely. I will be the first to tell you we have, but we are taking proactive steps to address some of those issues.”

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## **APS bond proposal at a glance**

Here is a breakdown of how \$575 million would be spent if voters approve a bond/school mill levy package Feb. 2.

\$316 million – Construction

\$100 million – Technology

\$58 million – Charter schools

\$5.6 million – School security

\$5 million – Teacher and student furniture

\$3 million – Americans with Disabilities Act compliance

For a detailed list of projects that would be funded, go to [www.aps.edu](http://www.aps.edu)

*Source: APS*