



Helena School Bond
HIGH SCHOOL & ELEMENTARY BOND 2025

TODAY'S VOTE. TODAY'S INVESTMENT. TOMORROW'S IMPACT.

ELECTION DAY: SEPTEMBER 9TH

The Time is Now.

Across our Helena Public Schools, our buildings are aging—the **average facility is over 70 years old**—and decades of **deferred maintenance** have taken a toll. Failing systems, outdated learning environments: if our buildings could speak, they'd be telling us that they can't keep up with the needs of our students. Over the years, there hasn't been significant bond investment, and now construction costs continue to rise—meaning the longer we wait, the more expensive it gets to fix what's broken and build what's needed.

A recent Facilities Master Plan, built on months of study and public input, identified the most urgent projects.

These include:

- A **new Helena High School** to replace the deteriorating facility.
- Significant renovations to **Capital High School** to address critical infrastructure needs.
- A **new Kessler Elementary School** to replace an outdated, undersized building.

- **Athletics investments** for a new competition field and HHS/CHS Practice Facilities.
- A **new location for the District Kitchen**, which currently operates out of a space never meant for food service.
- A **new facility for the Project for Alternative Learning (PAL)**, providing better support for students who need it most.

To make this happen, we're asking voters to consider two bond measures:

- **\$240 million for the High School District**
- **\$43 million for the Elementary District**

These are strategic, future-focused investments in safe, healthy, and functional learning environments—not just for today's students, but for generations to come.

THE ELECTION IS SEPTEMBER 9. This is our moment to act—before costs rise further, and while we can still choose to build a stronger future for Helena.

If Our Buildings Could Speak

The 2025 Elementary School Bond

Kessler Elementary: Honoring the Past, Building for the Future

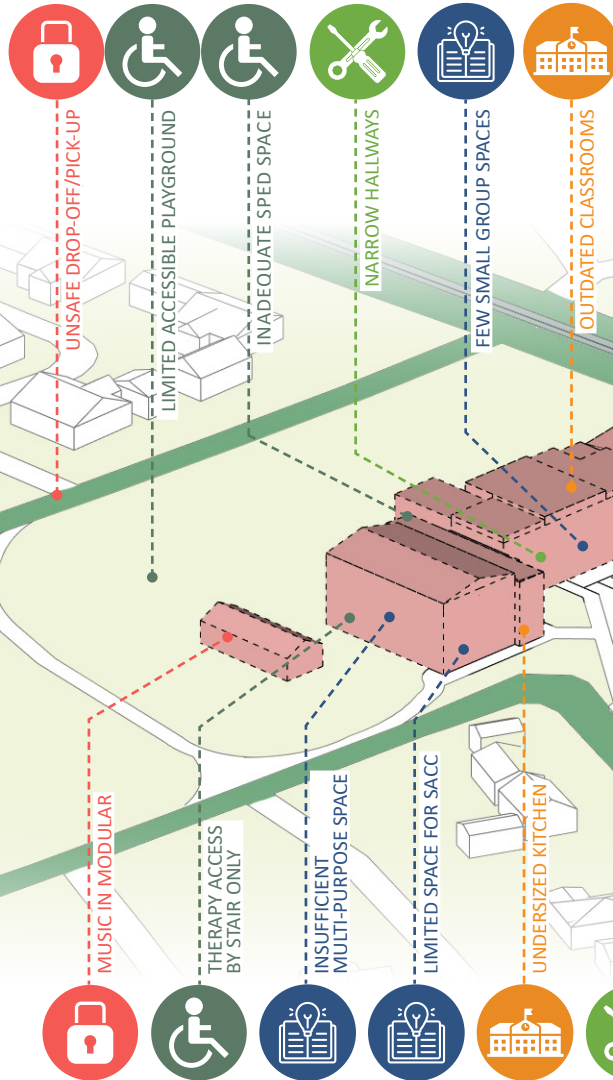
Kessler Elementary has served Helena's west side since 1936. Originally named Kenwood School, it was later renamed for local brick maker Nickolas Kessler and has long been a pillar of community connection.

But the building is aging. Decades of patchwork additions, outdated systems, and inadequate space have made it difficult to meet today's educational standards. In one recent case, wildfire smoke made the air inside so poor that recess was held outside—because the air outdoors was safer than the air indoors.

The proposed \$43 million elementary bond includes funding to replace Kessler with a modern school that meets safety, space, and learning needs. The new building will include updated classrooms, gym and multipurpose areas, fire suppression systems, and infrastructure to support students today and for generations to come.



If passed, construction would begin as soon as next year, with the new school opening by Fall 2028.



KESSLER TODAY

A SCHOOL BUILDING STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP

What are the current issues at Kessler Elementary?



SAFETY & SECURITY RISKS

Drop-off and pick-up areas sit too close to Highway 12, **posing traffic and pedestrian dangers**. Music classes are held in a **detached modular building**, separating students from the main school. Poor site circulation and limited parking add to daily confusion and **safety concerns** for buses, parents, and staff.



BARRIERS TO STUDENT ACCESS

Kessler **falls short in providing equitable access** to all students. Therapy services are located in areas only reachable by stairs, and the lower-level classrooms are also **not wheelchair accessible**. The outdoor playground **lacks inclusive equipment and access routes**, limiting play opportunities for students with disabilities.



SPACES DON'T SUPPORT LEARNING

There's **not enough space** for small group work or special education, and a **shared multi purpose room** for the cafeteria, PE, assemblies, or indoor play. The after-school program has **little storage and no permanent space**, limiting its effectiveness.



DETERIORATING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Much of the building is **simply worn out**. Classrooms are **outdated and poorly suited** to today's teaching. Restrooms **lack privacy and accessibility**. The small, **inadequate kitchen** makes it hard to meet food service standards and serve students effectively.



AGING INFRASTRUCTURE & SYSTEMS

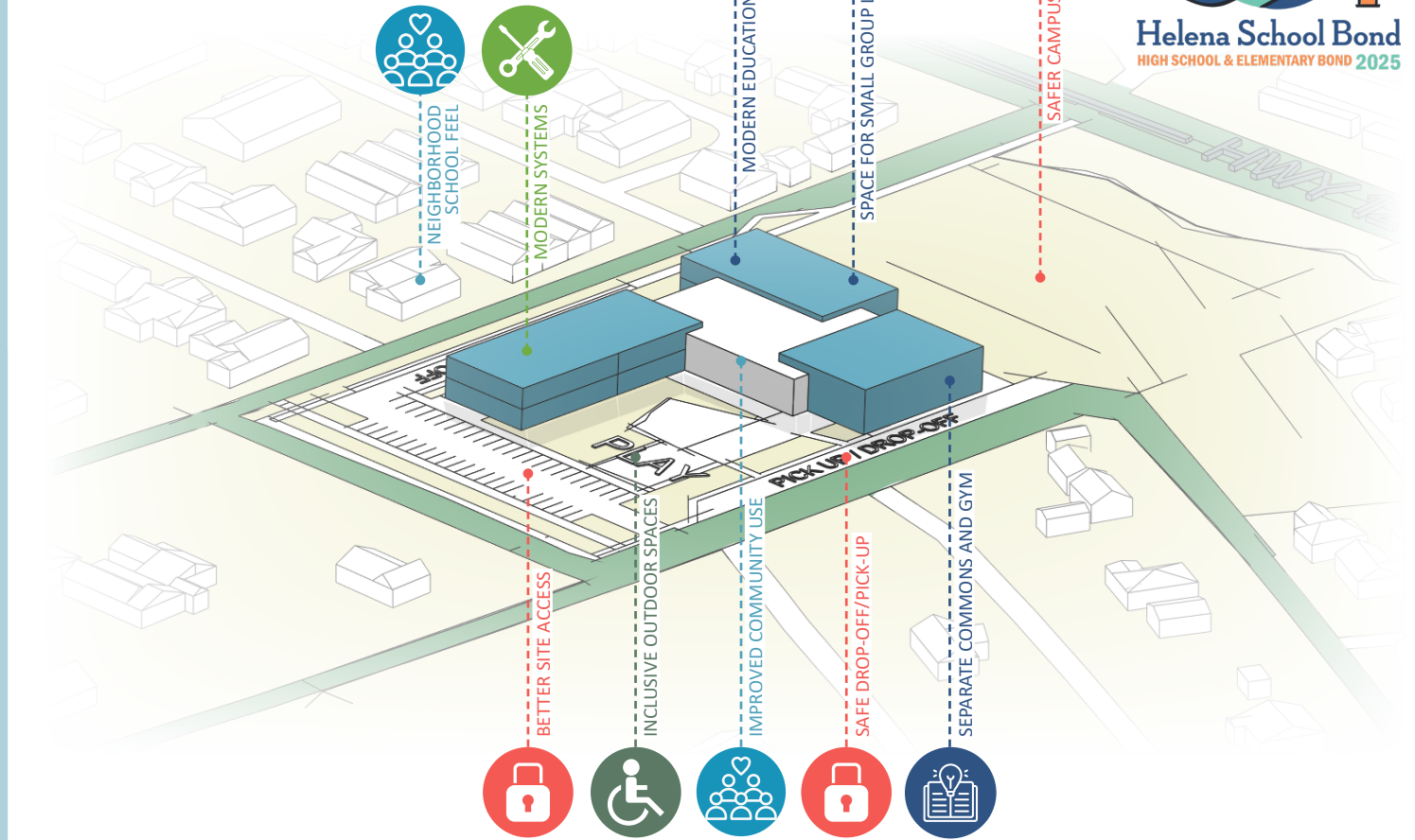
Kessler's core systems—such as HVAC, electrical, and circulation—are **no longer functioning effectively**. The aging HVAC system results in **poor air quality and inconsistent temperatures** throughout the building, with no air conditioning to relieve classrooms during warmer months. **Narrow hallways** create bottlenecks during transitions, adding stress and congestion to the school day. The **outdated electrical system** struggles to meet modern demands, and the building's windows—some of the worst in the district—contribute to **significant energy loss and occupant discomfort** year-round.

KESSLER RE-IMAGINED

A VISION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS



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What will an investment in Kessler Elementary look like?



SAFER CAMPUS, SMARTER CIRCULATION

The replacement school **addresses critical safety issues** on and around the campus. Improvements include a **safer drop-off and pick-up zone** set farther from Highway 12, **traffic calming** for kids crossing Granite Avenue, and overall site circulation upgrades to **reduce traffic conflicts and improve student safety**.



BUILT FOR EVERY LEARNER

New school design ensures that **all students** can access learning and play equally. This includes a **fully accessible playground**, as well as an overall modern building layout that **eliminates barriers** present in the existing facility.



FLEXIBLE SPACES FOR MODERN LEARNING

A new school could include **flexible** classrooms, breakout spaces, and dedicated areas for special programs and student support. Additional learning spaces throughout the building allow for **small group work and hands-on learning**. Separating the commons and gym enables **shared use without scheduling conflicts**.



FACILITIES THAT FIT THE FUTURE

Replacing the 80-year-old school with a **modern, purpose-built facility** will create spaces that meet today's **educational and building standards**—built to serve students well into the future.



RELIABLE, MODERN BUILDING SYSTEMS

The new Kessler will replace outdated infrastructure with **modern, energy-efficient systems**. A new HVAC system will provide **consistent temperature control and improved air quality**. Circulation inside and around the school is also improved for **better daily function**.



CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY

The new Kessler Elementary is designed not only as a school, but as a **neighborhood hub**. By preserving the school's community character and creating flexible, shared-use spaces like the gym and commons, the design **strengthens ties between the school and the neighborhood** it serves.

HOW WILL THIS BOND AFFECT MY PROPERTY TAXES?

Helena voters will be asked to consider two separate bond measures in 2025:

\$43 MILLION ELEMENTARY BOND
(20-YEAR TERM)

The Elementary Bond will appear on tax rolls starting in the 2026–27 fiscal year. To help reduce the early impact on taxpayers, the bond is structured to levy fewer mills until two existing school bonds are paid off in 2037 and 2039—balancing near-term affordability with long-term investment in Helena’s aging elementary facilities.

\$240 MILLION HIGH SCHOOL BOND
(30-YEAR TERM)

The High School Bond, also appearing on tax rolls in 2026–27, funds critical safety upgrades, new construction, renovations, and facility modernization at Helena’s two high schools.

The chart below shows **estimated tax increases** based on your home’s market and taxable value. These examples reflect homestead-qualified residential properties (primary homes or long-term rentals).

	ELEMENTARY BOND		HIGH SCHOOL BOND	
	20-Year Term		30-Year Term	
	\$43M		\$240M	
	ANNUAL (ESTIMATED)	MONTHLY (ESTIMATED)	ANNUAL (ESTIMATED)	MONTHLY (ESTIMATED)
2024/25 MARKET MULTIPLIER				
\$100,000	\$13.15	\$1.10	\$73.45	\$6.12
\$200,000	\$26.30	\$2.19	\$146.9	\$12.24
\$300,000	\$39.46	\$3.29	\$220.35	\$18.36
\$400,000	\$52.61	\$4.38	\$293.81	\$24.48
\$500,000	\$71.66	\$5.97	\$400.12	\$33.34

New in 2025: Montana’s tax laws are changing. Your home’s taxable value will now be based on its market value range:

- Up to \$400,000 – taxed at 0.76%
- \$400,001 to \$1.5 million – taxed at 1.10%
- Over \$1.5 million – taxed at 2.20%
- Non-primary homes and some agricultural properties will be taxed at different rates.

ALL BALLOTS MAILED ON AUG 22
ELECTION DAY: SEPT 9

UPCOMING EVENTS | BROWN BAGS & BONDS

- Tuesday, July 15 | 12-1 pm @ Capital High School
- Tuesday, July 22 | 12-1pm @ Helena High School
- Tuesday, July 29 | 12-1 pm @ Kessler Elementary School
- Tuesday, August 5 | 12-1 pm @ Capital High School
- Tuesday, August 12 | 12-1 pm @ Helena High School

CHECK BACK WITH THE HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR MORE BOND EDUCATION EVENTS AND TOURS THROUGH THE SUMMER.

QUESTIONS? WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Check out the website for more information on the high school and elementary bonds, tax increase, images and more.

Check helenaschoolbond.org on July 11th for more information!

