



**Richland County Community Unit School District #1  
Richland County High School Building Renovations Plan**

**March 20, 2018 Election**

## **Answers to Commonly Asked Questions**

Last year hundreds of Richland County Community Unit School District #1 parents, residents and employees met over several months to find ways to improve district schools. The successful FACTS community engagement program resulted in a long-range facility improvement plan. The first phase of this plan is to upgrade the Richland County High School to provide an outstanding educational environment for many more generations of high school students.

On March 20, residents of Richland County will vote on a one-cent County School Facilities Sales Tax. If approved, the sales tax is estimated to support \$25 million in facility improvements for the Richland County Community Unit School District #1 High School. The approved sales tax will provide a secure revenue source to support the renovation of our high school, enabling students to perform better in school and be better prepared for higher education or the workplace. This plan could provide up to 70 more years of life to the high school and provide an outstanding educational environment for many more generations of high school students.

**This document provides answers to some commonly asked questions about the ballot proposal and how funds generated from this tax will be used in the Richland County Community Unit School District #1. If you have any additional questions, please contact:**

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### **How was the proposal to upgrade Richland County High School developed?**

The proposal to renovate the high school using funds from the county sales tax was recommended by FACTS, a community engagement program that involved hundreds of district residents interested in finding solutions to improve the Richland County Community School District. While the FACTS group looked at all facilities, a decision was reached to address the high school due to the greater need at this building compared to other schools.

### **What is the county sales tax for schools?**

The County School Facilities Sales Tax allows voters to approve a sales tax to fund school facility needs rather than relying on property taxes. The sales tax is for one cent on every dollar spent on qualifying retail purchases. The Richland County Community School District school board passed a resolution to place the question on the March 20 ballot. The County School Facilities Sales Tax allows Illinois school districts a funding alternative that does not rely on local property taxes. As of 2017, 49 counties in Illinois have said yes to supporting their local schools by passing a sales tax referendum.

### **What is taxed and what is not taxed with the county sales tax?**

The County School Facilities Sales Tax does not tax anything that is not currently taxed. Many essential items would not be subject to the tax...things such as groceries, drugs (including prescription medications, vitamins, and over the counter medication), farm equipment (including fertilizer and seed) mobile homes and licensed and titled vehicles or boats & RVs.

### **Can these revenues be used for any other purpose?**

Sales tax revenues may only be used for school facility improvements or for property tax abatement. Facility improvements may include additions and renovations, new construction, safety and security or energy efficiency enhancements, parking lots, technology infrastructure and much more. The funds can't be used for operating costs, such as salaries, textbooks or computers, moveable equipment, buses, or other instructional costs.

### **How much revenue will be generated for Richland County Community Unit 1?**

The one- cent sales tax will provide a revenue source to support the school district's financing of the high school renovations allowing for approximately \$25 million in bond financing over the course of the improvements. The goal of the school district and board of education is to complete this renovation without impacting the district's property tax rate.

### **What will the additional funding provide for the district?**

Revenue generated by the one cent County School Facilities Sales Tax will support the funding for significant renovations to Richland County High School enabling students to perform better in school and be better prepared for higher education or the workplace. The renovation will accomplish three main goals.

- Accessibility – The high school was constructed in 1952 and there are many parts of the school that are simply inaccessible to individuals with mobility concerns.
- Safety & Security – In the world we live in, school security is a very real concern. This concern is addressed with more limited entrances to the school
- 21st Century Learning Environment – A modern learning environment addresses student learning needs in a much different way. The areas to be upgraded in the renovation plan include general classrooms, lab facilities, library, cafeteria/commons, vocational classrooms and shops, auditorium, fine arts spaces, and gymnasiums.

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

Election Day is Tuesday, March 20, 2018. The County School Facilities Sales Tax requires a simple majority (50% + 1 for approval).

**I'm not registered to vote yet? Can I still register and vote?**

Yes. Early voting is available Feb. 8 – March 19 at Richland County Clerk's Office at the Richland County Courthouse, Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Additional dates on Saturdays will be confirmed in the near future.

Local residents who are not registered to vote can register and vote at the same time also beginning in February. Grace Period Registration and Voting is Feb. 21 - March 20 at Richland County Clerk's Office, Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**How will the County School Facilities Sales Tax appear on the March 20 ballot?**

*"Shall a retailer's occupation tax and a service occupation tax (commonly referred to as a "Sales Tax") be imposed in Richland County at a rate of 1% to be used exclusively for school facility purposes?"*

**Beyond improving the high school, how will the improvements impact our community?**

Improving Richland County schools helps to keep neighborhoods strong and keeps property values up. Numerous studies have found a strong correlation between quality schools and property values.

**Are there plans for improvements to any other buildings in the school district?**

Currently, the improvement priority is the high school. Over time improvements will be necessary at the other school district's facilities. When this comes about, the district plans to reconvene the FACTS committee to gather input from the community.