

Waunakee School District

Community Survey Report
Spring 2022





Our mission is to help educational leaders gather, organize, and use data to make strategic decisions.

- Founded in **2002** to provide independent research
- Conducted over **10,000** staff, parent, and student, and community surveys for school improvement
- Helped more than **850** districts navigate the strategic planning and referendum planning process

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Survey Information



Results & Analysis



Wrap-up/Questions



Our Process



Each household within the District was mailed a paper survey.
Respondents could:

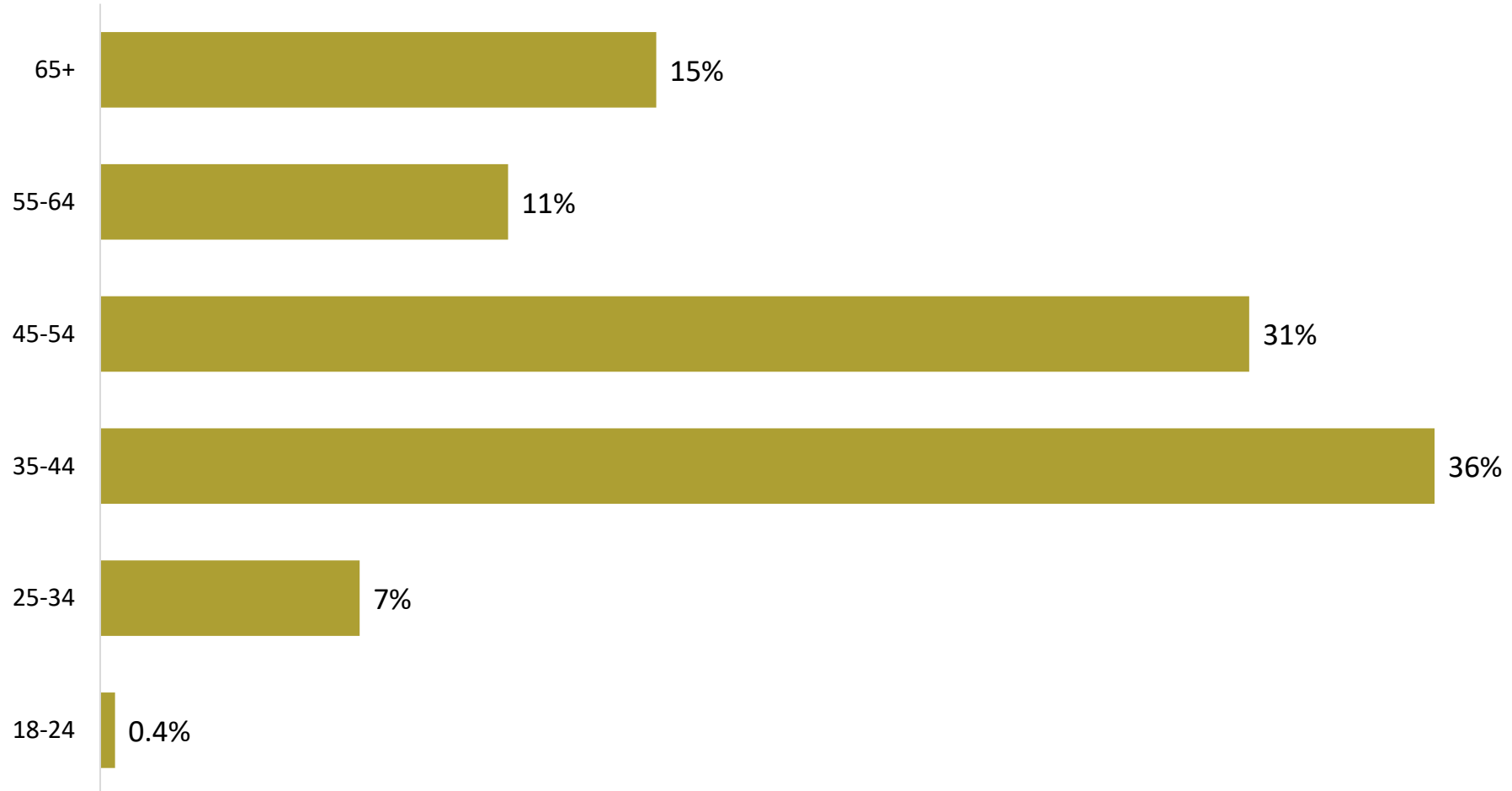
- 1) Fill out the paper survey and return directly to School Perceptions
or
- 2) Take the survey online with a one-time-use code

Survey Information

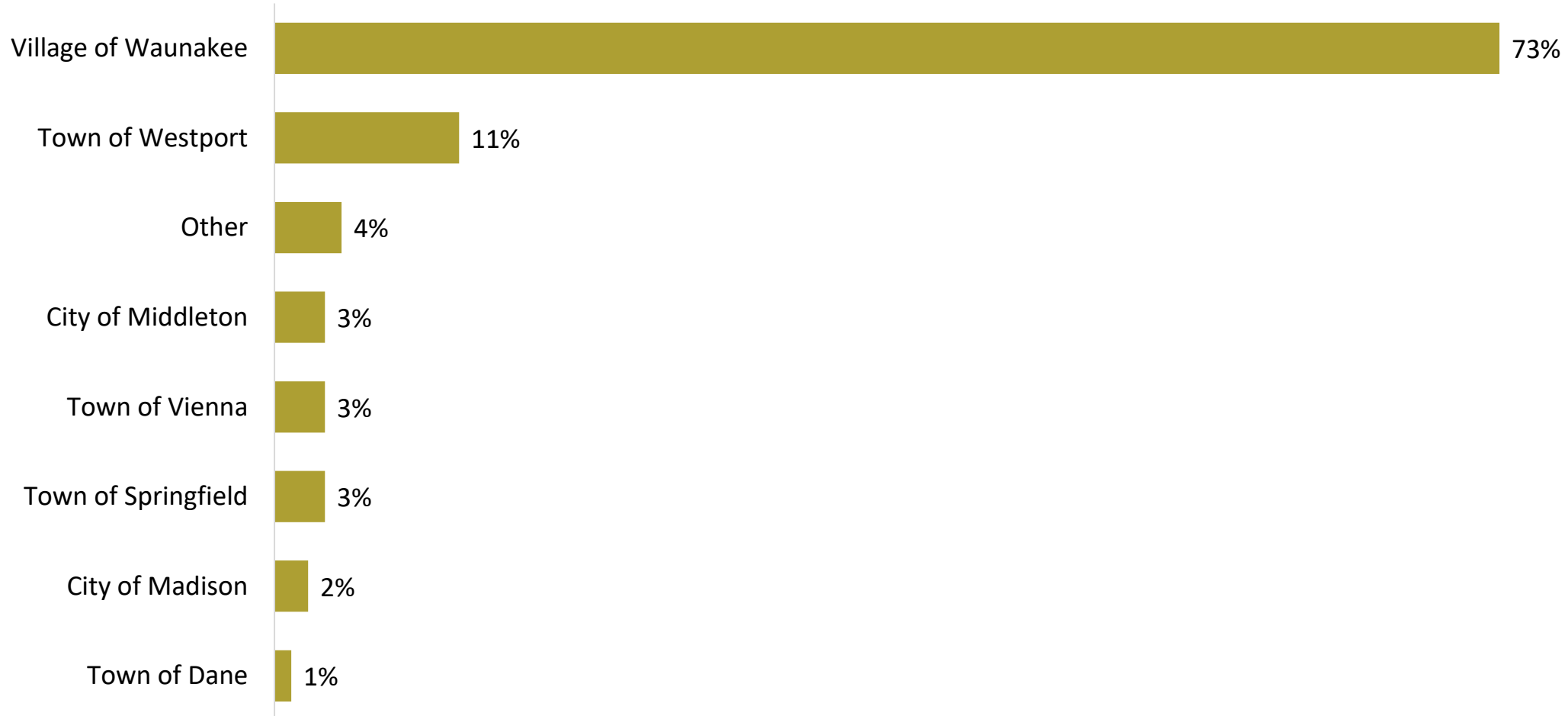


- **April 2022** survey window
- **2,541** total respondents (348 paper)
- **29%** participation rate
- +/- **1.98%** margin of error

What is your age?



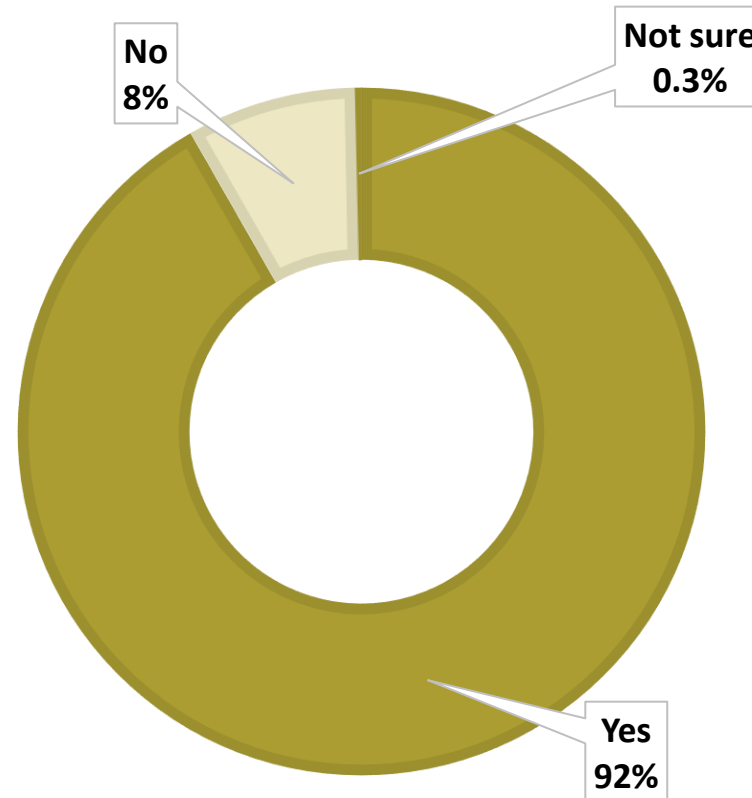
In which municipality do you reside?



Respondent Information



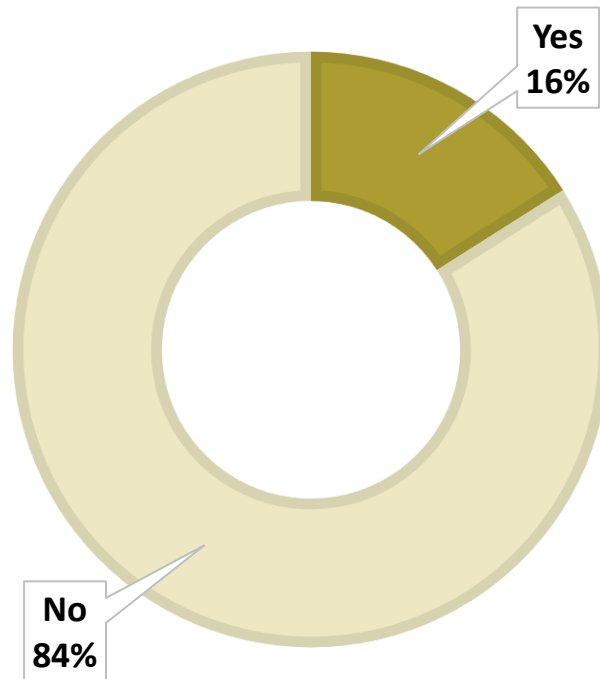
Do you live in the Waunakee
Community School District?



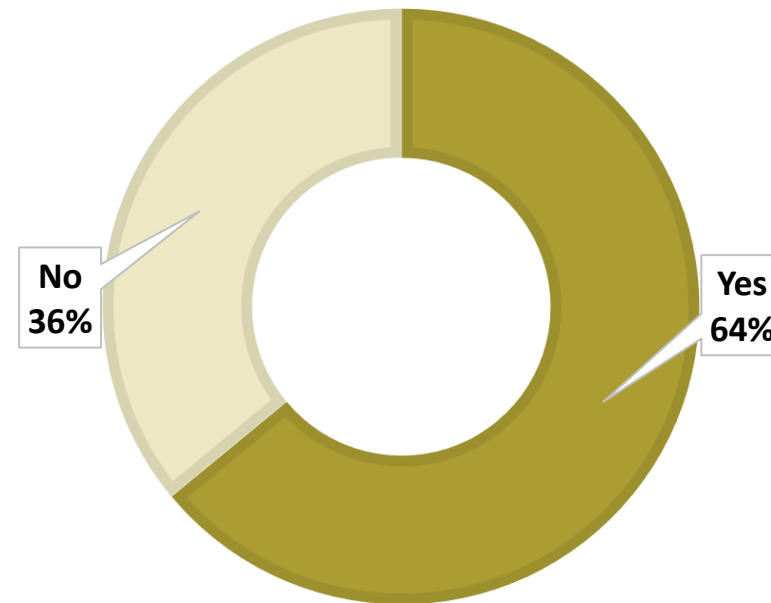
Respondent Information



Are you an employee in the District?



Do you have children attending a school in the District?



Planning Background



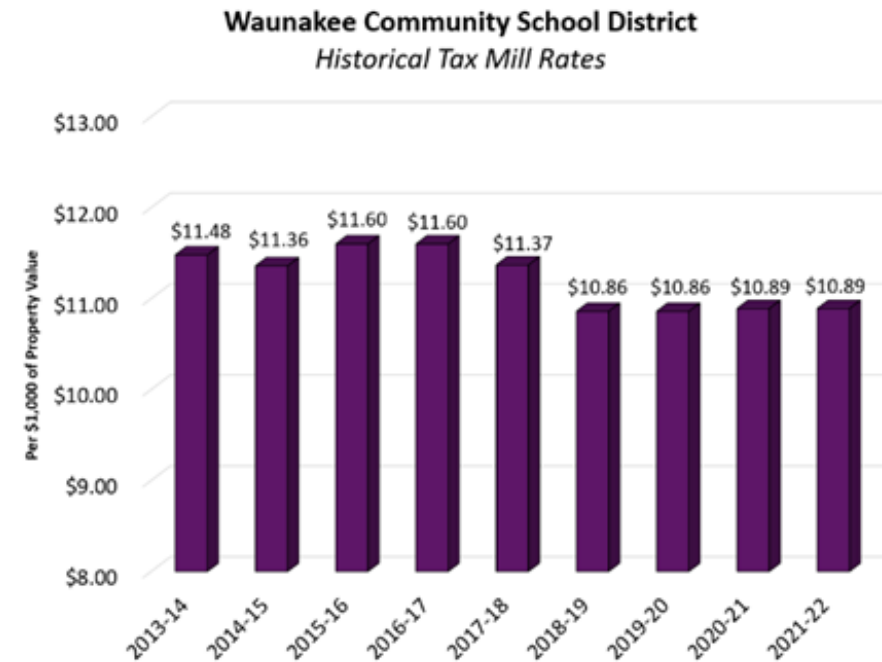
There are two types of referenda school districts use to request additional funding.

An **operational referendum** is used to maintain/improve current programs, services, and class sizes. The Waunakee community supported this type of referendum in 2014 and 2020. This type of referendum can also be used to pay for building operating expenses when new space is added.

Planning Background

A **capital referendum** allows a district to issue debt (take out a loan) to pay for major facility projects. Much like a home mortgage, a capital referendum is typically financed over an extended period of time, often 20 years. The Waunakee community supported this type of referendum in 2014 to fund the first phase of the facility master plan.

The District works very hard to control expenses and make decisions that improve our finances. As seen in the chart to the right, our goal has been to maintain a consistent mill rate. (The mill rate is used to calculate the school district's share of local property taxes).



Planning Background



In 2013, the District developed a master plan to guide future facility investments. Given the scope of the investment needed, the plan is being implemented in phases. In 2014, voters approved the first phase, which was completed on time and within budget.

Phase	Project	Status
I	Built the intermediate school, partially remodeled Heritage Elementary, updated/expanded Prairie Elementary, and addressed the most critical maintenance issues	Completed fall of 2016
II	Renovate or rebuild Heritage, build a new middle school, make minor renovations at the high school, and address the most critical maintenance issues	In development/ next referendum
Future phase(s)	Expand the intermediate school, build a fourth elementary school, and create a high school campus with the current middle school	Timing to be determined

Current Challenges



1) Enrollment Growth

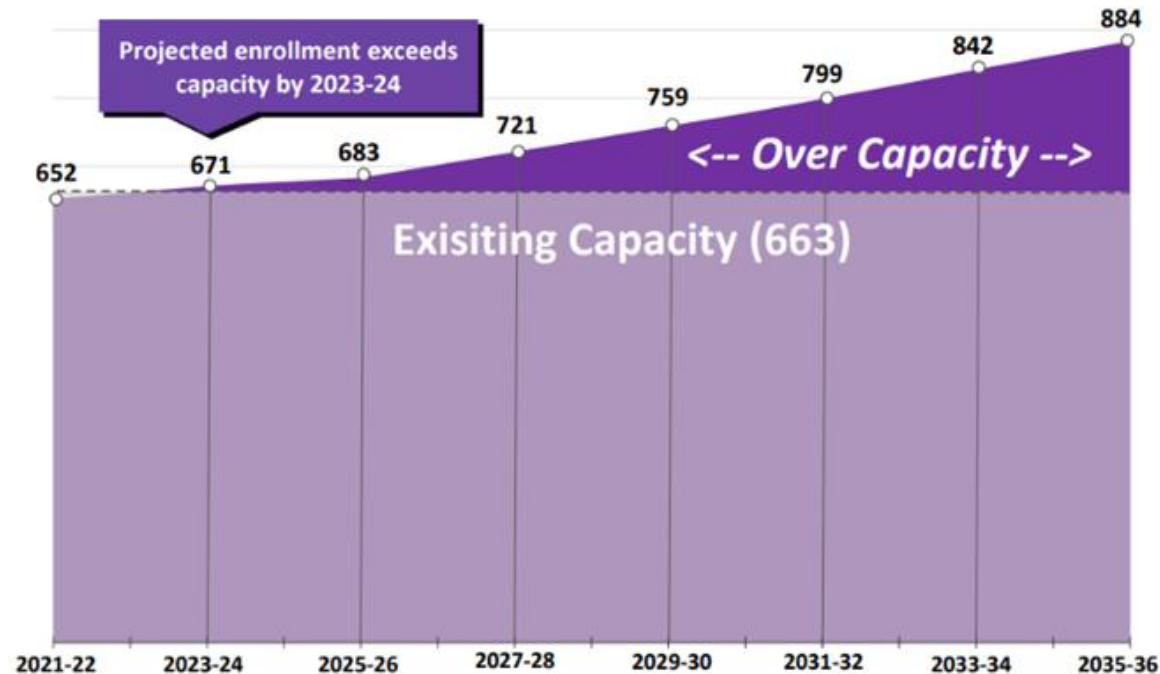
Based on a recent enrollment study conducted by MD Roffers, the District is projected to grow by more than 1,300 students by 2035. It is important to note that it will take two to three years after a referendum is approved before school construction is completed and spaces are available. While the enrollment increases will eventually affect all schools, the most immediate impact is at the middle school level.

Current Challenges



2) Middle School Capacity

The middle school has a capacity of 663 students. (This does not include the portable classrooms.) Our projected enrollment will exceed the school's capacity beginning in 2023. By 2035, total middle school enrollment is expected to grow to nearly 900 students.



Current Challenges



3) Critical Maintenance Issues

Regular maintenance helps us extend and sometimes exceed the expected lifespan of our schools. Our older schools are more expensive to maintain, heat, and clean. Some building systems throughout the District (such as heating, electrical, plumbing, roofs, windows, etc.) have reached or exceeded their service life.

Current Challenges



4) Heritage Elementary

A section of Heritage Elementary was built more than 70 years ago as the District's high school. Since that time, the building has had 11 additions. Consequently, classrooms are not designed to support today's learning models. Based on a recent facility audit, the following issues were identified:

- Due to the size of the building, the patchwork of the multiple additions, and the number of load-bearing walls, remodeling options are limited.
- An investment of \$6 million will be needed soon to replace the roof and replace plumbing, electrical, and heating/ventilation system components.
- The kitchen and cafeteria are too small.
- Renovations are needed to address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance issues.
- Due to its age, the building is more expensive to heat and operate.
- The school lacks flexible learning and collaboration spaces.

New Middle School Location



Based on projected enrollment growth, a new middle school will be needed in the near future. Two pathways have been developed for community feedback that vary depending on where the new middle school is built. The District explored building the new middle school at the intermediate school location, but this site is no longer being considered because it was found to be too small. Voters would need to approve a **capital referendum** to fund either pathway.

New Middle School Location



Pathway 1: Build the new middle school on the Heritage Elementary School site



New Middle School

Built on the current Heritage Elementary site

Estimated cost: \$88.7 million



Heritage Elementary School

Rebuild
(location to be determined)

Estimated cost: \$57 million



Current Middle School

Becomes part of the high school campus to address future growth

With this approach, middle school students could walk to the high school and access athletics and performance spaces.

New Middle School Location



Pathway 2: Build the new middle school on the outer edges of Waunakee



New Middle School

Built on the outer edges of the Village of Waunakee

Estimated cost: \$99.7 million



Heritage Elementary School

Replace or remodel
(location to be determined)

To replace: \$57 million
To remodel: up to \$53 million

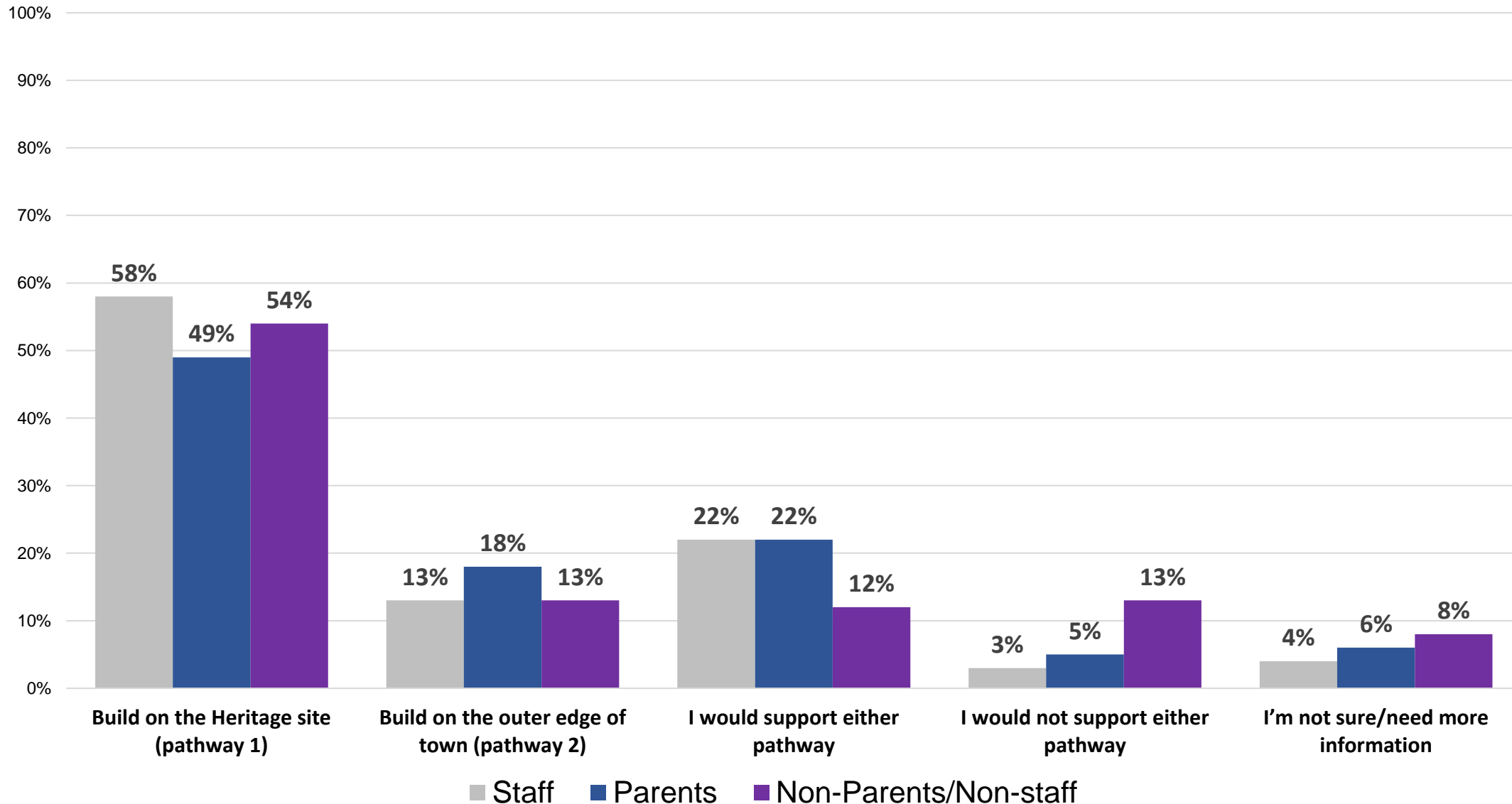


Current Middle School

Becomes part of the high school campus to address future growth

This option would require purchasing land. Because this site will not be within walking distance of the high school, we would need to build athletics and performance spaces for the new school.

What advice would you give in terms of the best location to build a new middle school?



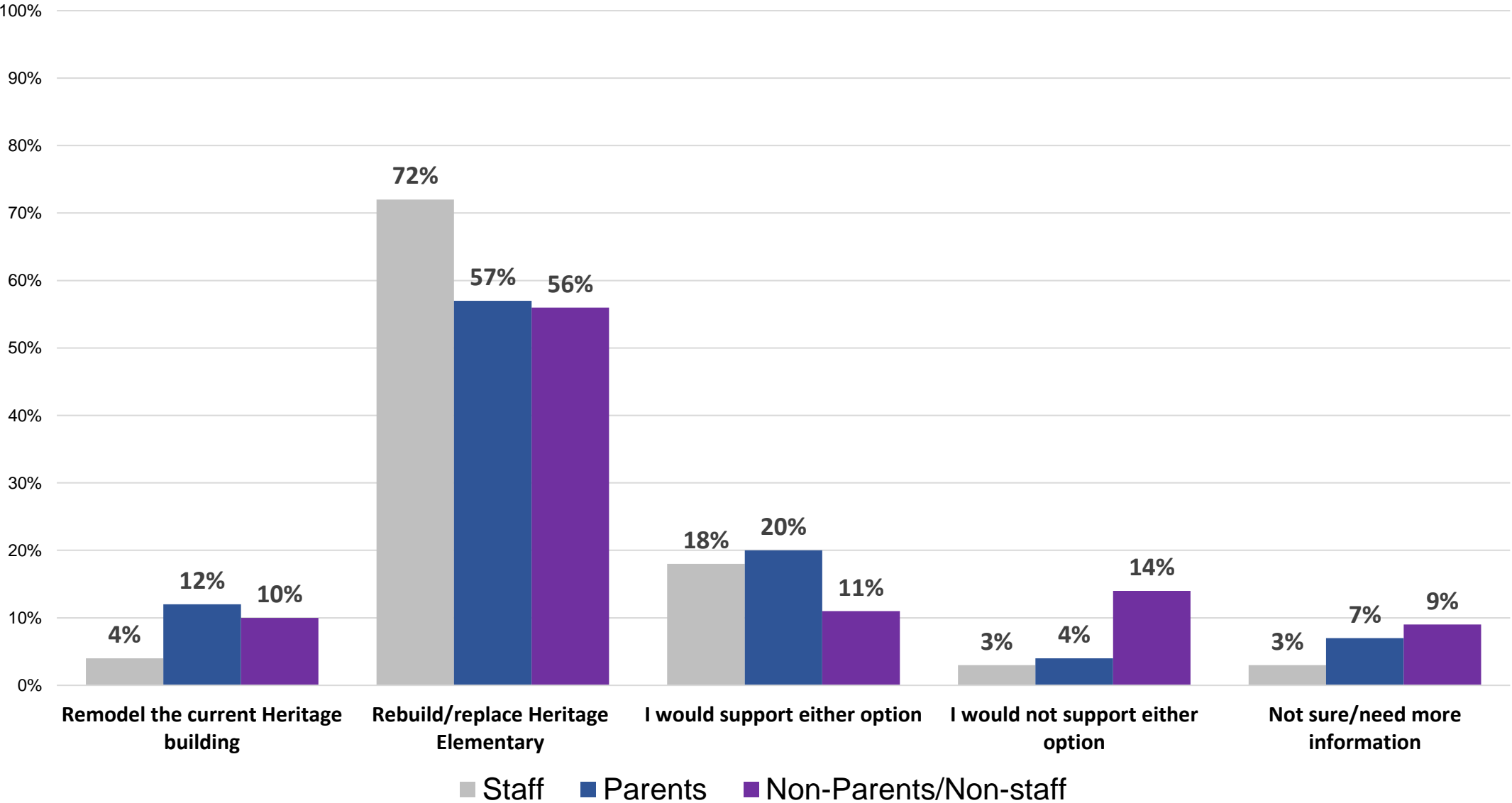
Heritage Elementary Planning



If the community supports building a middle school on the outer edges of the Village, we need to decide how the Heritage school would be remodeled or replaced.

It is possible to address many of the issues with Heritage by updating and reconstructing parts of the school. However, even with this investment, the school will still have some limitations due to the current facility design, the number of additions over time, and a large number of load-bearing walls.

If the community supports building a middle school on the outer edges of the Village (pathway 2), what advice would you give regarding whether to remodel or replace the Heritage school?



Heritage Elementary Planning

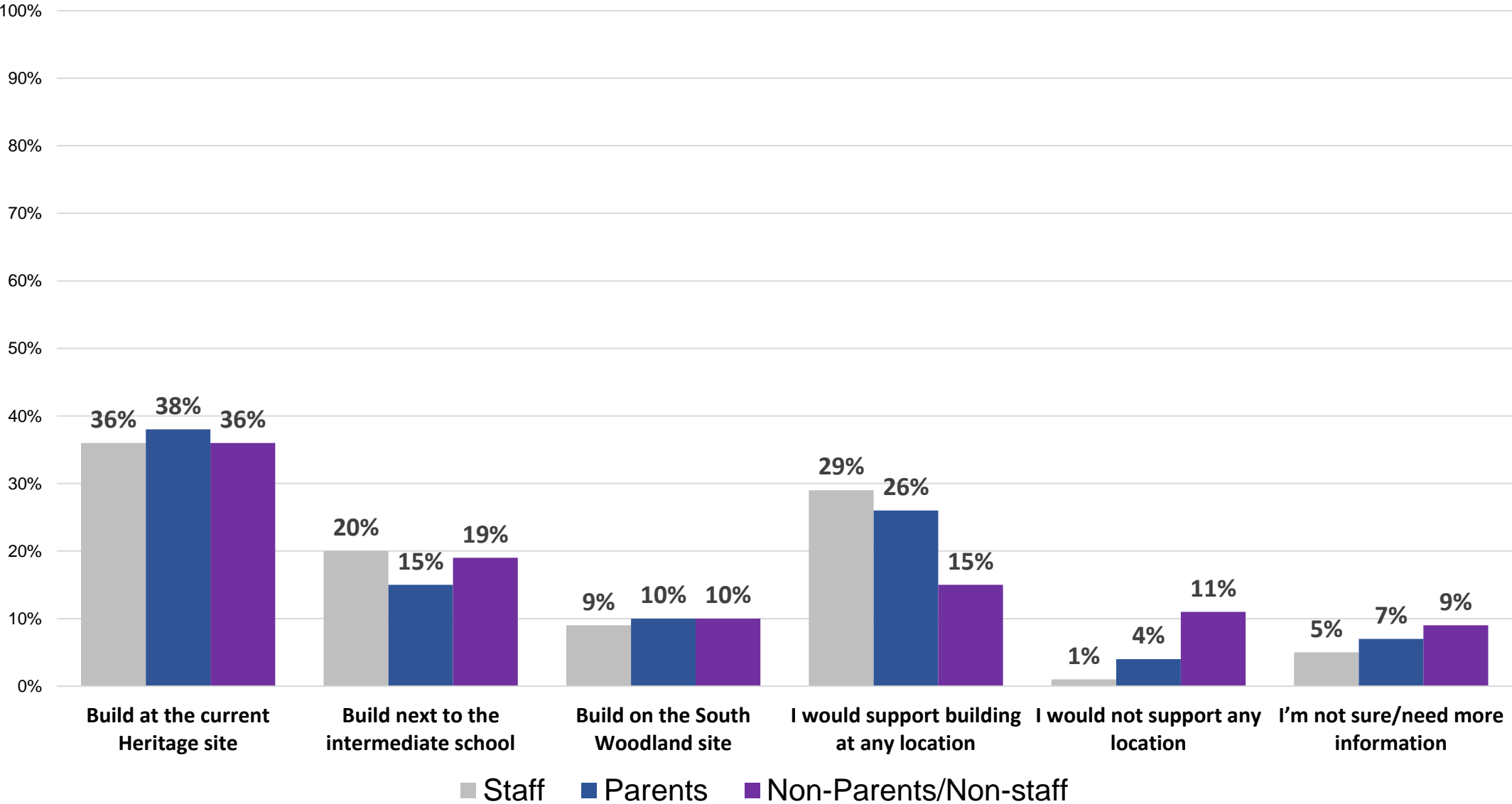


If the community supports **rebuilding/replacing** the Heritage school, there are three potential locations.

- 1. *Build the new Heritage Elementary School on the current site behind the existing school.*** Upon completion, the existing building would be demolished, and that area would be reconfigured for parking, playground, and greenspace.
- 2. *Build the new Heritage Elementary School next to the intermediate school on Woodland Drive.***
- 3. *Build the new Heritage Elementary School at the South Woodland site*** (near the Southbridge and Carriage Ridge neighborhoods on the corner of Peaceful Valley Parkway and Woodland Drive).

If the new school is built at either #2 or #3, the existing site would be maintained for a future school.

If the community supports building a middle school on the outer edges of the Village (pathway 2), what advice would you give regarding rebuilding/replacing the Heritage school?



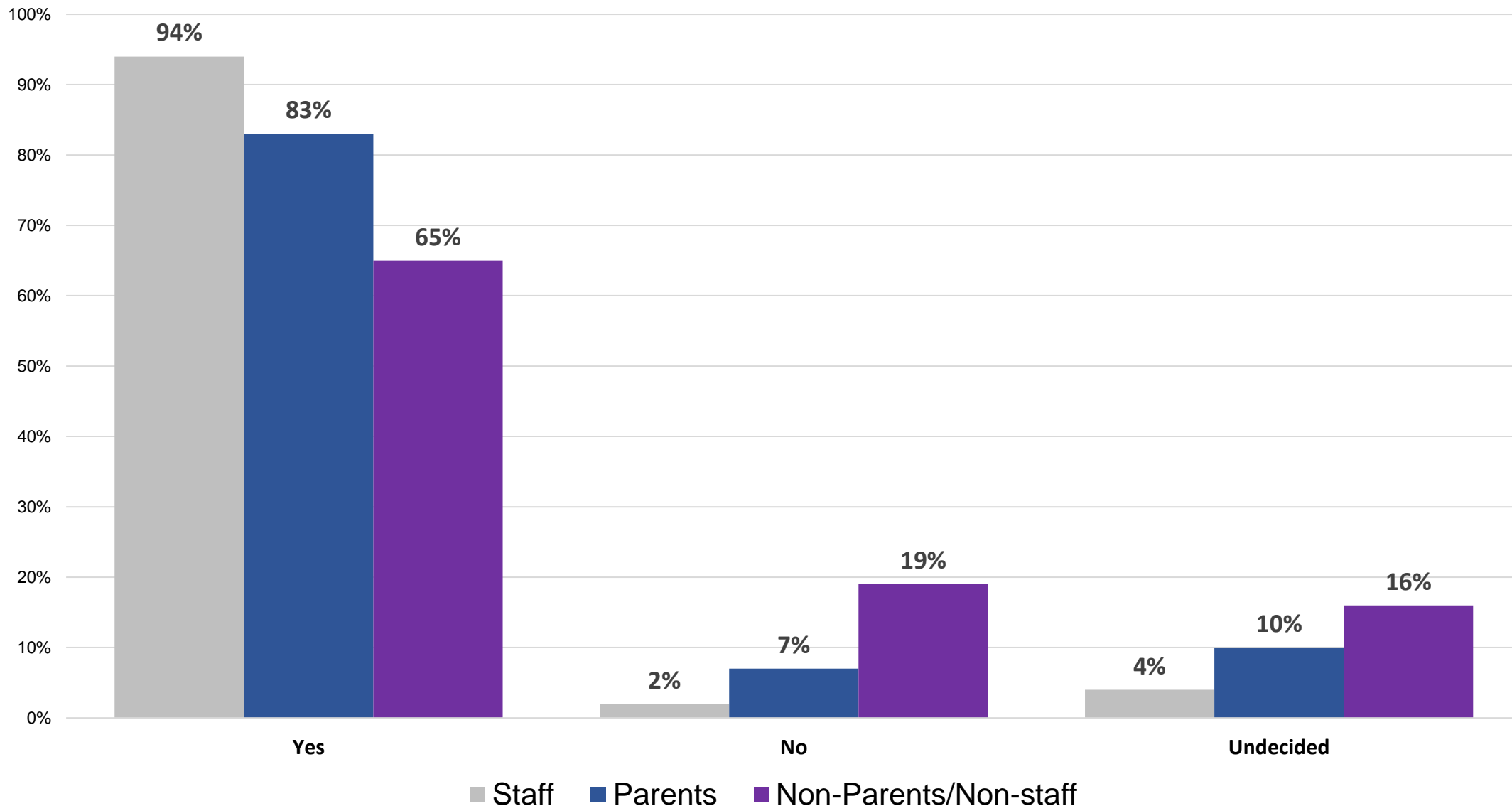
Operational Funding Support



In addition, the District could pursue an operational referendum to fund the following:

Staff Salaries: Recruiting and retaining quality staff is a top priority. This has become a significant challenge due to the statewide teacher and support staff shortages. In addition, our staff salaries are average to below average as compared to our neighboring districts depending on the position.

Operational Funding Support: Would you support referendum funding to increase salaries to recruit and retain high-quality staff?

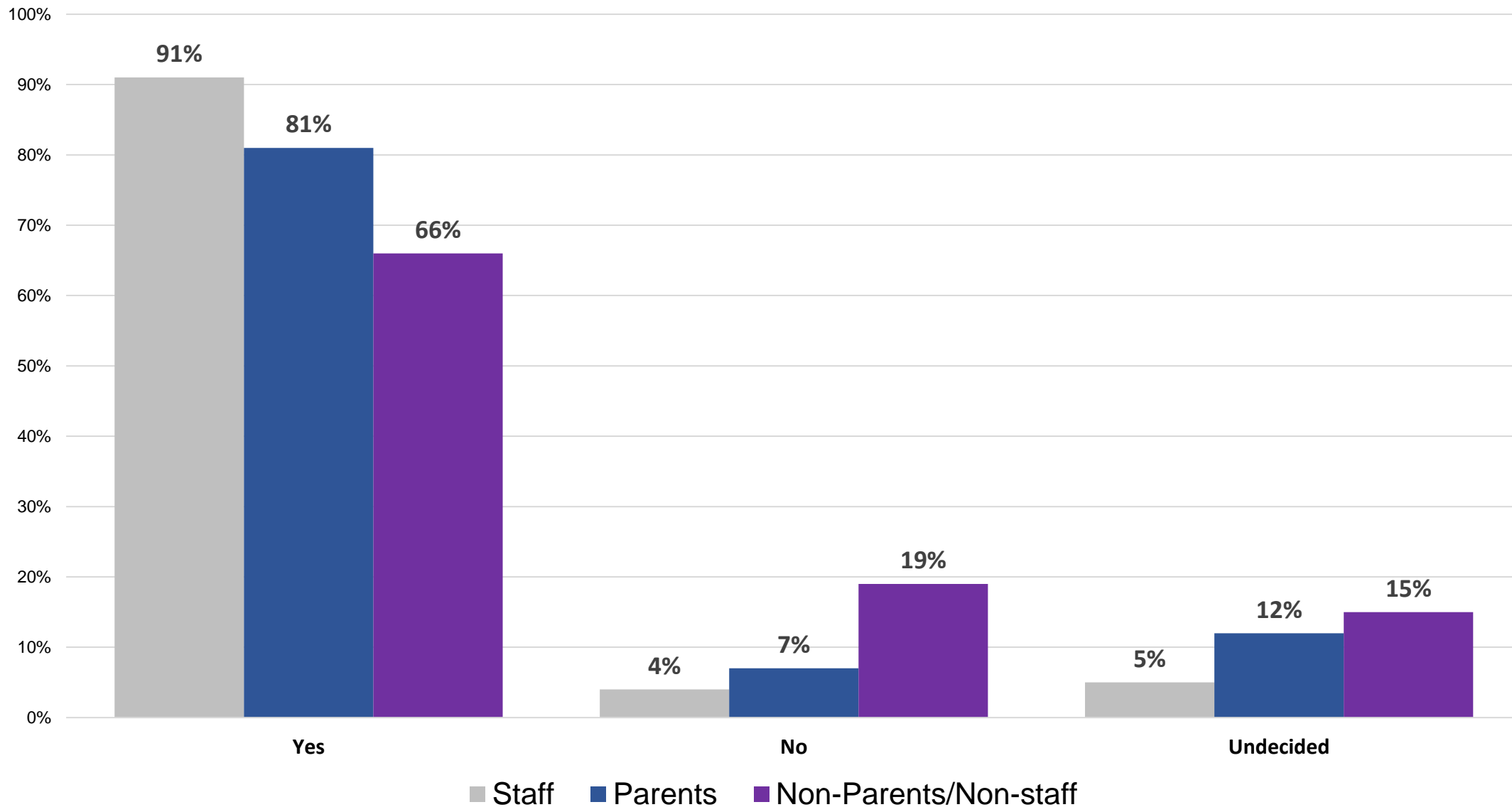


Operational Funding Support

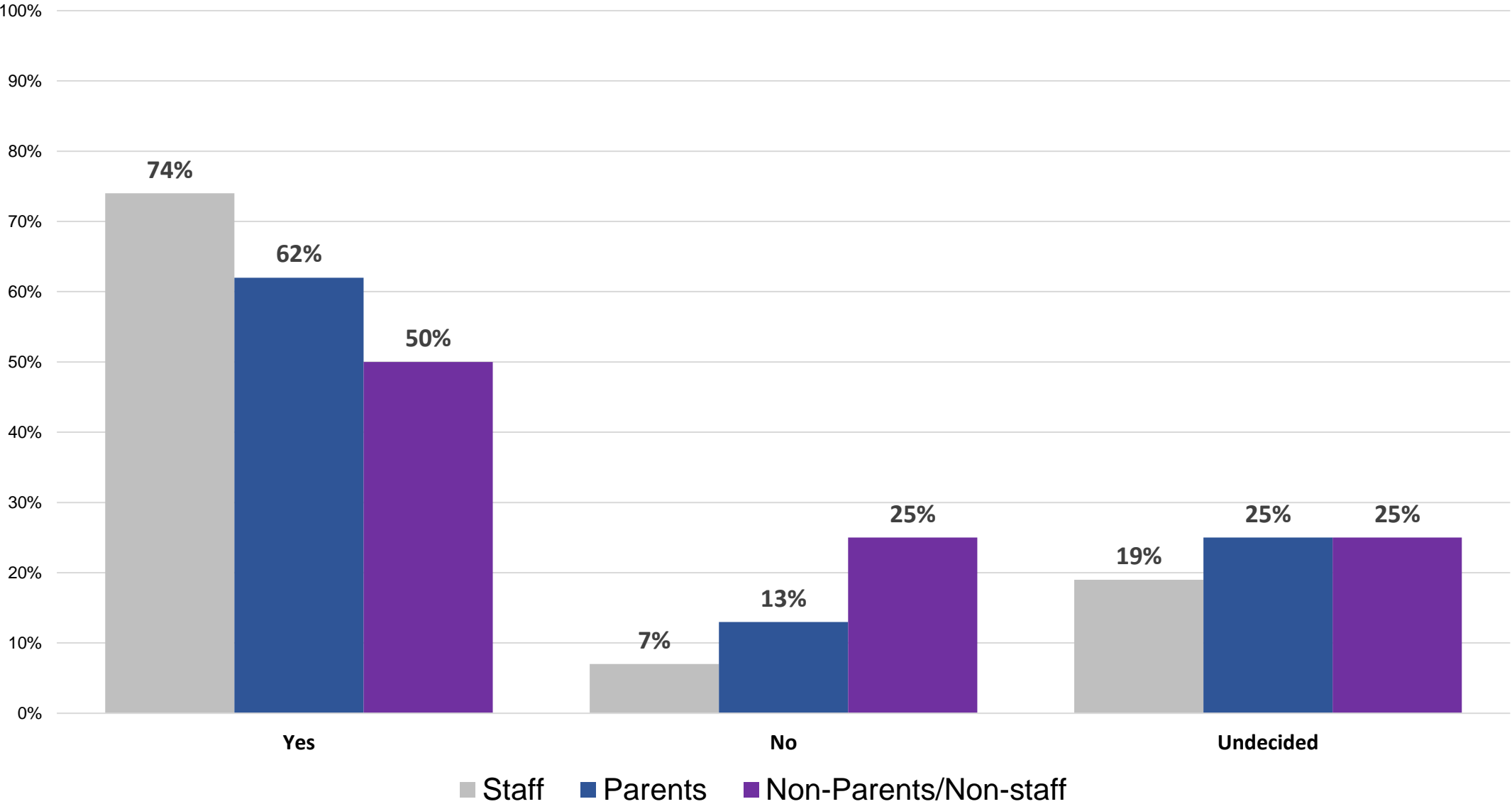


Operating New Space: Depending on what new construction projects are approved, additional funding would be needed to heat, clean, and operate the additional space.

Operational Funding Support: Would you support referendum funding to operate new spaces and/or buildings?



Operational Funding Support: Would you support referendum funding to replace these funding sources to maintain current programs and services?



Funding Support



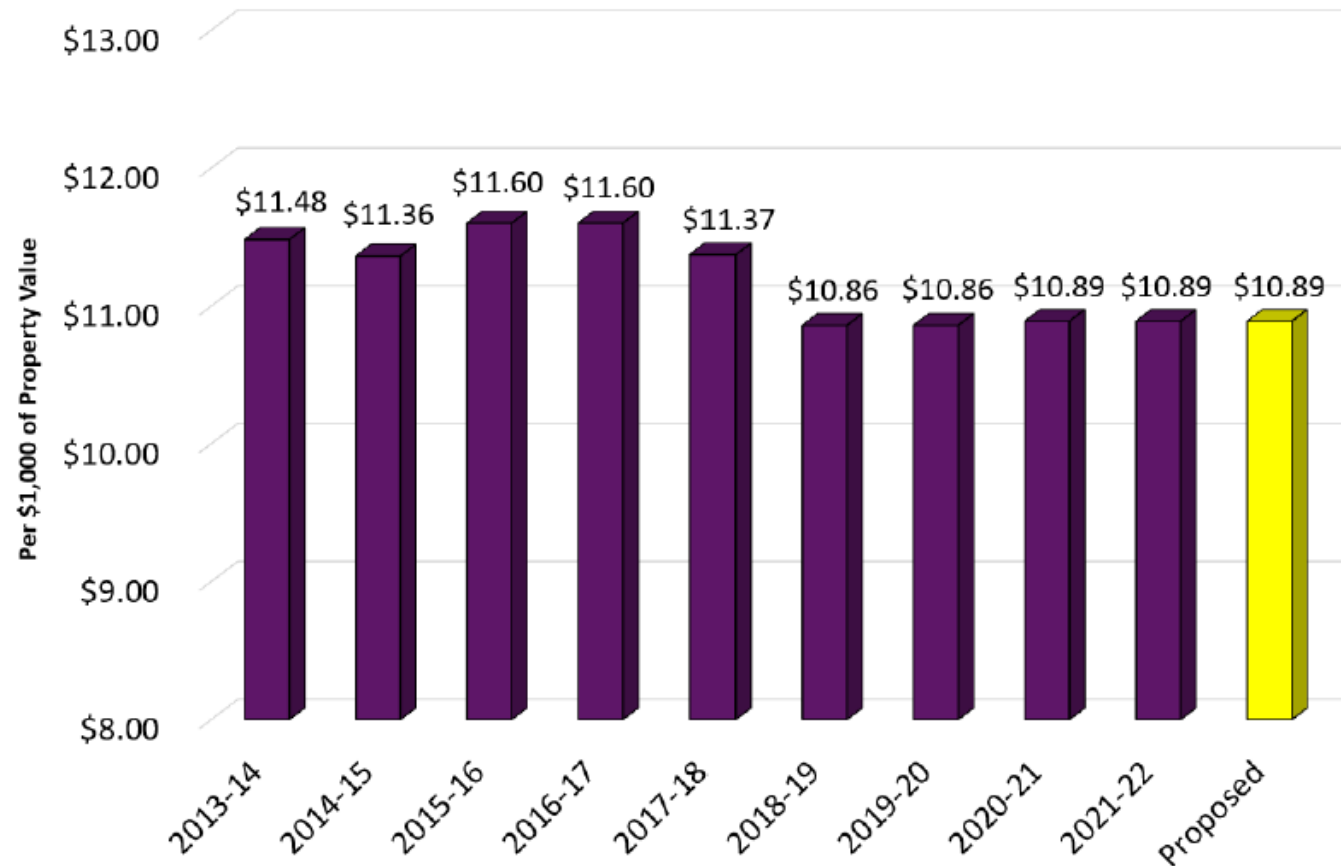
The Waunakee Community School District continues to be in a strong financial position. The School Board has maintained a consistent property tax rate over time. This practice has allowed us to pay debt early to reduce interest costs. This has also positioned the District well for future investments.

Based on the pathways described earlier in this survey, the District would ask voters to approve both an operational referendum and a capital referendum. The specific projects to operate and increase enrollment capacity will be determined based on the results of this survey. The School Board's goal would be to finalize a plan that maintains the current property tax mill rate.

Funding Support

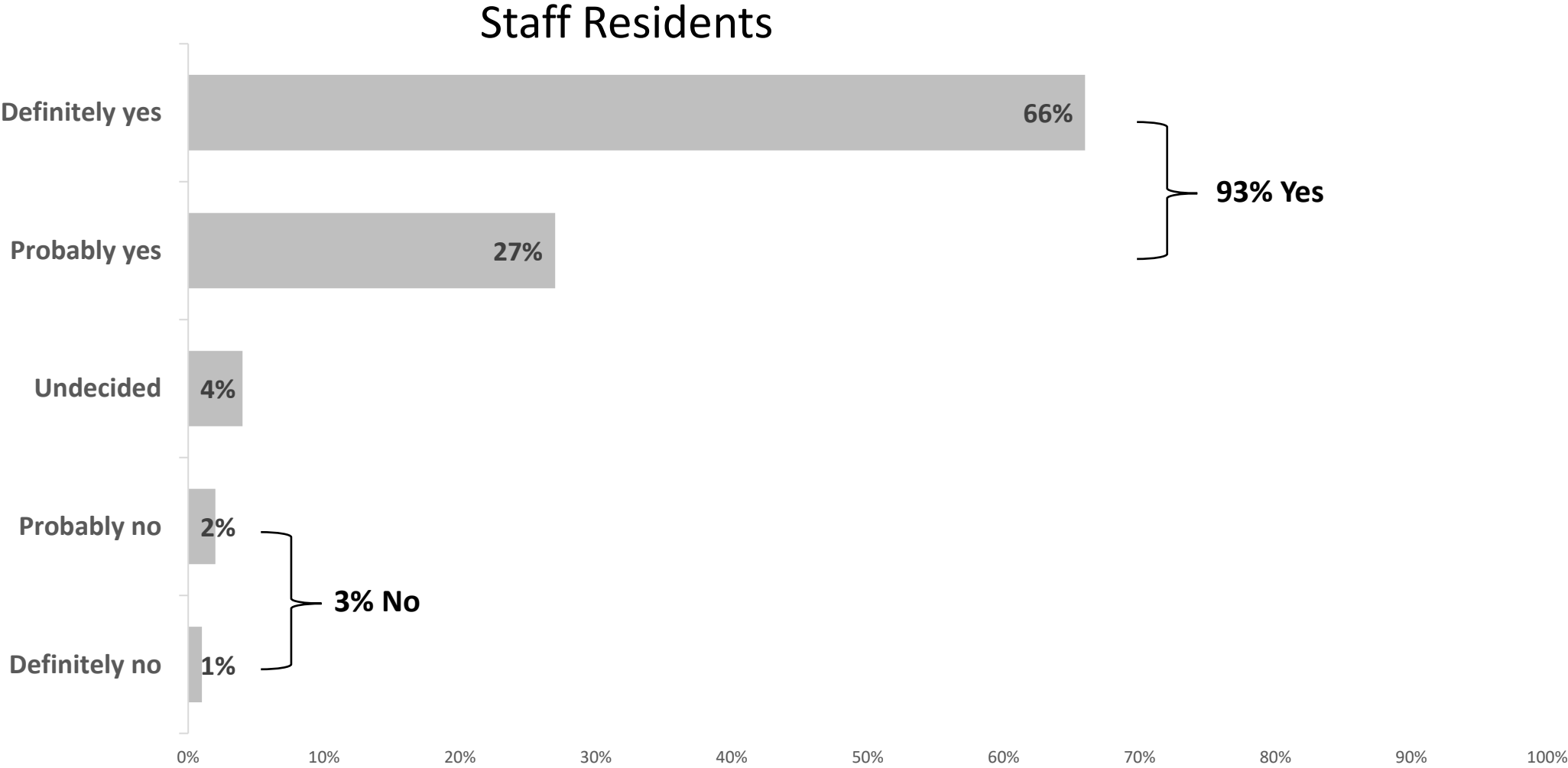


Waunakee Community School District
Projected Tax Mill Rate

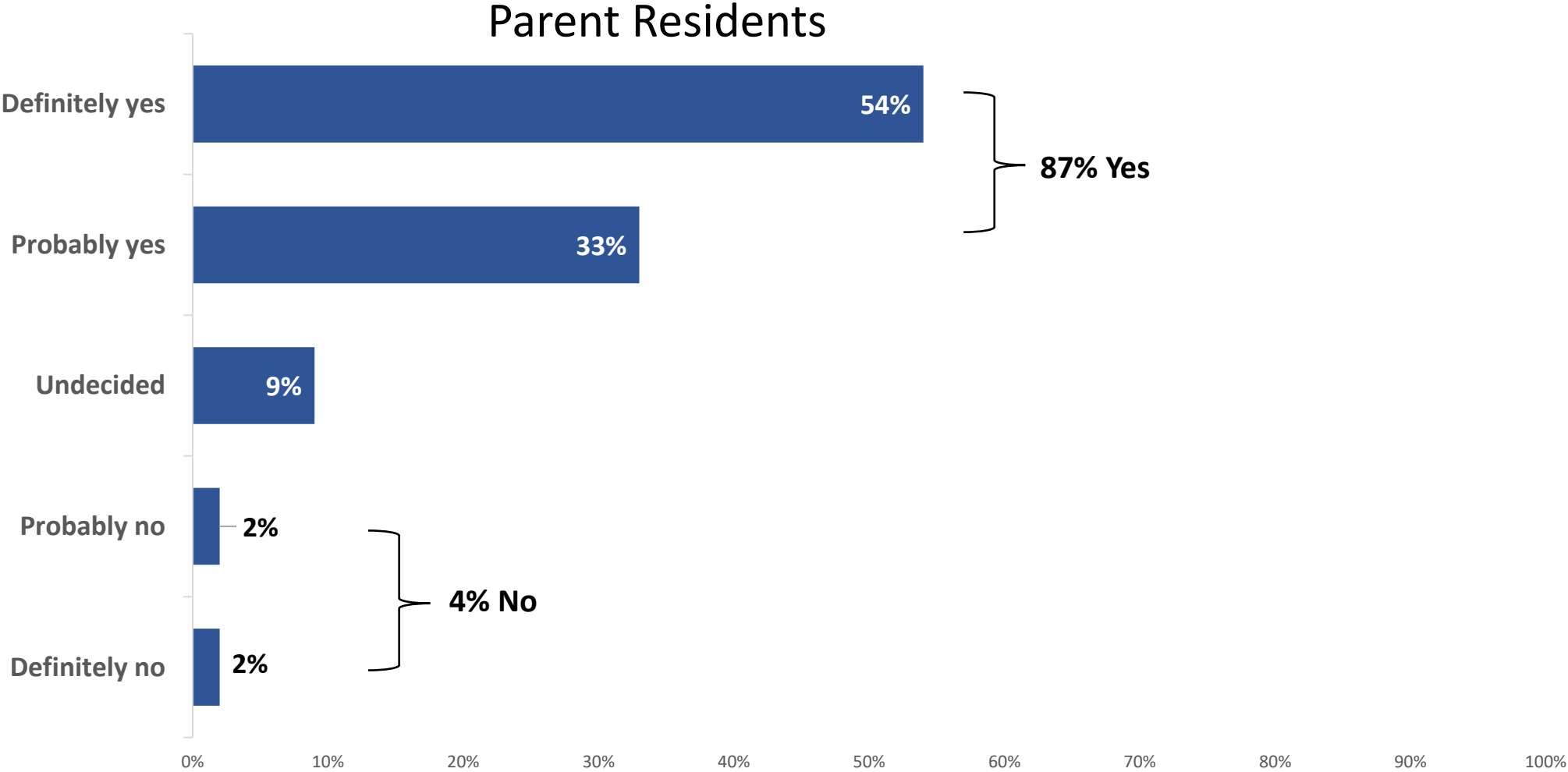


The School Board could propose a plan funded by operational and capital referendums that would not increase the mill rate over the current level.

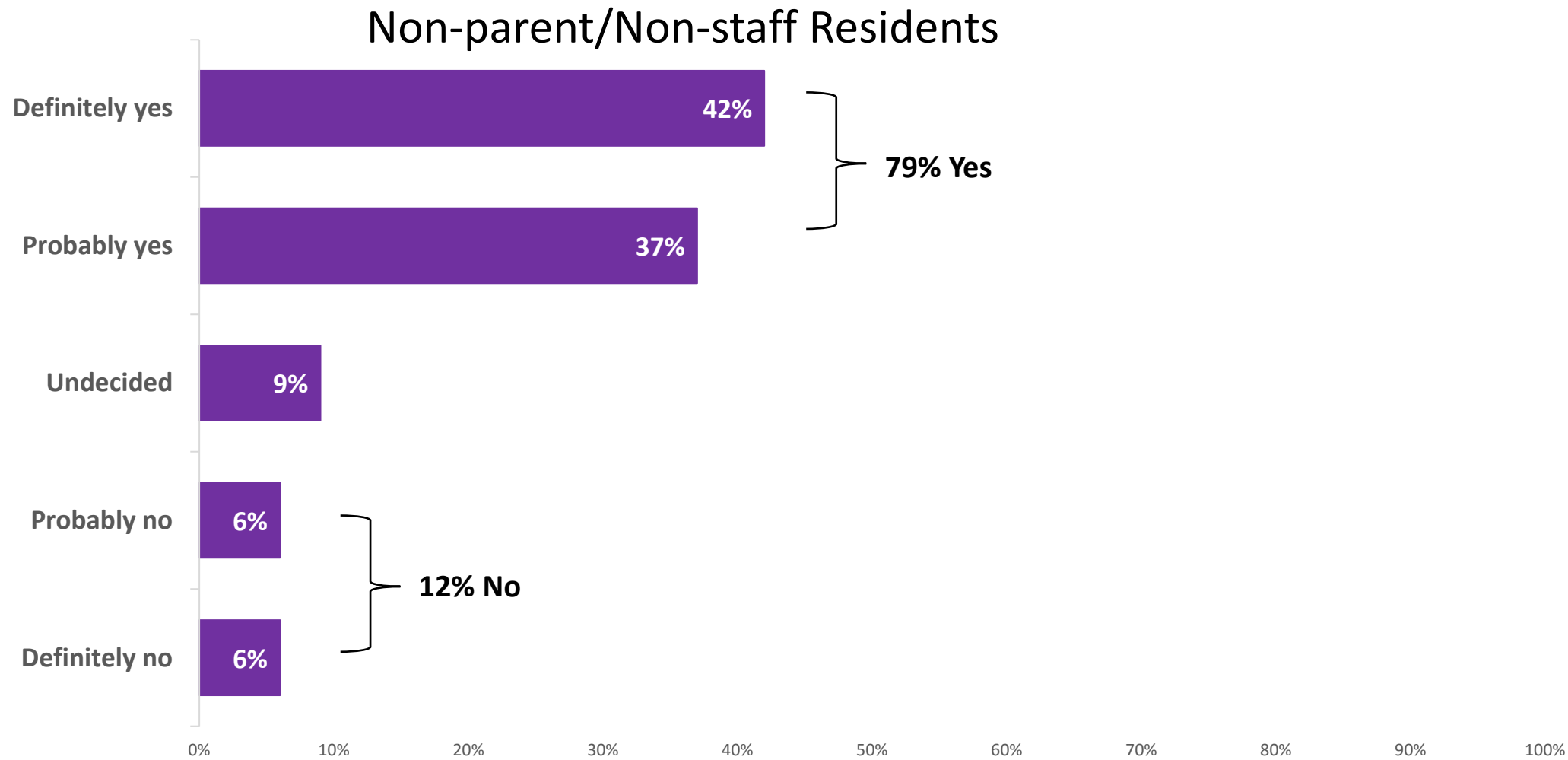
Funding Support: Assuming the projects included were acceptable to you, would you support both operational and capital (building) referendums that would keep the property tax mill rate at the current level (\$10.89)?



Funding Support: Assuming the projects included were acceptable to you, would you support both operational and capital (building) referendums that would keep the property tax mill rate at the current level (\$10.89)?



Funding Support: Assuming the projects included were acceptable to you, would you support both operational and capital (building) referendums that would keep the property tax mill rate at the current level (\$10.89)?



What did we learn?



A majority of all subgroups (80% of staff, 70% of parents 70%, 66% of non-parent/non-staff) support building the new middle school on the Heritage Elementary School site.

A majority of all subgroups support pursuing an operational referendum for:

- ✓ Staff salaries
- ✓ Operating new space
- ✓ Maintaining current programs and services

A majority of all subgroups support pursuing both an operational and capital (building) referendum, if the plan would keep the property tax mill rate at the current level (\$10.89).



Questions or Comments?



Thank you!