



# Whitefish Bay

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

*An Exceptional Place to Learn*

### **Facilities Advisory Committee**

### **School Finance 101**

March 6, 2025

Cumberland Elementary School

[Agenda](#)



# Focus Plan



# FOCUS PLAN

## VISION

An Exceptional Place to Learn

## MISSION

The Whitefish Bay School District, in partnership with families and community, is student-centered with a tradition of educational excellence that:

- Supports the individual needs of the whole child in a safe, caring, and inclusive learning environment;
- Empowers students with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and character necessary to thrive in an ever-changing, global society so that students are life, career, and college ready;
- Honors the diversity of all students and the pursuit of educational equity\*.

## VALUES

### Educational Equity and Excellence:

We maintain high expectations for personal growth and achievement.

### Tradition and Innovation:

We acknowledge the past and commit to continuous improvement.

### Safety and Well-being:

We strive for a safe and welcoming environment that fosters individual and collective welfare.

### Individual and Community:

We develop the talents and skills of individual learners and collaborative teams.

### Stewardship and Integrity:

We serve through principled and strategic decision-making and allocation of resources.

## GOALS

An Exceptional Place to...

### Learn:

Every student will continuously grow to meet or exceed academic learning targets and social emotional competencies.

### Work:

Every staff member will experience an environment where they are valued, developed, and supported.

### Engage:

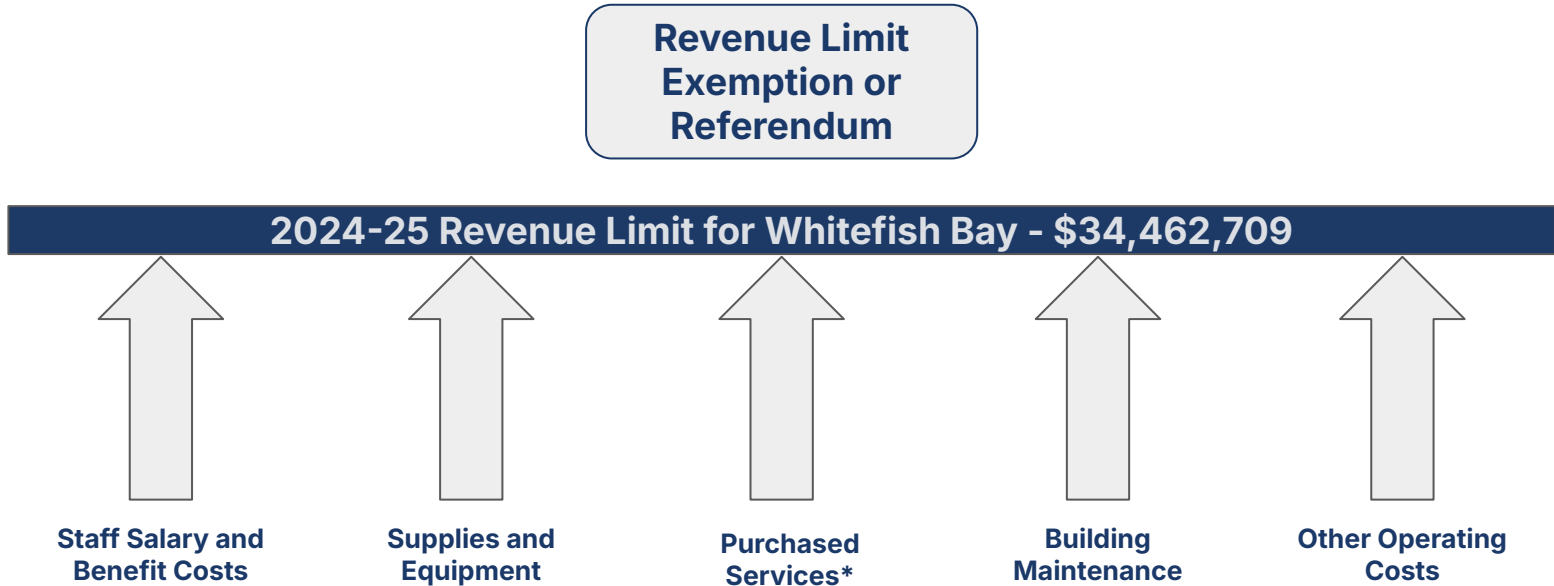
The community will be provided with opportunities to be involved in activities that promote collective growth, learning, and well-being.

\*Educational Equity™ means that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, across race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income™ (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2023).



# Revenue Limit

What is it and how does it impact the budget?



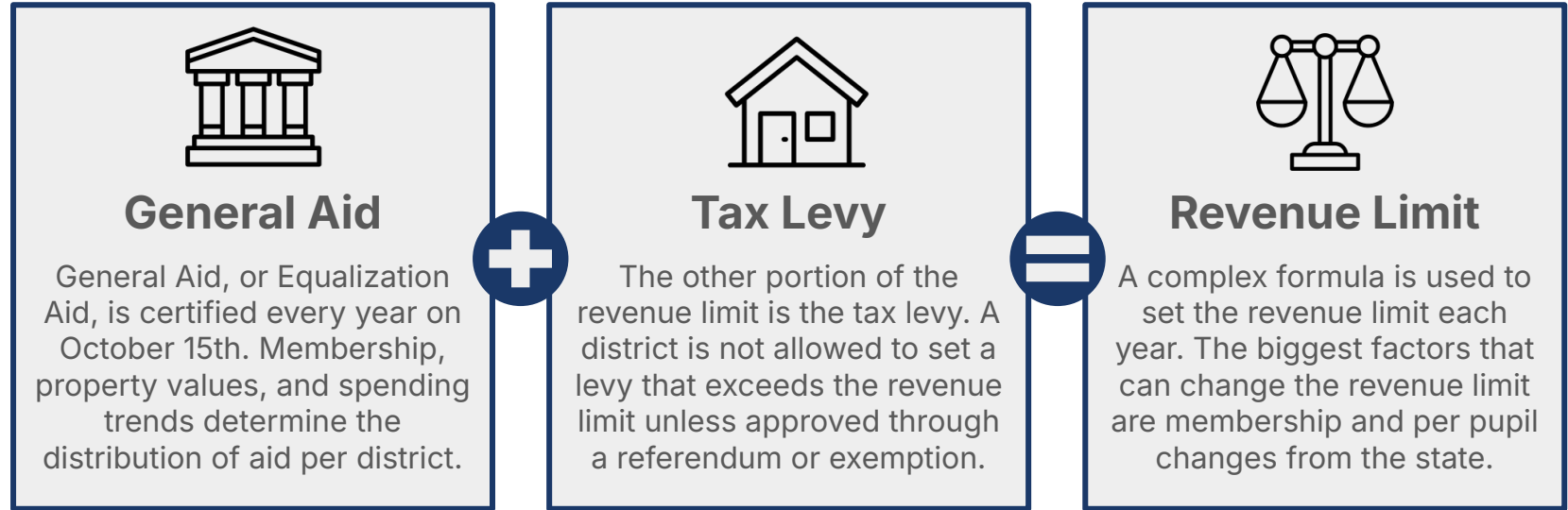
Established in 1993, revenue limits set a maximum amount of revenue a public school district could raise through state general aid and property taxes. The maximum limit for a district can change based on membership and per pupil increases from the state. A district may only exceed the revenue limit through an approved exemption or by referendum.

\*Some examples of costs for Purchased Services include utilities, software, and contracted services through a vendor.  
Source: Department of Public Instruction



# Revenue Limit Formula

What are the major pieces of the revenue limit?



The two primary sources of revenue within the revenue limit are state general aid and the the tax levy. If funding increases or decreases in one of these revenue sources, there is an inverse relationship that will result in the other source increasing or decreasing as well assuming the revenue limit remains the same. For example, if state aid increases, this will more than likely lead to a decrease in the tax levy, but not necessarily more funds for a school district since the revenue limit would remain the same.



# Revenue Limit History

How has the revenue limit changed over time?



The revenue limit will increase based on state funding allocations and membership. In 2021-22 and 2022-23, the state biennial budget did not include a per pupil increase for public schools resulting in the revenue limit remaining flat in 2021-22 and then decreasing in 2022-23.

Source: Department of Public Instruction



# State Funding

How is funding allocated?

**Academic Performance  
≠  
State Funding**



## State Per Pupil Increases

The revenue limit can change based on per pupil increases from the state. These per pupil increases are typically part of the state biennial budget.



## Membership

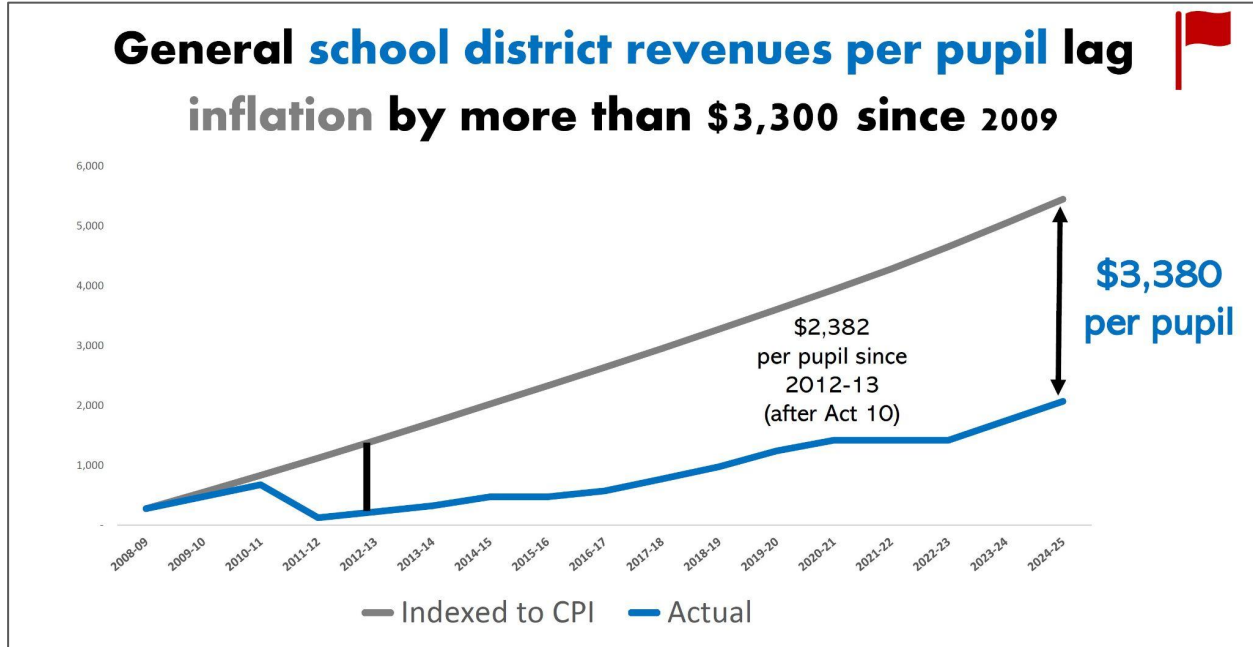
Membership counts occur twice per year in September and January. Membership counts are based on resident students whether they attend the district or not.

State funding is primarily driven by membership and per pupil increases from the state. Factors such as academic performance and local demographics do not impact the total revenue limit for a school district. Local property wealth and spending trends can increase or decrease the amount of state general aid a district can receive, but those amounts would be balanced out by the local property tax within the revenue limit.



# State Funding History

What is the recent history of state funding for public education?



Wisconsin public schools have not received an inflationary increase from the state since 2008-09 and received no per pupil increases in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years resulting in budget deficits in many districts across the state. Even with limited funding, costs continue to rise for school districts resulting in many schools needing to make significant cuts into their educational programs or having to pursue an operational referendum.



# Inflation

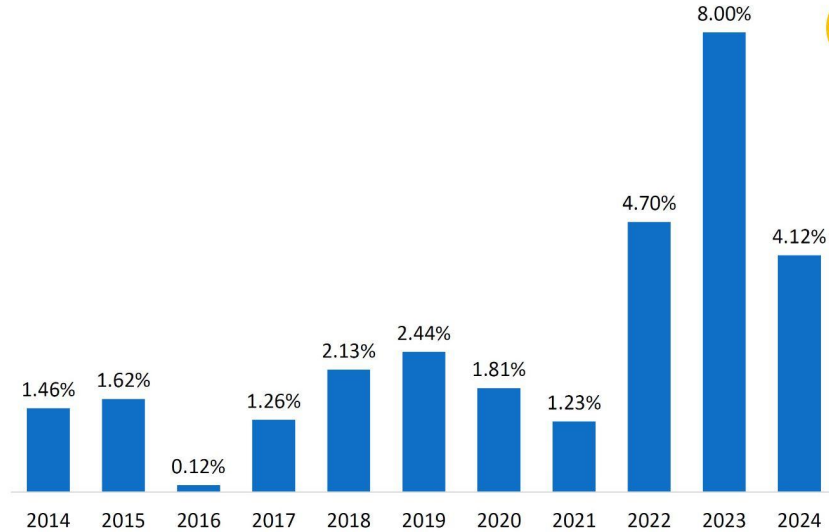
## How does inflation impact the budget?

### Inflation

CPI down from dramatic spike in 2023 but still high, historically

Revenue limit only increased by 2.7% in 2023-24 – forces hard choices

CPI-U for July 1 collective bargaining agreements (ceiling for base wage increases)



Rising inflation has put even more pressure on school districts as they have not received enough state funding to keep up with cost increases in compensation, employee benefits, utilities, and other purchased services. As a result, districts must reduce costs elsewhere in their budget that may have an impact on instruction or employee retention.

\*CPI-U is the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers and is used by the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) to set the bargaining rates for the upcoming fiscal year. Source: Department of Revenue/WERC CPI-U Rates; Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO)

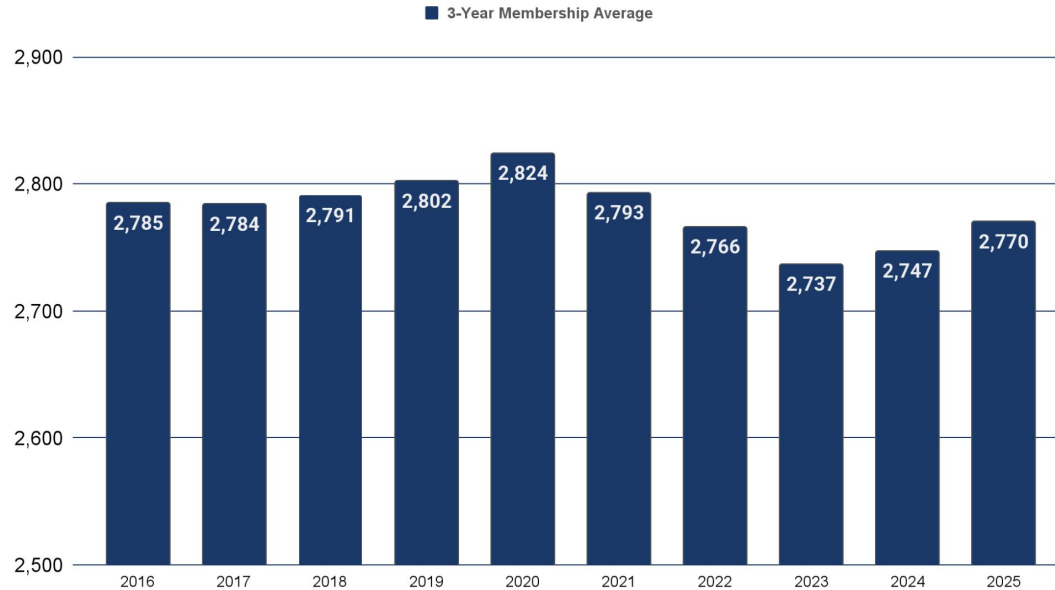




# Membership

## What is membership and how has it changed over time?

Membership



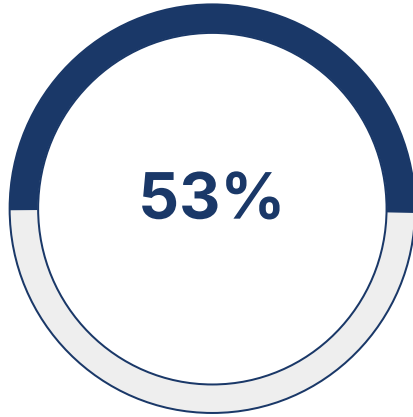
Pupil membership has a significant impact on school funding in Wisconsin. Membership is different than enrollment with enrollment being the actual number of students in a school district and membership being the number of resident students within a district whether they attend their resident district or not. Programs such as open enrollment\* may lead to membership and enrollment being different amounts.

\* Open enrollment is a program where students can attend another school district outside of their resident district. Resident districts must transfer an amount per student to the non-resident district.  
Source: Department of Public Instruction



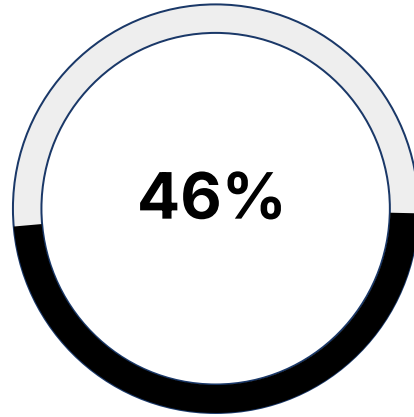
# General Fund Revenue by Source

What is the source of funding?



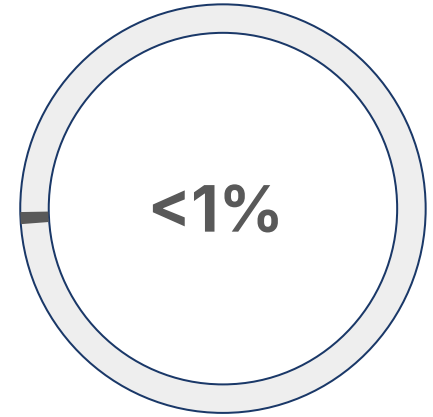
## Local Sources

Local property tax levy, school fees, facility use rentals



## State Sources

General Aid, various categorical aid



## All Other

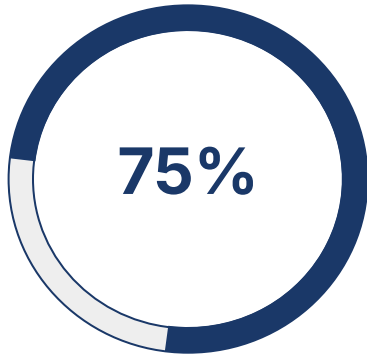
Federal grants, miscellaneous revenue

Revenue for public school districts in Wisconsin comes primarily from local and state sources. For the Whitefish Bay School District, revenue from local sources, such as the tax levy, is slightly higher than revenue from state sources, such as General Aid and categorical aid. Federal grants and other miscellaneous revenue make up the remaining amount of total revenue.



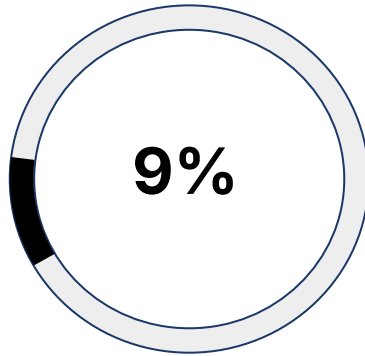
# General Fund Expenditures by Object

How is funding spent?



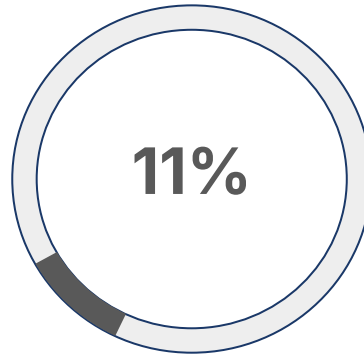
## Salary and Benefits

Compensation for employees, employee benefits



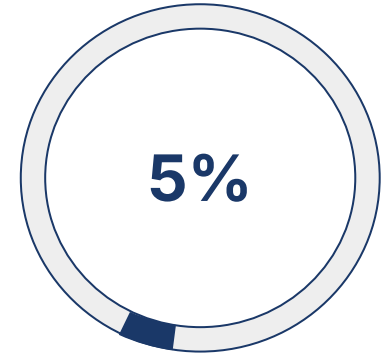
## Purchased Services

Leases, utilities, technology and maintenance services



## Transfers

Transfers to other funds (Special Education/Fund 27)



## All Other

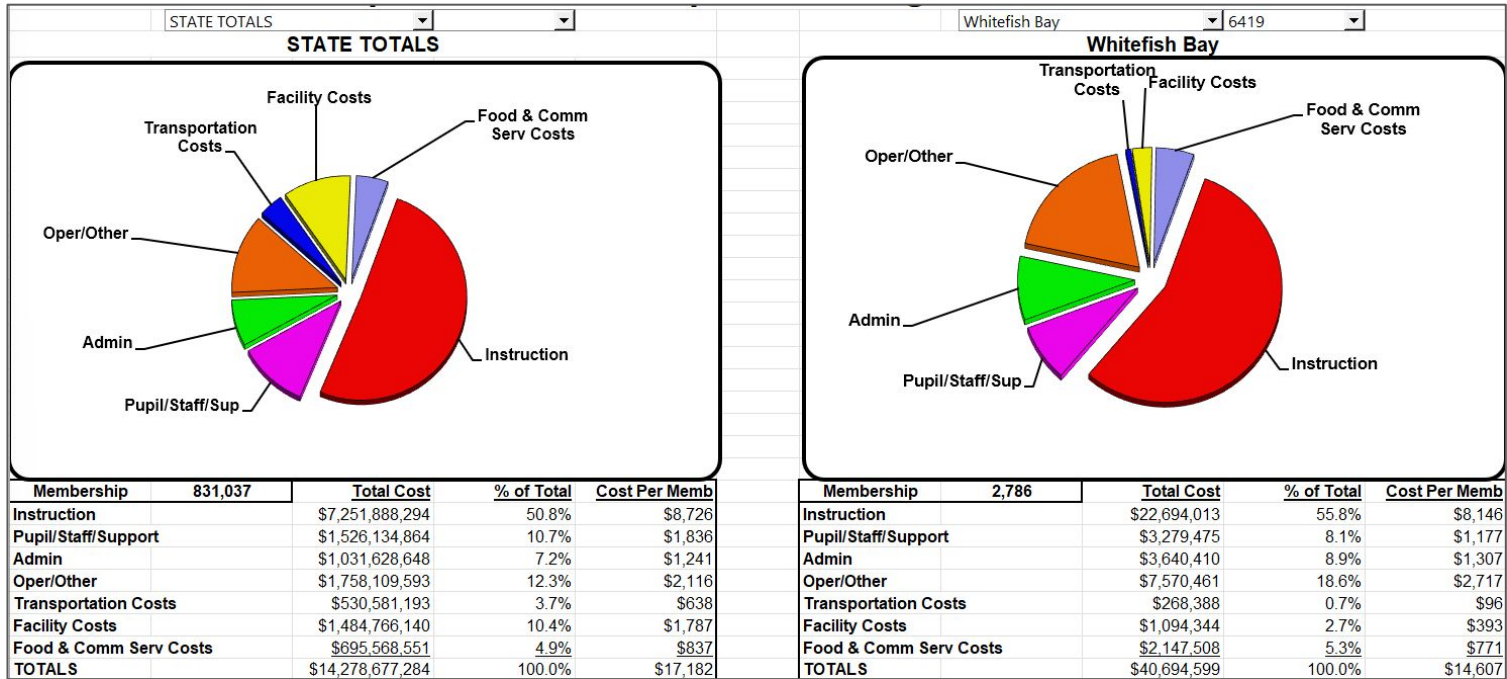
General supplies, capital equipment, liability insurance

In most school districts, salaries and benefits make up the majority of expenditures. In the Whitefish Bay School District, salaries and benefits represent roughly three-quarters of all the expenses in the General Fund. When the Fund 27 transfer is included, which is mostly for employee salary and benefit expenses in special education, that percentage exceeds 85%.



# Comparative Cost

How do spending trends compare with the state average?



Whitefish Bay School District is one of the lowest spending districts in the state per student. The percentage spent on instruction relative to the rest of the budget is higher compared to the state average percentage resulting in more resources going directly to educational programs.

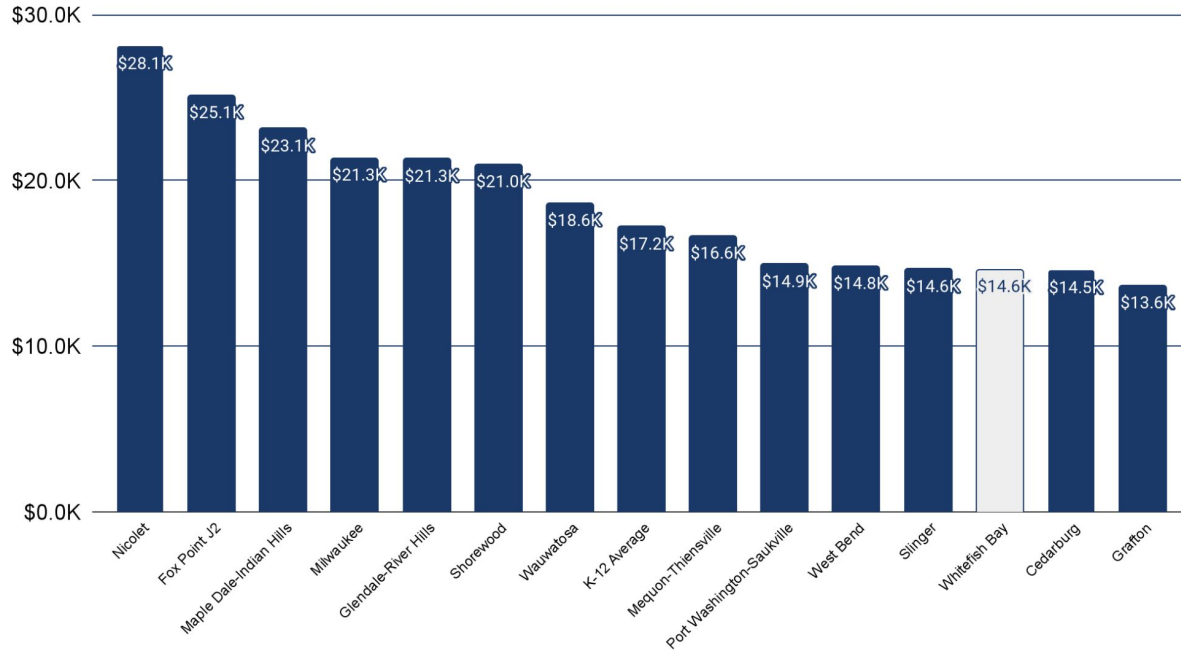
Source: Department of Public Instruction



# Comparative Cost Comparables

## How do spending trends compare to local school districts?

2022-23 Comparative Cost per Member



Compared to area school districts, Whitefish Bay is one of the lowest spending schools per student (member). Spending variances between schools can depend on a number of factors including number of staff, employee compensation and benefits, availability of programs such as food service and transportation, and maintenance costs.

Source: Department of Public Instruction

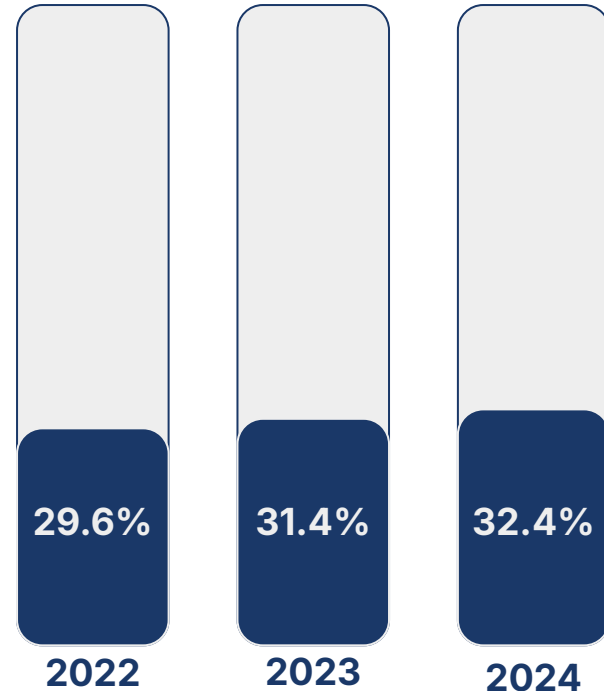


# Special Education Funding

How much funding do districts receive for special education?

- Public school districts in Wisconsin only receive about 30% in funding for special education costs that are typically required expenses included in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- School districts must also comply with Maintenance of Effort (MOE) as part of the federal program that requires districts to maintain a constant level of funding for special education from year-to-year. In other words, school districts are limited in what costs they can reduce in special education in order to balance the budget.
- The special education fund must balance each year so school districts must transfer from their operational budget into the special education budget to cover the shortfall in funding. **In 2023-24, the Whitefish Bay School District had to transfer \$3.2 million from the operating budget to the special education budget in order to balance.**

## Special Education Aid Reimbursement Rate



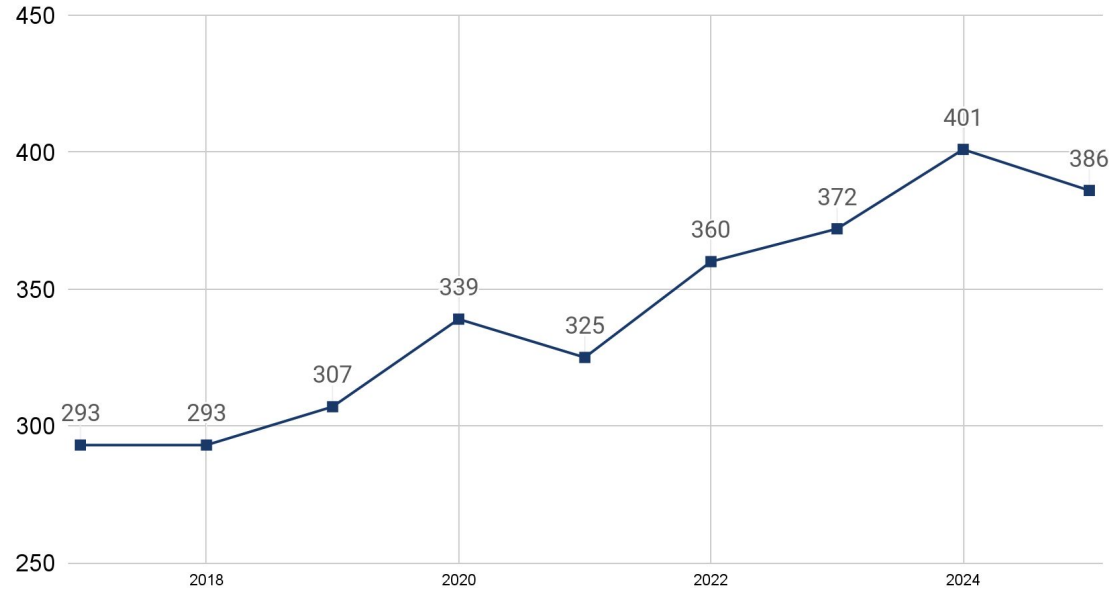
Source: Department of Public Instruction



# Special Education Membership

How has special education membership changed over time?

October 1 Special Education Student Count



The number of special education students has increased significantly over recent years, which has been a trend statewide in public schools. As the number of special education students increases, so do the costs for supporting these students and ensuring that they have the resources they need to be successful.

Source: Department of Public Instruction



# Long-Term Capital Projects

How are capital projects funded?

**10-Year Capital  
Project Plan =  
\$28 million**

## Project Examples Included in the 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan

Middle School window replacement	\$250,000
Masonry and tuckpointing at the High School	\$200,000
Replace a section of the roof at Cumberland Elementary	\$365,200
Replace steam boilers at the High School	\$1,252,200
High School Fieldhouse floor replacement	\$250,000
Replace remaining pneumatics w/ DDC at the High School	\$1,981,700
Replace classroom unit ventilators at the Middle School	\$1,941,000

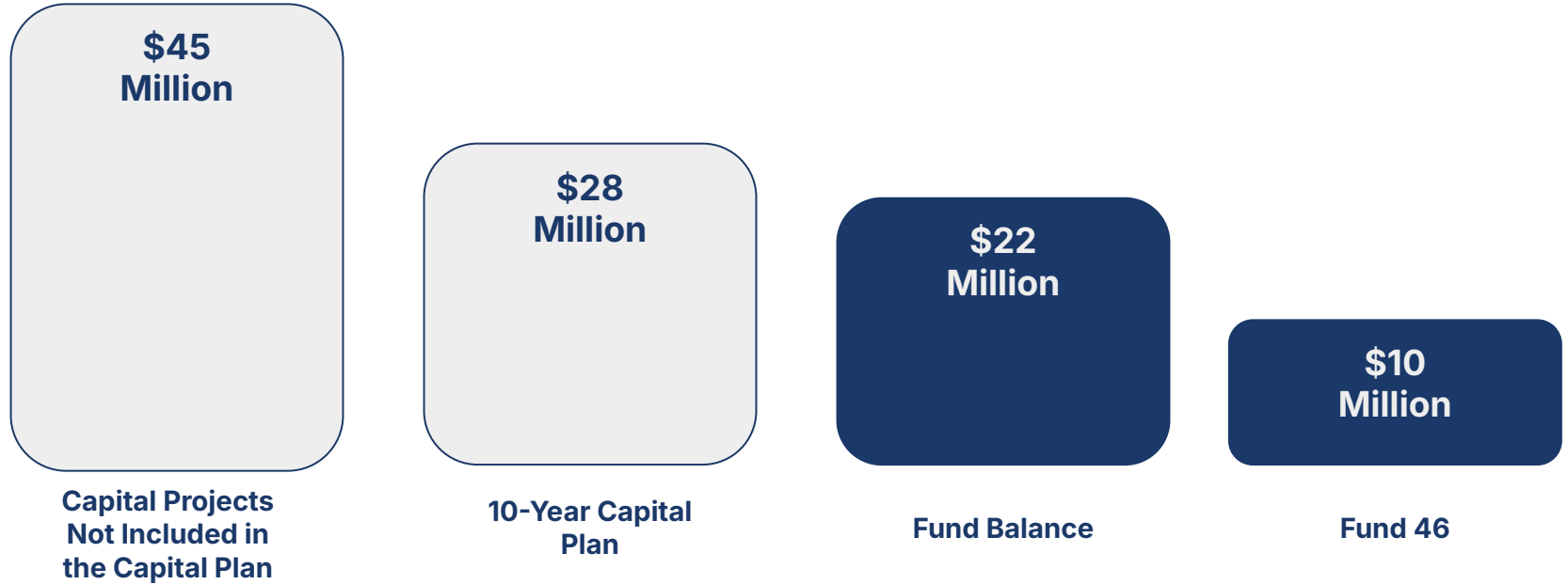
The Whitefish Bay School District currently has over \$28 million in capital projects planned over the next ten years. These projects currently do not have a dedicated source of funding from year-to-year and, as a result, the District must rely on fund balance and savings from prior years to pay for these projects each year. These projects are primarily for maintenance and the replacement of equipment/furnishings.





# Long-Term Capital Projects and Fund Balance

What is fund balance and how is it used for capital projects?

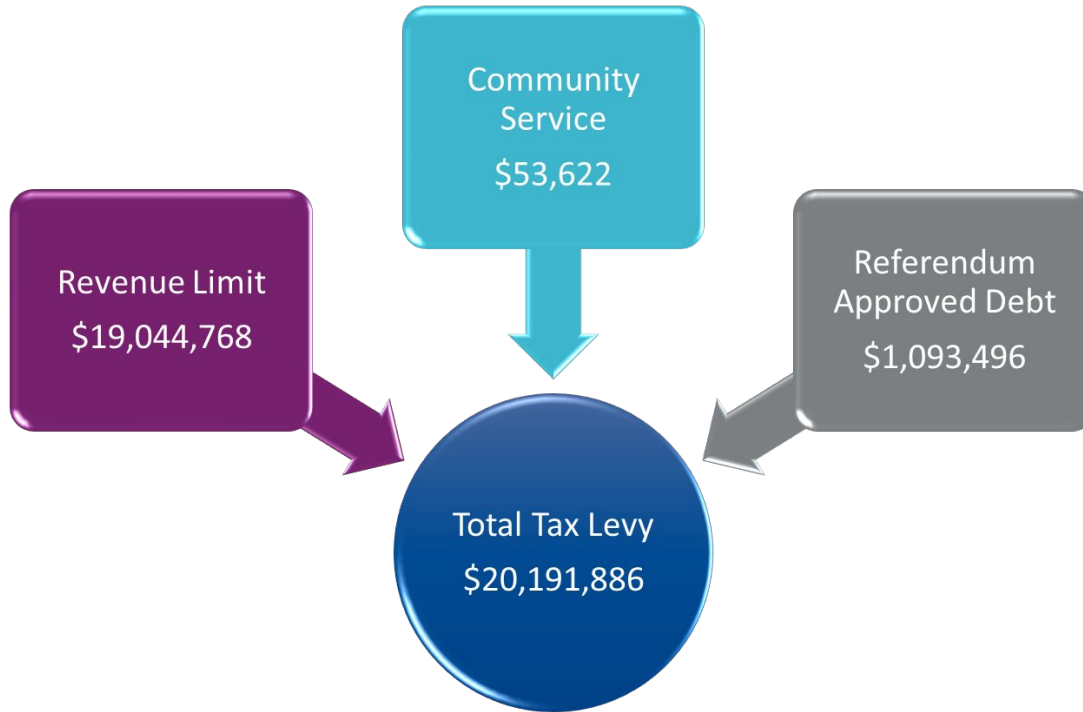


The Whitefish Bay School District has over \$22 million in the fund balance in the General Fund and over \$10 million in Fund 46, which is the Long-Term Capital Improvement Trust Fund. Some of these funds could be used to help offset the costs included in the 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan, but the purpose of these funds is primarily to manage cash flow and plan for unexpected emergencies. In addition, the District has over \$45 million in capital projects not included in the 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan.



# Tax Levy

What is included in the tax levy?

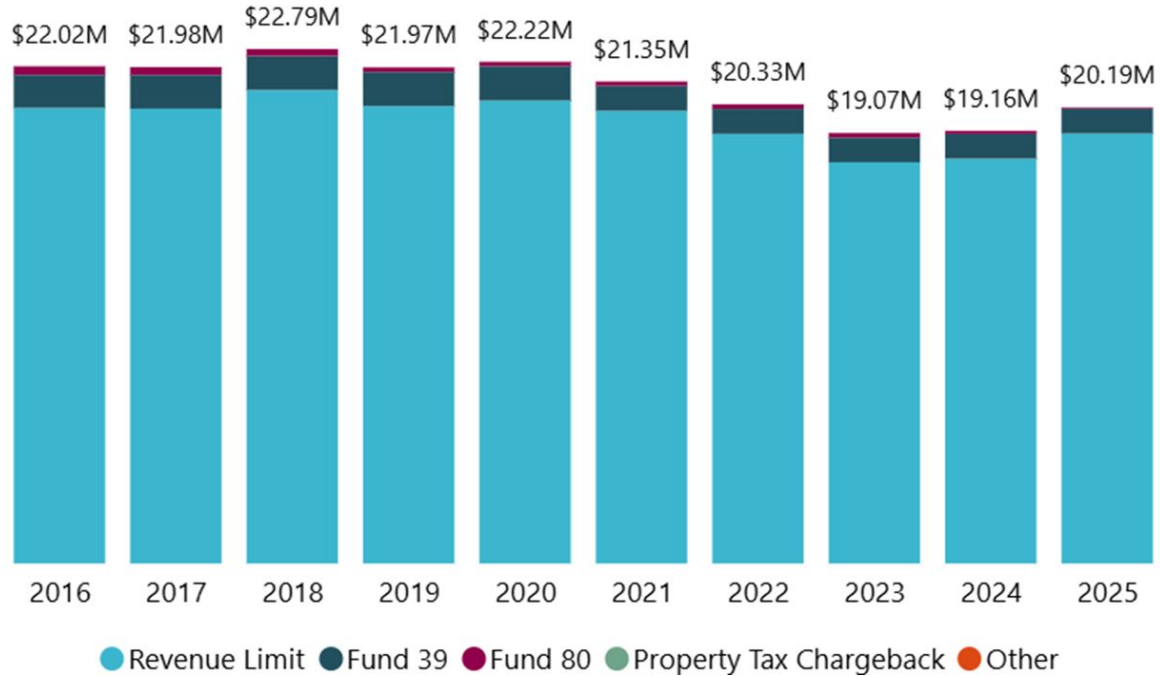


The largest portion of the tax levy comes from the revenue limit. The other pieces of the tax levy include the levy for the Community Service Fund, which provides programs for the community as a whole, and the levy for referendum approved debt, which is an exemption beyond the revenue limit.



# Tax Levy History

How has the tax levy changed over the years?



The overall tax levy for the Whitefish Bay School District has remained relatively flat over the last ten years and is roughly 11% lower than it was in 2018. Factors such as enrollment, state funding allocations, and the debt schedule can have an impact on the total levy from year-to-year.

Source: Department of Public Instruction; Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated



# Tax Levy Rate

## What is the tax levy rate and how is it calculated?

Total Levy / Total Property Value per Thousand = **Tax Levy Rate or Mill Rate**

2024-25 Tax Levy Rate Calculation:

- \$20,191,886 (total tax levy) / \$3,410,098,141 (local property value) \* 1,000 = **\$5.92 Tax Levy Rate**
- \$5.92 Tax Levy Rate = \$592 in property taxes on a \$100,000 home (school portion only!)
- Actual school tax levy amount may be lower due to the School Levy Tax Credit



The Tax Levy Rate, or Mill Rate, is used to provide an estimate to homeowners about how much they can expect to pay in local property taxes based on the value of their home. The Tax Levy Rate is an average and can vary from home to home. Beyond providing a way to estimate/calculate the school levy tax amount for the upcoming year, the Tax Levy Rate can also be used to track trends over time as property values increase or decrease.

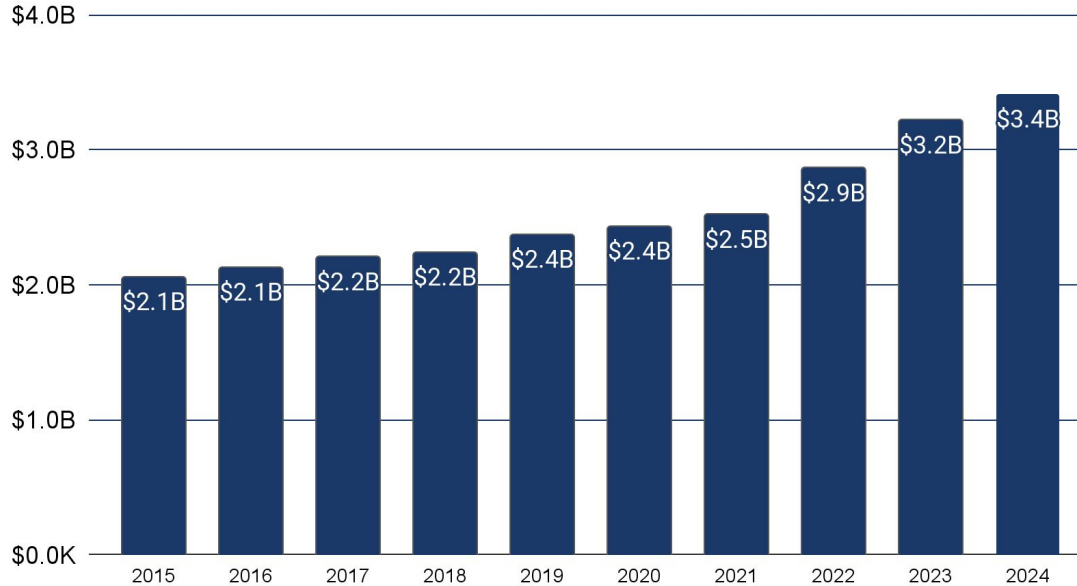
Source: Department of Public Instruction; Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated



# Local Property Values

How have property values changed over time?

Equalized Value History



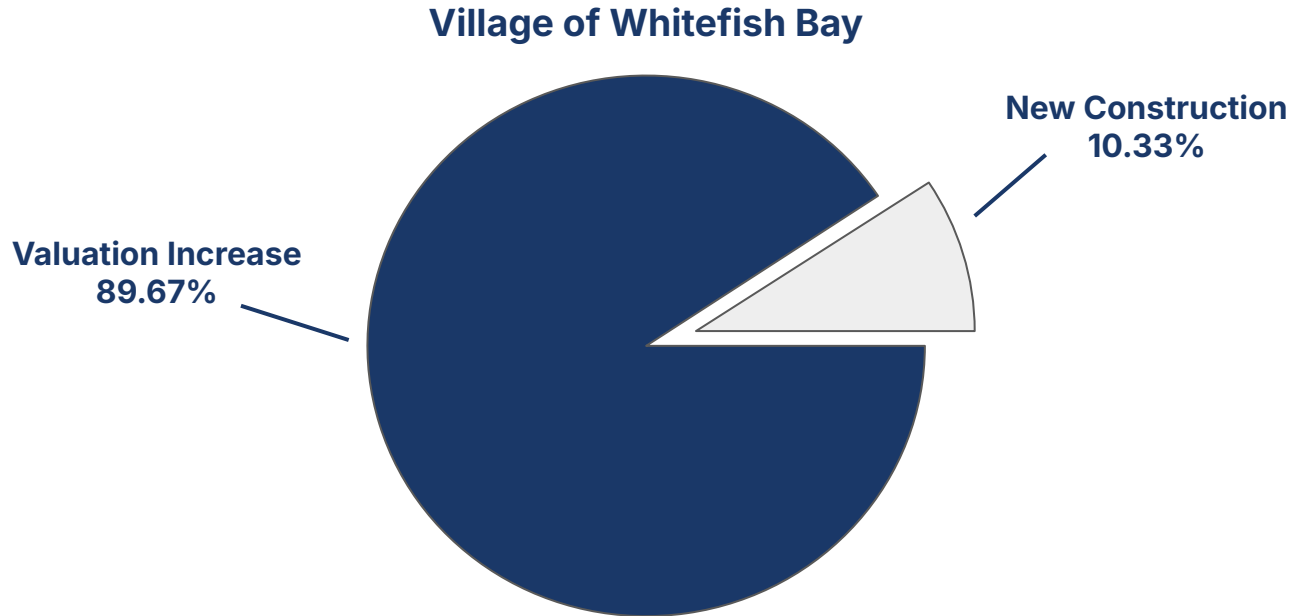
Property values for the Whitefish Bay School District have increased by over 65% over the last ten years. Increasing property values leads to a larger tax base for a school district to administer the tax levy each year, which usually results in a decrease in the tax levy rate.

Source: Department of Revenue



# Local Property Values

What are the sources of property value increases?



When property values increase, the two main sources of that increase are from reassessments on existing property and new construction. If the tax levy rate remains the same, a property owner could pay more in taxes if their valuation increased from last year. However, this could be offset by new construction, which grows the tax base and could potentially increase the number of taxpayers in the community.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue 2024 Statement of Changes in Equalized Values by Class and Item



# Tax Levy Rate

## How is the tax levy rate calculated on a tax bill?

Assessed Value Land	Ass'd Value Improvements	Total Assessed Value	Ave. Assmt. Ratio	Est. Fair Mkt. Land	Est. Fair Mkt. Improvements	Total Est. Fair Mkt.	
77,800	218,900	296,700	0.7426	104,800	294,800	399,600	<input type="checkbox"/> star in this box means unpaid prior year taxes
		<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>				
		Est. State Aids	Est. State Aids	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	% Tax	
		Allocated Tax Dist.	Allocated Tax Dist.	Net Tax	Net Tax	Change	
MILWAUKEE COUNTY		2,004,058	2,436,806	1,757.60	1,770.01	0.7%	
VILLAGE OF WHITEFISH BAY		855,299	1,182,266	1,570.01	1,611.27	2.6%	
WHITEFISH BAY SCHOOL DIST		18,569,177	18,993,159	1,913.63	1,836.76	-4.0%	
MATC		2,355,777	2,346,357	320.56	334.29	4.3%	
MMSD				485.57	513.09	5.7%	
SALES TAX CREDIT				-388.54	-401.32	18.7%	
<b>Total</b>		23,784,311	24,958,588	5,658.83	5,604.10	-1.0%	
		<b>First Dollar Credit</b>		56.61	53.61	-5.3%	
		<b>Lottery &amp; Gaming Credit</b>		185.80	199.55	7.4%	
		<b>Net Property Tax</b>		5,416.42	5,350.94	-1.2%	
School taxes reduced by school levy tax credit	\$ 543.15	<b>IMPORTANT:</b> Be sure this description covers your property. This description is for property tax bill only and may not be a full legal description.		Net Assessed Value Rate (Does NOT reflect credits)			
				0.018888116			
							<b>TOTAL DUE FOR FULL PAYMENT</b>
							<b>PAY BY January 31, 2024</b>
							<b>\$ 5,350.94</b>
							<b>Warning:</b> If not paid by due dates, installment option is lost and total tax is delinquent subject to interest and, if applicable, penalty.
							<b>Failure to pay on time. See reverse.</b>

Fair Market Value <b>A</b>	✖	Tax Levy Rate	=	School Levy Credit <b>B</b>	-	Individuals' School Levy <b>C</b>
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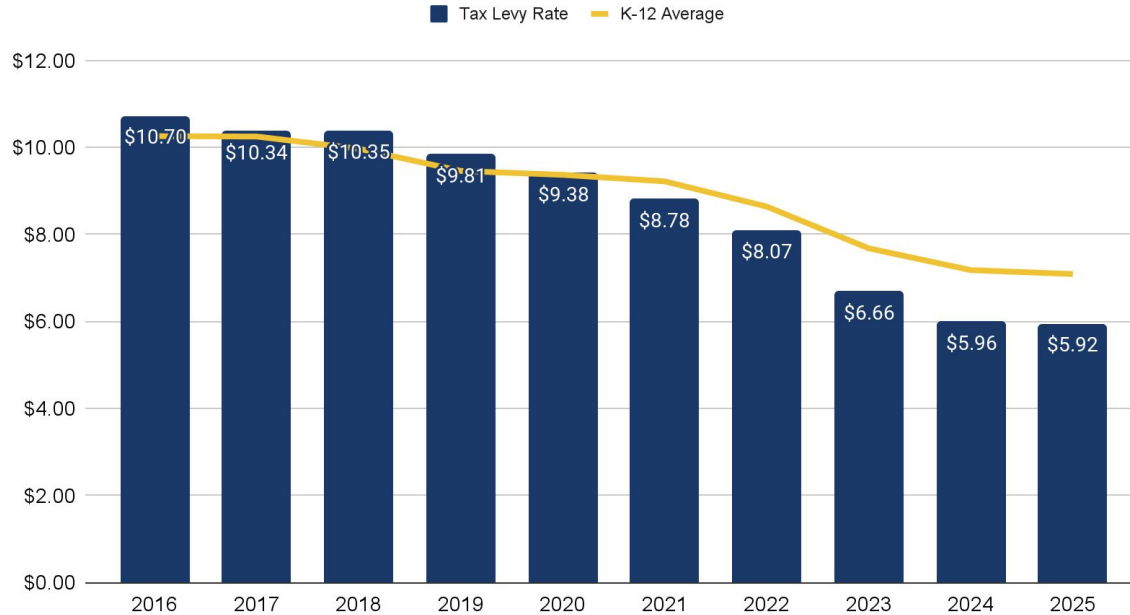
The tax levy rate for 2023-24 was \$5.96 for every \$1,000 of property value. Therefore, the calculation for this example would be \$399,600 (fair market value) multiplied by .00595573 (tax levy rate divided by 1,000) minus \$543.15 (school levy credit).



# Tax Levy Rate History

How has the tax rate changed over the years?

Tax Levy Rate History



The tax levy rate for the Whitefish Bay School District has decreased by over 44% in the last ten years and has stayed below the state average in each of the last five years.

Source: Department of Public Instruction

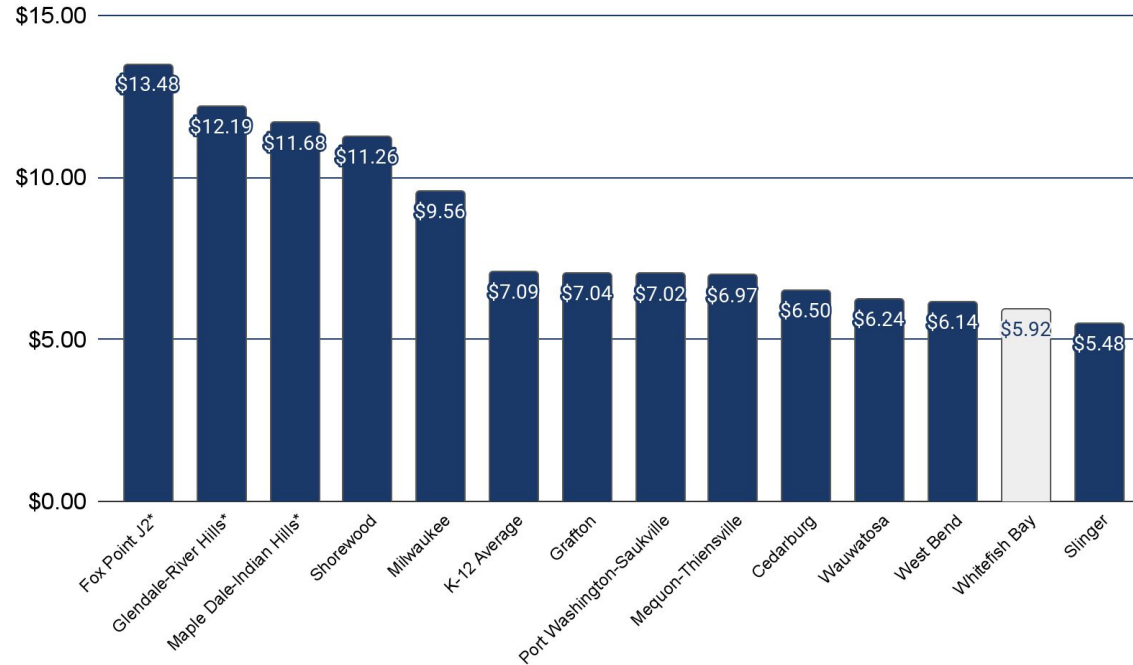




# Tax Levy Rate Comparables

How does the tax rate compare to other districts in the area?

## Tax Levy Rate Comparables



The Whitefish Bay School District has one of the lowest tax levy rates in the area and is below the K-12 average in Wisconsin.

\*Combined Grade School plus Nicolet UHS (\$4.61 = \$461/\$100,000)  
Source: Department of Public Instruction



# Outstanding Debt

What are the current balances for outstanding debt?

		Fund 39				Fund 39					
		Issue:	1			Issue:	2				
		Amount:	\$1,670,000			Amount:	\$10,170,000				
		Type:	General Obligation Refunding Bonds (CR)			Type:	State Trust Fund Loan (QSCB - Direct Pay)			LESS:	
										QSCB	
<i>PAYMENT PERIOD</i>		PRINCIPAL (4/1)	RATE	INTEREST (4/1 & 10/1)	TOTAL	PRINCIPAL (3/15)	RATE	INTEREST (3/15)	TOTAL	SUBSIDY	TOTAL
Jan-June 2025		\$110,000	2.750%	\$9,322	\$119,322	\$956,000	5.250%	\$150,728	\$1,106,728	(\$142,136)	
July-Dec 2025				\$7,809	\$7,809						\$1,091,723
Jan-June 2026		\$110,000	2.875%	\$7,809	\$117,809	\$956,000	5.250%	\$100,538	\$1,056,538	(\$94,807)	
July-Dec 2026				\$6,228	\$6,228						\$1,085,768
Jan-June 2027		\$115,000	2.875%	\$6,228	\$121,228	\$959,000	5.250%	\$50,348	\$1,009,348	(\$47,478)	
July-Dec 2027				\$4,575	\$4,575						\$1,087,673
Jan-June 2028		\$120,000	3.000%	\$4,575	\$124,575						
July-Dec 2028				\$2,775	\$2,775						\$127,350
Jan-June 2029		\$125,000	3.000%	\$2,775	\$127,775						
July-Dec 2029				\$900	\$900						\$128,675
Jan-June 2030		\$60,000	3.000%	\$900	\$60,900						
July-Dec 2030											\$60,900
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$640,000</b>		<b>\$53,897</b>	<b>\$693,897</b>	<b>\$2,871,000</b>		<b>\$301,613</b>	<b>\$3,172,613</b>	<b>(\$284,421)</b>	<b>\$3,582,089</b>

Prior to the Spring 2025 debt payments, the Whitefish Bay School District had over \$3.5 million remaining in outstanding principal owed on debt obligations from the 2009 referendum. Debt balances and payments are recorded in Fund 39, which is specifically used for referendum approved debt.

Source: Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated



# Referendum History

What is the referendum history for Whitefish Bay?

District Name	Vote Date	Type	Total Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	Result
Whitefish Bay	11/3/2009	Issue Debt	\$22,600,000	4,773	3,102	Passed
Whitefish Bay	4/4/1995	Issue Debt	\$3,975,000	2,980	2,898	Passed
Whitefish Bay	5/1/1994	Issue Debt	\$5,000,000	1,366	1,975	Failed

The Whitefish Bay School District passed two referendum questions in 2009 to issue debt for the total amount of \$22.6 million. Prior to that, the District had a failed referendum in 1994 for \$5 million and passed a referendum in 1995 for \$3.975 million.

The referendum in 2009 included the Great Room additions at Cumberland and Richards, as well as the addition of the music wing and Link at the High school. The project in 1995 included a major addition to the Middle School.

Source: Department of Public Instruction; Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated



# Area Referendum Data

## Have area districts gone to referendum?

- As a result of limited state funding, a large number of area districts have gone to referendum recently to either issue debt for capital projects, or to seek additional funding above the revenue limit through an operational referendum.
- When districts go to referendum to issue debt, the maximum length they can borrow is up to 20 years and the maximum debt capacity is 10% of their Equalized Value.
- Districts that go to referendum to exceed the revenue limit for operational expenses can either have a Non-Recurring Referendum (NR) that only lasts for a set number of years, or they can pursue a Recurring Referendum (RR) that is a permanent increase to the revenue limit.

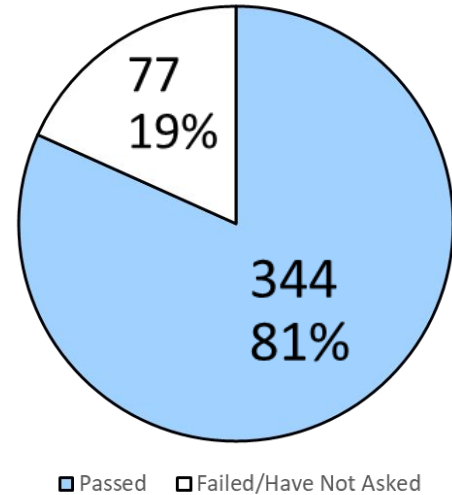
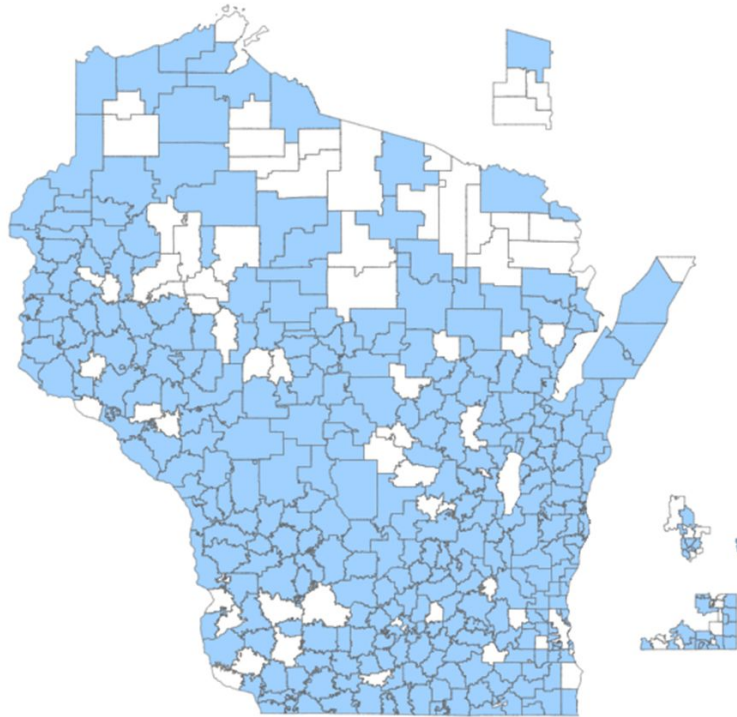
Source: Department of Public Instruction; Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated

District Name	Vote Date	Type	Total Amount	Yes Votes	No Votes	Result
Port Washington-Saukville	4/1/2025	Issue Debt	\$59,400,000			Upcoming
Wauwatosa	11/5/2024	Issue Debt	\$60,000,000	5,985	4,222	Passed
West Bend	11/5/2024	Issue Debt	\$106,250,000	18,470	13,657	Passed
Glendale-River Hills	11/5/2024	NR	\$9,000,000	5,156	3,367	Passed
Mequon-Thiensville	11/5/2024	NR	\$26,400,000	9,900	9,087	Passed
Wauwatosa	11/5/2024	NR	\$64,400,000	5,828	4,375	Passed
Maple Dale-Indian Hill	11/5/2024	RR	\$1,750,000	1,769	1,223	Passed
Grafton	4/2/2024	Issue Debt	\$11,140,000	2,903	1,938	Passed
Milwaukee	4/2/2024	RR	\$252,000,000	41,589	39,866	Passed
Shorewood	4/4/2023	NR - 2023	\$27,500,000	2,620	924	Passed
Fox Point J2	11/8/2022	NR - 2023	\$12,400,000	2,883	1,572	Passed
Fox Point J2	4/5/2022	Issue Debt	\$58,500,000	1,386	1,153	Passed
Nicolet UHS	4/5/2022	Issue Debt	\$77,400,000	4,045	3,068	Passed
Nicolet UHS	4/6/2021	NR - 2022	\$23,400,000	3,629	1,794	Passed
Mequon-Thiensville	4/7/2020	Issue Debt	\$55,700,000	6,166	4,492	Passed
Milwaukee	4/7/2020	RR - 2020	\$87,000,000	67,112	19,381	Passed
West Bend	4/2/2019	Issue Debt	\$47,000,000	6,533	7,645	Failed
Maple Dale-Indian Hill	4/2/2019	Issue Debt	\$16,370,000	1,028	733	Passed
Shorewood	4/2/2019	Issue Debt	\$65,000,000	3,025	1,961	Passed
Maple Dale-Indian Hill	4/2/2019	NR - 2019	\$9,800,000	1,001	774	Passed
Glendale-River Hills	4/2/2019	NR - 2020	\$7,900,000	2,360	1,283	Passed
Shorewood	4/2/2019	RR - 2019	\$275,000	3,288	1,666	Passed



# Statewide Referendum Data

How many districts in the state have gone to referendum?



Since 2004, over 80% of the public school districts in Wisconsin have passed a referendum to either cover operational expenditures or to issue debt, or both.

Source: Department of Public Instruction; Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated



# School Finance Strengths

## What are the areas of strength for school finance?

At \$5.92, the Whitefish Bay School District has one of the lowest tax levy rates in the area and is below the state average of \$7.09. The tax levy rate has also decreased by over 44% within the last ten (10) years.

Whitefish Bay has one of the lowest rates of spending per pupil in the area and is below the state average. The District is able to maintain this low level of spending while still having high academic performance.

While membership has fluctuated over the years, it has been relatively stable and has increased over the last two years. Stable membership helps the District avoid having to make budget cuts due to loss of funding.

The Whitefish Bay School District has a strong fund balance in the General Fund and in Fund 46, which helps the District avoid short-term borrowing, plan for emergency expenses, and cover some capital projects.

The majority of the remaining outstanding debt for the District is set to be paid off by 2027 with some smaller payments through 2030.



# School Finance Challenges

## What are some of the challenges for school finance?

Like all other public school districts in Wisconsin, Whitefish Bay must work within the revenue limit, which caps how much revenue a district can collect each year through state aid and the tax levy.

Wisconsin public schools have not received an inflationary increase in state funding since 2008-09, which has presented many challenges as costs have continued to increase at or above inflation.

Costs for special education are only reimbursed up to around 30%, resulting in school districts needing to transfer from their operational budget in order to cover the budget shortfall. Special education membership also continues to rise.

While Whitefish Bay does have a strong fund balance, the amount available only covers a small portion of the capital projects list in the 10-Year Capital Plan. In addition, there is a long list of capital projects that are not included in the 10-Year Capital Plan.

Some area districts have passed capital and/or operational referendums that gives them an advantage over Whitefish Bay in terms of available resources.



## Questions

What questions do you still have on school finance?

If you still have questions on school finance, please use the link below to submit them to Ben Irwin, Director Business Services.

School  
Finance 101  
Questions