

City of North Richland Hills May 2012 Bond Election Frequently Asked Questions

At the recommendation of the Community Improvements Task Force, the North Richland Hills City Council has called an election for May 12 to consider the issuance of \$48 million in bonds to pay for a portion of the cost of a new municipal complex including Police and Fire operations, Municipal Court and City Hall. Following are frequently asked questions and answers about the proposed municipal complex and the upcoming bond election.

Why is a bond election proposed now?

The widening of Loop 820 is well underway and when the project is completed the existing highway will span 14 lanes, effecting the operations of existing city facilities. In Spring 2011, a citizens' task force, the Community Improvements Task Force, was formed to look at North Richland Hills' facility and infrastructure needs, including the impacts of the Loop 820 expansion. This task force was made up of 26 residents from throughout our community. Following 8 months of study, the task force recommended the construction of a new municipal complex. Based on the task force's recommendation, the City Council has called a May 12 bond election to help fund the construction of a new municipal complex.

What would the new municipal complex include?

The Community Improvements Task Force has recommended the following be included in the proposed new municipal complex:

Public Safety

- Police Department, currently housed at Loop 820/Holiday Lane
- Police Traffic Division, currently housed on Dick Fisher Drive
- Police Property Division, currently housed on Dick Fisher Drive
- Police Crime Scene Investigators, currently housed on Dick Fisher Drive
- Police SWAT operations, currently housed on Dick Fisher Drive
- Fire Administration, currently housed on Dick Fisher Drive
- Emergency Management, currently housed on Dick Fisher Drive

Municipal Court

- Municipal Court, currently housed at Loop 820/Rufe Snow Drive
- Northeast Tarrant Teen Court, currently housed at Loop 820/Rufe Snow Drive

City Hall

- All services currently housed at City Hall at Loop 820/Holiday Lane
- Parks Administration, currently housed at Loop 820/Rufe Snow Drive
- Citicable, currently housed at Loop 820/Rufe Snow Drive
- Neighborhood Services/Code Compliance, currently housed in two facilities on Dick Fisher Drive

What is the proposed square footage?

While the facility has not been designed yet, it is proposed to be about 180,000 square feet. This includes about 94,000 square feet for Police and Fire operations, about 71,000 square feet for City Hall and about 15,000 square feet for Municipal Court.

How does this compare to existing city facilities?

Currently these city facilities total 143,669 square feet.

How would the additional square footage be used?

The added square footage for the new municipal complex would be utilized mostly for Public Safety areas.

Where would the new municipal complex be located?

The Community Improvements Task Force looked at many possible locations for the proposed municipal complex and identified the old North Hills Mall property on Boulevard 26 as the preferred location, with the existing City Hall site at Loop 820/Holiday Lane as a secondary option.

On April 9, 2012 the City Council approved an agreement to purchase a portion of the former North Hills Mall property on Boulevard 26 for the proposed new municipal complex. The agreement, which is contingent on the outcome of the May 12 bond election, gives the city the option to purchase up to 12 acres of the former mall site. This would leave about 68 acres for redevelopment by private investors.

The former North Hills Mall property was abandoned in 2004 and the buildings were demolished in 2007. Should a new municipal complex be built at this location, the existing city property at Loop 820/Holiday and at Loop 820/Rufe Snow Drive would be sold to private investors for redevelopment of the Loop 820 corridor with new commercial, retail or office uses.

What is the total cost of building a new municipal complex?

Initial estimates show that construction of the proposed new municipal complex including Police and Fire operations, Municipal Court and City Hall could cost up to \$70 million. That includes land acquisition, design, construction, fixtures and equipment.

How would it be funded?

The project would be funded with \$48 million in voter approved bonds, with the remainder from other sources including:

- Compensation for city owned property that is being taken for the Loop 820 highway widening.
- The sale of city owned property on Loop 820 for retail, commercial or office uses
- Designated capital reserves (gas leases)

If voters approve the bonds, how much will my property taxes increase?

The increase to the property tax rate could be 3 to 4 cents. The average taxable value of a home in NRH is \$122,317, which includes all applicable exemptions. A 3-cent property tax increase on that home would equal \$36.70 per year, while 4-cent property tax increase would equal \$48.96 per year.

Will senior citizens property taxes increase too?

No. North Richland Hills implemented a tax freeze for senior citizens and disabled homeowners in 2004. Homeowners who are 65 or older or disabled will not pay more in taxes if the bond measure is approved.

When was the last time the city raised the property tax rate?

The City of North Richland Hills has maintained the same tax rate of 57-cents per \$100 property value for the past 19 years.

How does the North Richland Hills property tax rate compare to other cities?

North Richland Hills is in the middle. Some area cities have higher tax rates and some area cities have lower tax rates as illustrated on [this chart](#).

How do I calculate the impact of a tax rate increase on my home?

First, you need to know the appraised value of your home. If you are not sure of the appraised value, you can look it up on the [Tarrant Appraisal District website](#). Look for the most recent “Appraised Total” amount.

Start with the appraised total and subtract your 15% homestead exemption. This gives you the taxable value of your home. Divide the taxable value by 100 and then multiply by .03 for a 3-cent increase in the tax rate, or by .04 for a 4-cent increase in the tax rate.

Here’s an example of how a 3-cent tax rate increase would apply to a \$100,000 home:

Appraised total:	\$100,000
Minus 15%:	- 15,000
Taxable Value	\$ 85,000

Divide by 100	=	850
Multiply by 0.03	=	\$ 25.50 annually

A [tax rate calculator](#) is also available on the city’s website.

When were existing city buildings constructed?

The city facility at 820/Rufe Snow was built in 1968 as a church and added onto in 1978. The city acquired the building in 1985. The city facility at Loop 820/Holiday Lane was built in 1975 and added onto in 1987 for the Police Department and 1995 for the City Council Chambers.

What was the City's population when these buildings were constructed?

Census	Population
1960	8,662
1970	16,514
1980	30,592
1990	45,895
2000	55,635
2010	63,343

Will North Richland Hills population continue to grow?

Demographers estimate that North Richland Hills population will grow by 22% over the next 20 years or so and will reach about 77,000 in 2030.

How much does it cost to maintain the existing city facilities?

Maintenance for the existing city facilities is estimated to cost \$5.5 million over the next 10 years and \$7.4 million over the next 15 years. These costs are primarily for the replacement of roof and HVAC systems, but also include floor, ceiling, painting, and exterior projects.

How are city facilities being impacted by the highway widening?

At both locations (Loop 820/Rufe Snow and Loop 820/Holiday Lane), all parking and landscaping adjacent to the service road is being taken for the highway widening, putting the front door of both facilities in close proximity to Loop 820. At Loop 820/Rufe Snow there will no longer be adequate space in front of the building for the required emergency responder access and landscape setbacks. At Loop 820/Holiday Lane the fire lane will need to be reconfigured, which will result in additional parking being lost. Both facilities will be out of compliance with many codes and government regulations.

If the highway widening is impacting city property, why isn't the state paying for construction of new facilities?

The city will receive some compensation from the state for the damages the highway project will have on city property along Loop 820; however the amount is in litigation. The damages received from the state will contribute to paying for these projects.

Why didn't you anticipate this when the City Hall addition was built in 1995?

When the City Hall addition was built in 1995, the plans for improving Loop 820 fit within the existing footprint of the highway. Since that time, the scope of the state highway project has changed requiring the need for additional land for the highway project.

Did the Community Improvements Task Force consider reconfiguring the existing city buildings at Loop 820/Holiday and Loop 820/Rufe Snow?

Yes, the Task Force evaluated the possible reconfiguration of existing city buildings. Reconfiguring these facilities would require that they be brought up to current local, state and federal codes, including handicap accessibility, fire sprinkler systems and appropriate building materials. Reconfiguring these facilities would not allow city services to be consolidated into one location.

Did the Task Force consider utilizing vacant buildings around town?

Yes, the Task Force evaluated vacant buildings for use as municipal offices. There are no vacant buildings large enough to accommodate Public Safety, Municipal Court and City Hall services. The use of vacant buildings would require city offices to be in multiple locations around town.

Did construction of the new library and the new recreation center increase the city's property tax rate?

No. The new library and recreation center were constructed without an increase in the property tax rate. Funding for both projects came from a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District and did not increase the tax rate.

A TIF District is an area of the city that is designated for special development or redevelopment. Properties located in the TIF Districts are taxed at the same rate as other properties in the city. The TIF funds are that portion of the taxes on the property generated by increases in property value over unimproved land value. As new homes and businesses are built in the TIF District, the increase in property tax revenues is set aside by the City, County, County College District and County Hospital District in a TIF Fund that is reinvested in the district for the construction of new infrastructure and facilities. By utilizing the TIF Funds from this reinvestment zone, the city was able to construct the new Library and Recreation Center without increasing the property tax rate.

If Fire Administration moves into the proposed municipal complex, what would happen to its existing building on Dick Fisher Drive?

It would continue to be used as a training center, fire truck maintenance center, and as the backup Emergency Operations Center.

What kind of interest rate would the city pay on the municipal bonds?

Financial advisors anticipate that the bonds could be issued with an interest rate of about 3.5%. The city expects the bonds to be paid off over a 20 year period.

If voters approve the bonds, when would the construction of a new municipal complex be completed?

The property acquisition and architectural design would begin this summer. It is estimated that the construction could be completed in 2015.

Who served on the Community Improvements Task Force?

Task Force Members included: Jay Bruner, Suzy Compton, September Daniel, Jay Garner, Brad Greene, Tom Harris, Hayden Hunter, Steve Koons, John Lewis, Tom Lombard, Kathy Luppy, Dottie McCrary, Randy Moresi, David Nelson, Tony Pack, Mike Rigby, Danny Roberts, Tito Rodriguez, Randy Shiflet, Loyce Shirley, Joe Tolbert, Mike Washburn, David Whitson, Mary Witt, Mark Wood, and Nicole Zajimovic.

Is the North Richland Hills Bond Election related to the consolidation measure that is on the ballot in Richland Hills?

No. The decision to call this election was not predicated on or related to the City of Richland Hills.