

Opinions of Abington Residents On Investments In Their Middle School

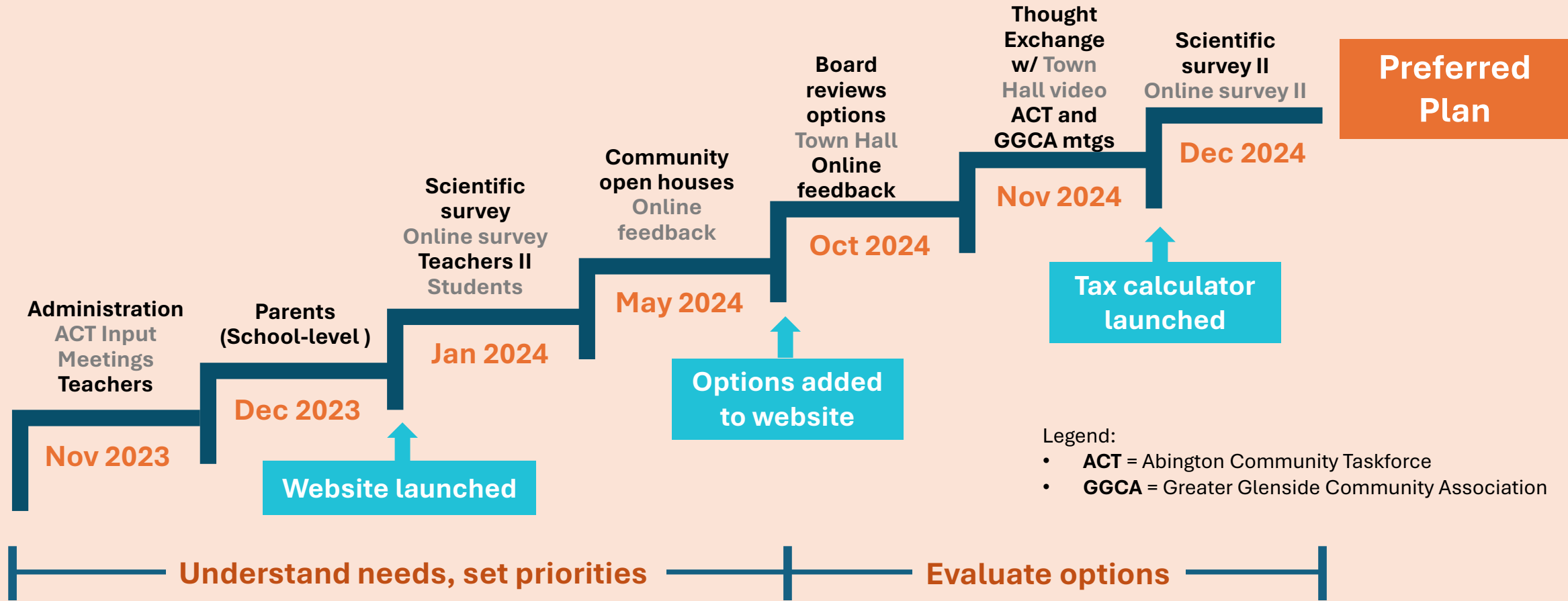
Todd Rapp, CEO
Rapp Strategies, Inc.

January 14, 2025

Peter Leatherman, President
Morris Leatherman LLC



Layering Input From Your Stakeholders and the Community



Scientific Survey Methodology

- 500 adults who reflect the demographics of ASD
- December 4 thru 16, 2024
- Cell-phone only was 59% of sample
- Margin of error of +4.5%

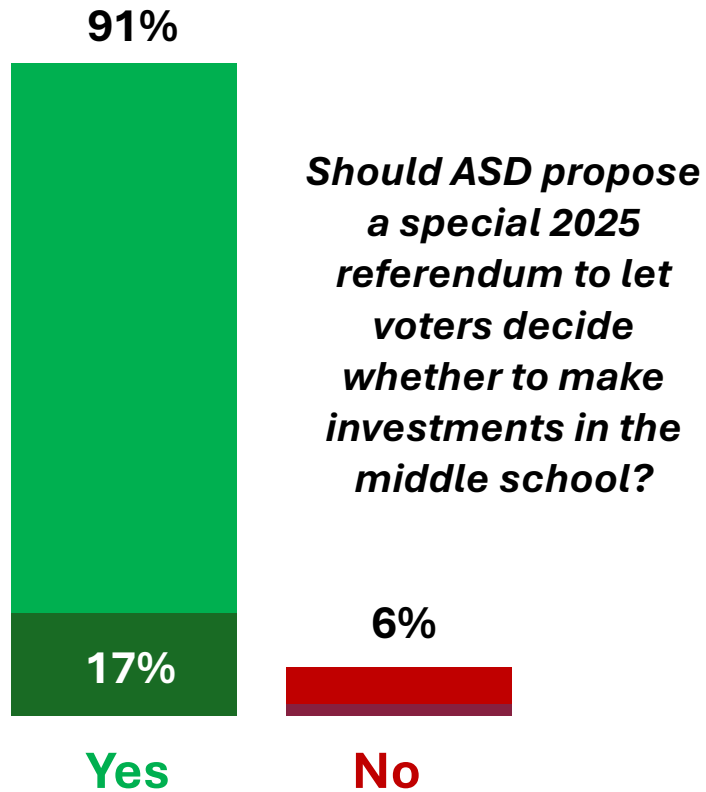
- Demographically consistent with January 2024 survey, except:

	<u>Jan '24</u>	<u>Dec '24</u>
DEM	44%	38%
IND	24%	24%
GOP	27%	29%
<i>Other</i>	5%	9%

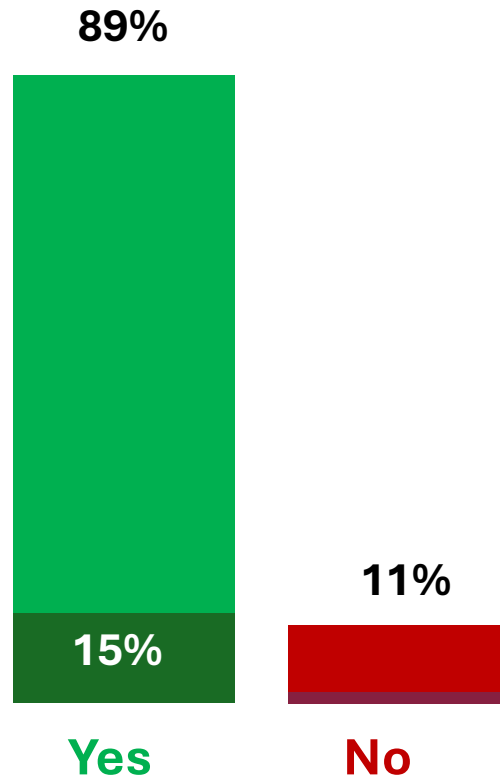
January 2024 survey was focused on identifying the right strategies to study; this survey emphasized picking the right plan to submit to voters.

Residents Want a Chance to Decide

Pre-Test



Post-Test



Who are they?

- 62% Don't follow ASD activities closely
- 75% Support no plan
- 75% Believe ASD funding is fine
- 57% Oppose nearly any tax increase for schools

Perceptions of Quality of Facilities

The High School

Would you say the high school is modern; aging but still functioning well; past its prime; or is it ready to be replaced?	Modern	20%
	Aging/Functioning	51%
	Past its Prime	18%
	Replaced	6%
	DK/R	5%

The Middle School

Would you say the middle school is modern; aging but still functioning well; past its prime; or is it ready to be replaced?	Modern	4%
	Aging/Functioning	44%
	Past its Prime	31%
	Replaced	16%
	DK/R	6%

Who believes MS is just aging?

- Tax intolerant
- Don't believe New schools improve communities
- Predisposed to any option

Those who choose "Aging" are divided between repair, building new or no plan. That decision is not based on how closely a respondent follows ASD decisions.

Once a respondent concludes the MS is past its prime, the decision isn't whether to replace, but one school vs two schools.

Confidence in District Decision-Making

I trust the Abington School District to **do what is right for the children and staff of this district.**

88%
agree
(Jan: 85%)

During the last couple of years, the Abington School District has **managed its budget effectively and efficiently.**

77%
agree
(Jan: 75%)

The Abington School District does a good job of involving **community leaders, parents and interested citizens** in decisions about the schools.

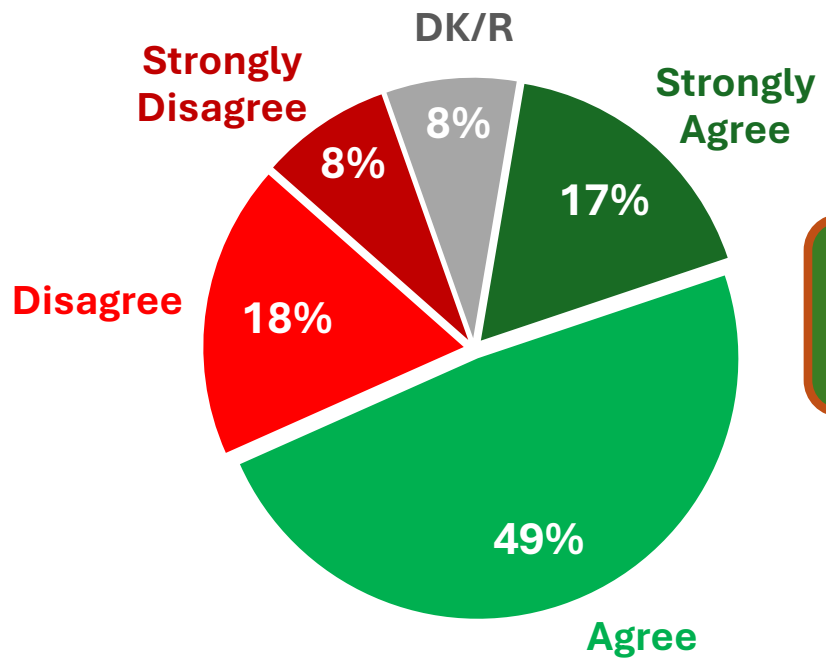
80%
agree
(Jan: 81%)

72% check the boxes for all three categories

- 85% would support a property tax increase to protect their investment
- 93% believe there should be a referendum

Agreement That New Local Funding is Needed

Abington Schools are a good investment and I would support a property tax increase to protect that investment.



66% Total Agree

Do you think the Abington School District is adequately funded?

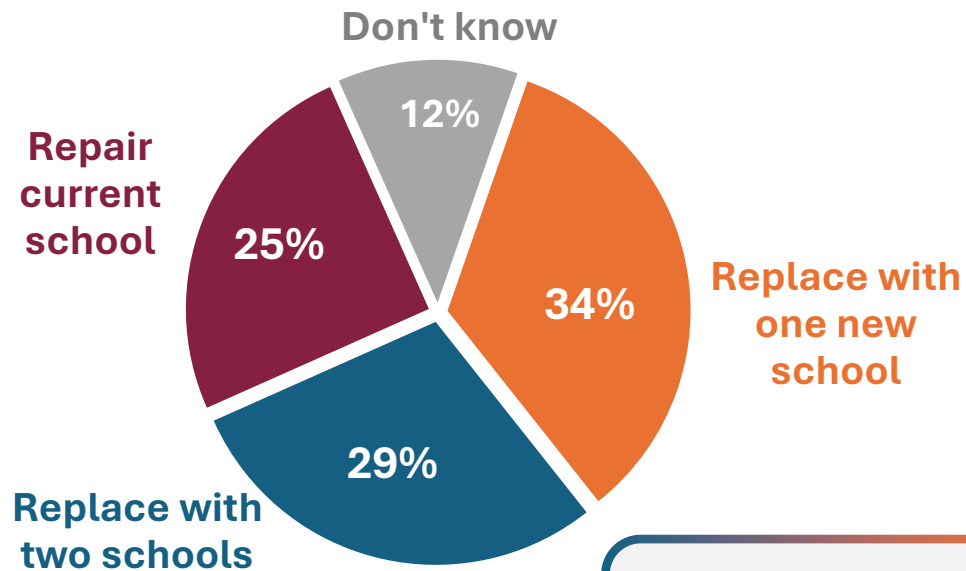
Yes	44%
No	51%
Dk/R	4%

- 47% are most supportive to new local funding.
- Another 18% are open to a property tax increase even if they believe schools are adequately funded.
- 96% believe a referendum should occur.

Initial Reaction: What's the Best Strategy

Q: Should the Middle School be replaced?

If Yes to Q: One or two schools?



63% say replace
Intensity margin vs
repair is 17:4

Note: Questions asked before a budget or tax impact is identified.

	Replace w/One	Replace w/Two
Parents	38%	37%
Highly confident in decision making	39%	37%
Understand local funding is needed	44%	43%

Support for Three Possible Referenda

	Referendum A Renovate \$270 million \$51/month	Referendum B New school on campus \$285 million \$54/month	Referendum C Two MS \$450 million \$86/month
Total Support	54%	60%	41%
<i>Strong Support</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>9%</i>
Total Opposition	42%	36%	56%
<i>Strong Opposition</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>13%</i>
Don't Know	4%	4%	3%
<hr/>			
Best Option	18%	33%	24%
Weakest Option	36%	4%	38%

- *23% said they would support no plan*
- *15% said they would support any option*

Referendum Support Among ASD Supporters

	Initial Support for Replacement	Referendum A Renovate	Referendum B 1 New MS	Referendum C 2 New MS
Understand new local funding is needed (47%)	87%	71%/16%	85%/27%	64%/15%
Highly confident in district decision making (72%)	76%	64%/13%	74%/20%	54%/12%
Parents (29%)	75%	63%/16%	74%/17%	52%/14%

Total Support/Strong Support

Is the District Planning Carefully?

Are you confident the Abington School District is considering the needs of students and staff as they develop a plan for these investments? Do you believe strongly that way?

Strongly yes	13%	} 79%
Yes	66%	
No	16%	
Strongly No	1%	
DK/R	5%	

Are you confident the School District is looking to invest tax dollars carefully by finding the best funding plan for the facilities investments? Do you believe strongly that way?

Strongly yes	14%	} 73%
Yes	59%	
No	19%	
Strongly No	4%	
DK/R	5%	

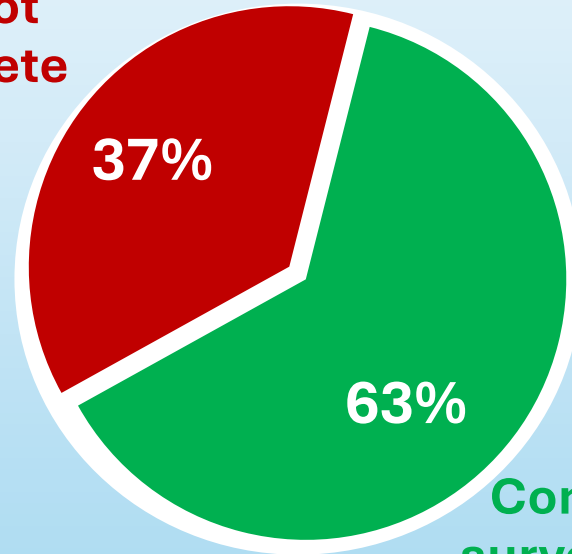
What We Learned From Online Survey

2,164 started the survey
Closed on December 24th

Of these:

- About 2/3rds of this group quit the survey after Q.3
- By Q.27, over 85% had quit

Did not
complete



Completed
survey (1,361)

Of these:

- 44% are current parents
- 31% are ASD grads or parents of grads
- 24% have no direct connection

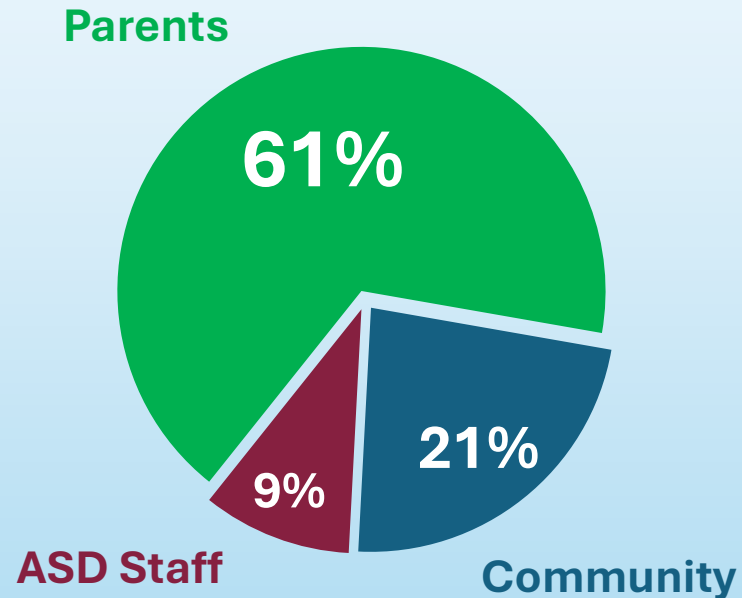
Reminder: This is a self-selected sample, not demographically representative of ASD adult residents

Comparison of Online Survey Results

	Current Parents	Other ASD Connection	No ASD Connection
Initial New (vs. Repair)	71% <i>new</i>	45%	39%
If New, 1 MS (vs 2)	36% <i>just one</i>	39%	40%
<hr/>			
Remodeled referendum	52% <i>support</i>	48%	39%
One MS referendum	71% <i>support</i>	47%	43%
Two MS option	45% <i>support</i>	21%	21%
<hr/>			
Preference #1	1 MS	1 MS	No plan
Least favorite	2 MS <i>(but narrow)</i>	2 MS	2 MS
Should we hold referendum?	78% <i>yes</i>	78%	67%

What We Learned From Thought Exchange

- 1,834 started the process with 1,180 completed in November 2024.
- Each had the option of watching the townhall presentation first or taking the questionnaire separately.



- 74% agreed with replacing middle school
- 63% agreed that two middle schools would benefit students
- However, tax concerns led to these respondents favoring the 1 MS option over 2 MS, once costs were revealed
- Safety, maintenance costs were also identified as important concerns

Reminder: This is also a self-selected sample, not demographically representative of ASD adult residents

Selected Strategies & Options for Extensive Evaluation

Single Building MS Strategy

Option 1

Refresh/Renovate the existing Middle School sized for 2,200 students.

Option 2

Demolish and build a new 2,200 Student Middle School on the Campus designed for the Educational Training Model.

No Impact on Elementary School Level
(in this portion of the plan)

Two Building MS Strategy

Option 3

Split the existing MS population into two 1,100 Student Middle Schools.

Option 4

Reconfigure the grade structure into a 5/6 building and 7/8 building. Each building would be sized for 1,500 students.

Potential Need for Investment at Elementary School level (for Copper Beech Conversion)

Summarizing the Assessments

- ✓ We conducted a comprehensive assessment of needs
 - Conclusion: Middle School is the highest priority
- ✓ We identified multiple options to consider
 - Process: Remodel option, 1 MS, 2 MS, plus options within each area
- ✓ We know managing the tax impact is important to residents
 - Conclusion: Choose the plan with the best long-range value for students, staff and residents
- ✓ We sought input from staff, parents and residents many times over the past two years to inform our choices
 - Conclusion: Residents want a chance to vote
 - Conclusion: Build new is preferred, continued investment in current MS isn't much cheaper
 - Conclusion: Two MS seems too expensive – even our best supporters pause at the tax impact

Remaining step: Narrow to just one plan for a referendum

Consultants' Recommendation

OPTIONS

~~1A~~
Renovate existing MS

~~1B~~
Renovate and expand existing MS

2
Replace current MS on same campus

~~3A~~
2 MS one new and one at Glenside Weldon

~~3B~~
2 MS one new and one at CBES, new ES at 6-W

~~4~~
2 MS Using 3B with a Grade 5-6 and 7-8 plan

FROM EVALUATION

- Cost/Benefit: Nearly as much \$\$ as building new
- Still an older school
- Doesn't fully address educational needs
- Disruption during construction

BEST VALUE FOR RESIDENTS!
Addresses the most critical staff and parent concerns.

Site not suitable for needs of a new MS.

Educational benefits are strong, but additional cost causes public support to wane, even for parents.

* Options 3 & 4 result in additional ongoing operational costs in addition to the construction costs shown.

Questions?

