



Rio Americano Signature Project Forum Report

Summary

San Juan Unified held a Measure N Signature Project Forum at Rio Americano High School on Thursday, Oct. 2 in the Large Gym.

The Rio Americano forum drew a crowd of 119. Staff delivered a short presentation seeking input and feedback regarding three previously proposed Signature Project ideas: A 350-seat theater, upgrades to P.E. and athletics facilities, and new science classrooms.

The audience was asked to move into four classrooms in smaller groups to discuss all three Signature Project ideas. Each small group was asked to identify what program and academic needs each Signature Project idea would meet at the high school, and what features would be needed to accommodate those needs. Then, the groups were asked to go back into the gym where staff reported out on the small group discussions. Finally, staff took questions and comments.

Small group results

An informal poll (a show of hands) in the small group sessions resulted in 106 people who said they preferred a theater for Rio's Signature Project. There were 11 people who said they preferred P.E. and athletic upgrades, and five who preferred science classrooms.

Key points (listed in no particular order):

Why a 350-seat theater is needed at Rio Americano:

- Renowned band program. Currently plays in cafeteria which is not adequate

- Acoustics are bad in current facility
- Civic engagement. Space for community forums and events
- Attract out-of-district students
- Could be used to support feeder school programs
- Could be used to support community music/theater programs
- Space for seminars/guest speakers
- A place to host guest speakers and other functions in the Civitas program
- Could host freshman orientation
- Could be space for a full class (frosh, soph, junior senior) meeting
- Could expand programs to include career tech for things like stage and set design/ light and sound engineering
- Expand all VAPA programs and use the facility for productions
- Rental space

Needed features of a theater:

- 350 seats is the perfect size
- Great acoustics
- Recording studio space
- Nice stage
- Ticket booth
- Curtains/lighting
- Infrastructure for current and future technology
- Costume storage
- Equipment storage
- Lobby area with concession stand
- Restrooms

Why P.E. and athletic upgrades are needed at Rio Americano:

- Current facilities are lacking
- Track safety
- Gophers in the fields
- ADA liability
- Tennis Courts in wrong direction for tournaments
- Gym floor is old
- No wrestling facility
- Every student takes P.E.

Needed features of P.E. and athletic upgrades

- Gym floor redone

- Re-orientation of tennis courts
- All-weather track
- Coach offices
- Stadium seating
- Locker rooms
- Pool deck
- Seating for water polo

Why a science classroom expansion is needed at Rio Americano

- Only have seven labs currently
- Need more space. Rooms are cramped
- Safety for student learning
- Current equipment is old
- Need technology upgrades
- Every student takes science
- Not 21st Century learning space

Needed features in science classroom expansion:

- Renovation of current classrooms and one full science lab
- Storage space for chemicals and other materials
- Technology upgrades
- Potential to expand with Science, Technology, Engineering & Math
- Possible expansion for Robotics courses
- Better equipment

Questions and Answers

Audience members spoke on a variety of topics, with several comments focusing on equity and their feeling that Rio has not received its fair share of past bond money. Several people said they feel Rio shouldn't have to choose between an auditorium, P.E. facilities, and science classrooms and they would like to receive a Signature Project that incorporates all three needs. Multiple audience members also reiterated that an auditorium would attract students from outside the district. Other questions that were asked at the Oct. 2 forum are:

Q: Why is the seating capacity for the proposed performing arts building at 350?

A: (Answered by teacher Josh Murray): We're not married to that number, but we came to it after a lot of thought. It allows us to come in under budget. It also allows us to build into the footprint of where we think the building can fit on campus. It's a number that will work well for band and other programs.

Q: Is the (Signature Project money) one lump sum dedicated to one project, or an amount per school?

A: San Juan has set aside \$117 million set out of Measure N to build Signature Projects at all nine comprehensive high schools. If a school comes in under the average amount, we don't have a plan yet for that remainder. We will be making proposals at the direction of the superintendent, cabinet and ultimately the board. We have \$2.4 billion in facility needs district wide. So, any leftover money will go to schools in need.

Q: How long before the \$117 million for High School Signature Projects will be spent? Will my kids have graduated?

A: We can't accurately answer that tonight. It will depend on how projects are approved. Generally, it takes significant time to complete this type of process.

Q: As a parent, it's clear that the majority of us want a performing arts facility built. How do we get to the front of the line and get our project first?

A: We're developing a process to work with principals and to get a sense of loading order. That will go to the superintendent's cabinet, and we will possibly bring that information to a Board workshop that will be open to the public.

Q: We've had two forums. Is this making a difference? What are some of the factors in the decision making?

A: Right now we're taking your input to help flesh out the project. We'll be sharing our reports from the forums. You'll be able to see the list of projects, costs once that is complete. All of this is public information. Websites will soon be updated at www.sanjuan.edu/hsprojects.

Q: The first quarter of 2015 is very ambiguous as a timeline (for a final decision). We met with the Superintendent two years ago and were told this would be resolved a long time ago. Will we see a more concrete deadline?

A: We're trying to be open about where we are in the process. Superintendent (Kent) Kern is very committed to the first quarter of 2015. We want to move forward as quickly as possible.

Q: San Juan High, El Camino and Del Campo had some big projects completed already. Do those projects counts towards some of their money?

A: No. Past work at high schools was done outside of the Measure N Signature Project program. It's important to note that the El Camino and Del Campo fields are considered to be shared facilities, used by multiple schools.

Q: In that case, is there more Measure N money that can go to Rio from outside of the Signature Project program?

A: Yes, it's possible. We have many factors under consideration and many schools that have needs. A full implementation plan for Measure N has not been finalized.

Q: Will there be money from Measure N to renovate/maintain science and P.E. facilities?

A: There are other opportunities to do renovation type projects. We're in the process of developing those types of projects throughout the district. Where Rio would be prioritized is still being evaluated.

Q: What is the Board going to use as its criteria for the best Signature Project?

A: If you have two projects with a lot of demand, we'll have to look deeper as a staff. When there is a clear-cut project, we'll focus on the budget and how to get the process started.

Q: How do deferred maintenance projects get scheduled? How did Arden Middle School get its multi-purpose room?

A: The Arden multi-purpose room is a brand new building that is part of Measure J. Deferred maintenance is more targeted. We do a complete evaluation of a school and decide how to work within the (relatively small) budget to meet the deferred maintenance needs at that site.

Q: When you talk deferred maintenance for P.E. facilities, it is part of a \$1.5 million budget which doesn't go very far. That tells me the term "deferred maintenance" isn't appropriate to enhance our P.E. facilities. What other options are available to see significant improvements to Rio?

A: It would have to be a bond expenditure. It would either be Measure N or a future bond.

Q: Is the Facilities Master Plan available to the public?

A: Yes, it's a public document. The Facilities Master Plan lists \$2.4 billion in needs throughout San Juan Unified. However, it does not identify which projects will be completed first. You can find the whole Facilities Master Plan on our website at www.sanjuan.edu/fmp.

Q: When was the last time Rio received funds to improve the school? (NOTE: The answer provided on Oct. 2 was inaccurate. The following answer is factual).

A: San Juan Unified has completed roughly \$5.4 million in school repairs at Rio since 2006. The most recent work was a \$19,107 fencing project that was completed this year. Other work in previous years includes a \$640,855 restroom project that was finished in 2011, \$908,000 in paving work that was finished in 2011, \$913,544 to update science classrooms in 2007, \$962,247 for mechanical work in 2006 and \$687,513 for roof repairs in 2006.