



Below: A 2008 bond paid for the transformation of the school system's Career Center into Forsyth Technical Community College's Oak Grove Center. The college is depending on this year's bond to complete its renovation.



Photos by Todd Luck

Forsyth Technical Community College has a \$65 million bond on this year's ballot for its capital needs.

\$65 million bond for Forsyth Tech set for ballot

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth Technical Community College is hoping voters will approve its \$65 million bond to help the growing college with capital needs and a new location at Smith Reynolds Airport.



Green

By state law, counties are responsible for funding the construction and maintenance of facilities at community colleges, so larger capital projects may result in bond referendums like the one that voters will decide this

year. "When we need a building, when we need to expand space, the county is where we go for that support," said Forsyth Tech President Dr. Gary Green. He said the college experienced significant growth over the last 15 years, as more people are looking to gain the skills they need in today's changing economy. Green said the college's more than 200 curriculum programs are aligned with the jobs and careers that are in demand. Forsyth Tech would like to keep that tradition going with a Forsyth Tech Aviation Center at Smith Reynolds Airport. If approved, the bond will provide \$16.6 million to either build or renovate a space at the airport,

located off Liberty Street, for the program. It will give students hands-on experience working on the mechanical structure of airplanes, so they can achieve FAA certification. "It's instrumental to the growth of the airport," said Mark Davidson, airport director. "The one thing we're missing is workforce development." Davidson said it will provide qualified employees needed by several aviation companies at the airport. He also hopes it entices new companies to locate at Smith Reynolds. The airport is an economically depressed area

of the city. Green said the new Aviation Center will help link the residences to lucrative growth at Smith Reynolds. "It's a good opportunity to link those good paying jobs in aviation with the community around Liberty Street and around Carver High School," he said. Also in the bond is: \$18 million to complete the renovations that began with the 2008 education bond that transformed the school system's former Career Center into Forsyth Tech's Oak Grove Center. The money will let the college finish the remaining 100,000 square

feet in the building to expand advanced manufacturing programs, student services and house new programs. • \$21 million for a new Learning Commons building with a new library and technology center. The college needs to replace its aging library for continuing accreditation. • \$6.4 million to expand the Transportation Center on Patterson Avenue, which trains students to work on automobiles including diesel trucks and motorsports race cars. • \$3 million for infrastructure campus needs like replacing aging water lines and demolition of old, unusable buildings to make

more room for parking and student activities. Green said Forsyth will be campaigning for the bond through its donor-funded Forsyth Tech Foundation, so no taxpayer money will go to the billboards, signs and other promotions voters will be seeing for it in the coming months. The Forsyth Tech bond will be at the bottom of the ballot, along with a \$350 million school bond and a \$15 million county parks bond. If all three are approved, Forsyth County property taxes will increase by 3.6 cents per \$100 of property value in 2018 with another 3.8 cents increase in 2022.



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