

District: City of Leominster
 School Name: Fall Brook Elementary School
 Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic
 Date: October 23, 2024

Recommendation

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the City of Leominster (the “District”), as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Fall Brook Elementary School and construct a new facility serving students in kindergarten through grade 5 on the site of the existing facility. MSBA staff has reviewed the Feasibility Study and accepts the District’s Preferred Schematic.

District Information	
District Name	City of Leominster
Elementary School(s)	Priest Street Elementary School (K only) Fall Brook Elementary School (K-5) Frances Drake Elementary School (K-5) Johnny Appleseed Elementary School (K-5) Northwest Elementary School (K-5)
Middle School(s)	Samoset Middle School (6-8) Sky View Middle School (6-8)
High School(s)	Leominster High School (9-12) Leominster Center of Excellence (9-12) Center for Technical Education Innovation (9-12)
Priority School Name	Fall Brook Elementary School
Type of School	Elementary School
Grades Served	K-5
Year Opened	1966
Existing Square Footage	70,957
Additions	(4) Modular classrooms added in 2006
Acreage of Site	120-acres (shared with Samoset Middle School)
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mechanical systems – Electrical systems – Plumbing systems – Envelope – Windows – Roof – Accessibility In addition to the physical plant issues, the District reported that the existing facility does not support the delivery of its educational program, as well as existing overcrowding.
Original Design Capacity	550 students
2023-2024 Enrollment	615 students
Agreed Upon Enrollment	610 students

District Information	
Enrollment Specifics	The District and MSBA have mutually agreed upon a design enrollment of 610 students serving grades K-5.
Total Project Budget – Debt Exclusion Anticipated	To be determined

MSBA Board Votes	
Invitation to Eligibility Period	March 2, 2022
Invitation to Feasibility Study	December 21, 2022
Preferred Schematic Authorization	On October 30, 2024, Board agenda
Project Scope & Budget Authorization	District is targeting Board authorization on April 30, 2025
Feasibility Study Reimbursement Rate (Incentive points are not applicable)	74.01%

Consultants	
Owner’s Project Manager (the “OPM”)	Leftfield, LLC
Designer	Miller Dyer Spears, Inc.

Discussion

The existing Fall Brook Elementary School is a 70,957-square-foot facility located on a 120-acre site shared with Samoset Middle School. The facility currently serves students in kindergarten through grade 5. The original building was constructed in 1966, with four modular classrooms installed in 2006.

The District’s Statement of Interest (“SOI”) identified numerous deficiencies in the existing facility associated with outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; the building envelope and roof; windows; accessibility; and deficiencies in existing spaces that are deemed incapable of appropriately delivering the District’s educational program.

In conjunction with its consultants, the District performed a comprehensive assessment of the existing conditions and their educational program and received input from educators, administrators, and facilities personnel. Based on the findings of this effort, the District and its consultants initially studied four (4) preliminary options, including: one (1) code upgrade/base repair option, one (1) addition/renovation option, and two (2) new construction options, as presented below.

Option	Description of Preliminary Options
Option R	Code Upgrade/Base Repair for grades K-5, with an enrollment of 610 students at the existing Fall Brook Elementary School; with an estimated project cost of \$38-\$41 million.
Option AR1	Addition/Renovation (2-story, New Gymnasium, Media Center, Art and STE Classrooms) at the existing Fall Brook Elementary School, designed for 610 students in kindergarten through grade 5; with an estimated total project cost of \$85-\$92 million.

Option N1	New construction (2-story classroom wing, connected by a centralized Media Center with 1-story Gymnasium, Cafeteria, and administrative wing) at the existing Fall Brook Elementary School site, designed for 610 students in kindergarten through grade 5; with an estimated total project cost of \$86-\$93 million.
Option N2	New construction (2-story classroom wing connected by centralized STE and Arts classrooms with 1-story Gymnasium, Cafeteria, Media Center, and administrative wing) at the existing Fall Brook Elementary School site, designed for 610 students in kindergarten through grade 5; with an estimated total project cost of \$91-\$113 million.

As a result of this analysis, the District determined that all four (4) options would be considered for further evaluation. However, after evaluating the preliminary options, the District also developed two (2) additional new construction options, as described below:

- “Option N3”: New Construction (3-story classroom and Media Center wing, and a 1-story wing housing the Gymnasium, Cafeteria, and administrative offices) designed for 610 students in kindergarten through grade 5; located at the southern area of existing Fall Brook Elementary School site; and,
- “Option N4”: New Construction (3-story classroom and Media Center wing and a 1-story wing housing the Gymnasium, Cafeteria, and administrative offices) designed for 610 students in kindergarten through grade 5 at the existing Fall Brook Elementary School site.

Upon further review, the District determined that “Option N3” would not be considered for further evaluation due to its close proximity to the wetlands, the anticipation that it would result in significant disruption to ongoing education during construction because of its proximity to the existing facility, and the anticipation that it would result in a less-optimal solar orientation for the proposed academic classroom spaces.

MSBA staff and the District agreed to five (5) final options for further development and consideration in the final evaluation and development of preliminary design pricing, as presented below, including: one (1) code upgrade/base repair option, one (1) addition/renovation option, and three (3) new construction options.

Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing for Final Evaluation of Options

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option R: (Code Upgrade / Base Repair)	70,957	70,957 \$672/sq. ft.	n/a	\$4,210,192	\$51,890,416 \$731/sq. ft.	\$64,863,020
Option AR1: (Addition / Renovation)	105,595	57,544 \$669/sq. ft.	48,051 \$860/sq. ft.	\$13,524,667	\$93,371,739 \$884/sq. ft.	\$116,714,674
Option N1:*** (New Construction – 2-story with centralized Media Center)	104,645	N/A	104,645 \$701/sq. ft.	\$16,074,038	\$89,453,890 \$855/sq. ft.	\$111,817,362

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option N2: (New Construction – 2-story with centralized STE & Arts programming)	104,645	N/A	104,645 \$713/sq. ft.	\$16,009,008	\$90,604,011 \$866/sq. ft.	\$113,255,014
Option N4: (New Construction – 3-story classroom wing with Media Center)	107,222	N/A	107,222 \$701/sq. ft.	\$16,086,944	\$91,236,256 \$851/sq. ft.	\$114,045,321

* Marked up construction costs

** Does not include construction contingency

*****District's Preferred Schematic**

The District has selected “Option N1” as its Preferred Schematic to proceed into Schematic Design, as the District has determined that this option best meets the needs of the District’s educational program. The District also indicated that the proposed design supports the desired program goals and adjacencies to allow for grade-level collaboration, and that it is anticipated to provide ample natural light to the interior spaces. Additionally, the proposed building footprint aims to effectively utilize the remaining available/buildable site, allowing the existing Fall Brook Elementary School to remain fully occupied and operational during construction of the new facility.

“Option R” was not selected by the District because the square footage of the existing facility does not meet the spatial needs of the District’s design enrollment or the needs of the District’s educational program. Additionally, it is anticipated that this option would result in undesirable and significant disruption to ongoing education during construction.

Although “Option AR1” meets the goals of the District’s educational program, this option was not selected because it is anticipated to result in an undesirable and significant disruption to ongoing education during phased construction. Furthermore, the District also indicated that while the proposed layout would result in a larger and extended building footprint, the proposed design would also create challenges in configuring the desired spatial relationships in the District’s educational program. Additionally, they noted that the proposed layout is anticipated to result in inefficiencies to site circulation at the bus pick-up and drop-off areas due to the location of the gymnasium and cafeteria. Lastly, the District indicated that this option does not allow for the District’s preferred separation of students in kindergarten through grade two from those students in grades three through five.

While “Option N2” also meets the goals of the District’s educational program, this option was not selected by the District because it is anticipated that this option will not achieve the desired goals associated with the site development in relation to existing traffic and proximity to the existing facility. Additionally, the District indicated that this option does not provide the desired outdoor access and adjacencies between the gymnasium and hardscape play areas when compared to “Option N1”.

"Option N4" was not selected by the District because the 3-story design does not meet the desired goal of providing grade separation between students in kindergarten through grade two from those students in grades three through five. Additionally, the District anticipated that this option would result in

longer transition times between the academic classroom wing spaces and the educational spaces on the ground floor, when compared to the 2-story configurations of “Option N1” and “Option N2”.

The District presented its proposed Preferred Schematic to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee (“FAS”) on September 11, 2024. At that meeting, members of the FAS discussed the following items: appreciation for the District’s ideas and goals expressed in the educational program; the importance of professional development for staff in preparation for the transition to a new facility; the opportunity for the District to thoroughly address feedback and provide responses associated with the MSBA’s initial review of the educational program; distribution of special education spaces and the DESE review process; continued operation of the existing facility during construction; site constraints and associated design considerations for building geometry and orientation; further development of the building massing; appreciation for the separation of the academic areas from public spaces; further refinement of the design and clarification of the envisioned character of the building; intentional development of indoor/outdoor connections as the design progresses; emergency access to the building; resiliency considerations; and, potential schedule impacts associated with regulatory and stretch code requirements as well as enabling packages and permitting.

MSBA staff reviewed the conclusions of the Feasibility Study and all other subsequent submittals with the District and found:

- 1) The options investigated were sufficiently comprehensive in scope, the approach undertaken in this study was appropriate, and the District’s Preferred Schematic is reasonable, cost-effective, and meets the needs identified by the District.
- 2) Prior to the submission of the District’s Schematic Design submittal, the MSBA requests that the District be available to present updates associated with the Preferred Schematic to the FAS. This update is to ensure a mutual understanding and agreement of the proposed project scope and to ensure that this scope will be reflected in the District’s Schematic Design submittal.
- 3) The District has submitted an operational budget for educational objectives and a capital budget statement for MSBA review.
- 4) The District’s Special Education submission will be subject to final review and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the Schematic Design submittal, which will be completed prior to executing a Project Scope and Budget Agreement.
- 5) Subject to Board approval, the MSBA will participate in a project that includes spaces that meet MSBA guidelines, except for variations previously agreed to by the MSBA. All proposed spaces will be reviewed during the Schematic Design phase.
- 6) As part of the Schematic Design phase, the District will work with the MSBA to determine a mutually agreeable methodology to differentiate eligible costs from ineligible costs.

Based on the review outlined above, staff recommend that the City of Leominster be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Fall Brook Elementary School with a new facility serving students in kindergarten through grade 5 on the site of the existing facility.