

9TH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**BROOK
LINE
SCHOOLS**

SITE IDENTIFICATION STUDY

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Town of Brookline

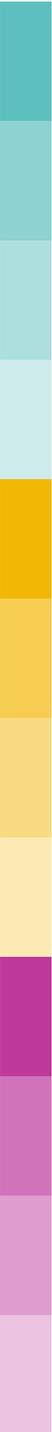
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All School Districting Maps were created by the Town of Brookline. Mapping and parcel data used in this study are based on Town of Brookline GIS Maps and Assessor's Data.

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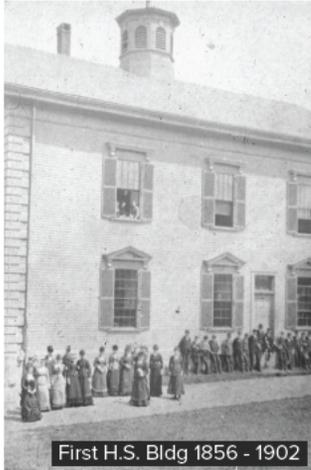


SITE IDENTIFICATION STUDY





Putterham, circa 1900



First H.S. Bldg 1856 - 1902



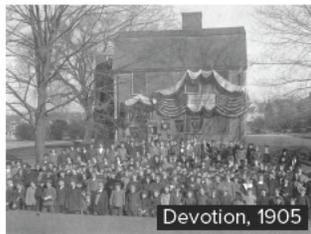
Pierce Grammar, 1905



The Beacon School



Health



Devotion, 1905



Devotion, 1990's



Driscoll



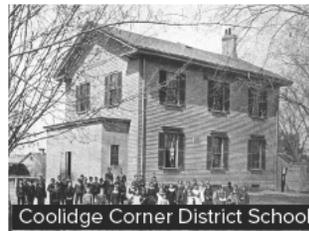
Putterham, circa 1907



Devotion, Early 1900's



Sewall School



Coolidge Corner District School



Putterham



Putterham Schoolhouse, circa 1907



Manual Training School



Lincoln



Lawrence

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Town demographics are changing, with profound effects on the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB). From Fiscal Year 2005 to Fiscal Year 2015, the number of K-8 sections grew from 201 to 257. For the last ten years, the PSB has used a variety of tools to accommodate the growing enrollment in the town's over-capacity schools. For example, the PSB has added small additions to some schools, moved some operations from the schools, and relocated most Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP) classrooms to private rental space. In the same time period, the overall K-8 enrollment grew from 3,888 to 5,375.

The PSB estimates that by FY 2021, another 27 K-8 homeroom classrooms and the necessary support space and functions that are associated with it will be needed in the elementary schools. This projected growth averages approximately an additional four to five sections every year in the seven years of FY 2016 through FY 2021. FY 2021 overall enrollment is estimated to be 5,914 K-8 students. This ninth elementary school study explores possible sites to build an additional school if the PSB and the Board of Selectmen (BOS) decide to take this path to meet the rising enrollment challenge.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This study investigated 26 sites and narrowed to a list of six possible sites for a ninth elementary school in Brookline, MA. The study's purpose was to identify sites for a 100,000 square foot (SF) K-8 school that could accommodate 550 students. The school program also includes adjacent staff

and visitor parking along with playgrounds and recreational space. This study does not make a recommendation as to whether to build a ninth school, nor does it recommend one site over another of the six finalist sites. The study also does not address other challenges facing the Town including addressing Brookline High School space needs (which are escalating given the growing elementary population), solving the issue of current sub-optimal space in the schools, or addressing the space needs of BEEP programs, administrative spaces, and supportive building services that have been relocated off site at the schools.

The review of possible town sites was governed by criteria set forth by the Town which included a desire for a 2.5 - 6 acre site for a K-8 school program. The overall goal of the study was to identify sites that allow the Town to preserve the desire to provide neighborhood walkable schools where possible. The study team used this information as the starting point in a process that included:

- Refining initial criteria as set forth in the RFP issued by the Town of Brookline
- Researching case studies for schools
- Conducting a broad search for public and private property online and through driving tours and discussions
- Evaluating all properties against criteria
- Choosing six finalist sites and conducting further analysis including district mapping, site layouts, and conceptual cost analysis

The general criteria for evaluating possible school sites included characteristics regarding location and access, physical

qualities, and legal and regulatory issues (see page 20). Because of the limited availability of larger sites in the town, the team also considered school alternatives where students would not be assigned based on neighborhood geography, as they are in our current buildings (e.g., a concept/ theme-based school). The team does not make a recommendation regarding a concept/theme-based school but provided information to give the BOS and Brookline School Committee (BSC) a range of choices as they move forward with a decision.

THE SITES

Six sites were chosen as the best choices for a ninth elementary school. These sites represent private property, Town-owned property and hybrid site assembly of both privately-owned and Town-owned property. The sites also provide a range of choices regarding school type; some are in more dense urban settings and follow a more compact site school model while others offer potential for more traditional school development in line with the existing elementary schools in Brookline. A few of the sites can work for either model of school development.

These final six sites were each explored to determine hypothetical suitability by laying out at least one physically feasible site plan, including school building, access ways, parking, and recreational space on the parcels. Determinations were made regarding the parcels or partial parcels needed for adequate site assembly to provide for a school site. Zoning regulations were followed where possible and exceptions were noted. Parking for 60 cars (60% of the approximately 100 on-

site staff) is provided in each scenario to allow comparisons across sites. Historic preservation, and open space issues/regulations were also taken into account.

Any changes to Brookline Schools capacity and location are likely to have an impact on school attendance areas and buffer zones, whether these changes are simply growth of school enrollment, expansion in place of existing schools, or the construction of a ninth elementary school. This study was guided by the general desire to preserve the Town goal of providing walkable neighborhood schools, where possible. Currently, 48% of modeled K-8 students live within a 1/4 mile of a school today. Student-school assignment models for all six sites indicate that all but one of the modeled scenarios meet or exceed this percentage.

The student-school assignment modeling scenarios are hypothetical. Any decisions about districting assignment policy would need to go through Brookline's normal public process, concluding with a vote by the BSC.

Preliminary cost and potential development structures were explored for each of the six sites. While each potential project is different, we have tried to provide a means of comparing the options, including how the likely development might be structured with partners relative to non-school uses on each site. Displacement and opportunity costs are also factored in where appropriate (e.g., displacing current municipal or non-municipal operations, taking municipal swing space off line, displacing potential commercial property tax sources, etc.).

The resulting development cost estimates for the six finalist sites all fall within a similar range of [REDACTED] including land acquisition costs. As of the writing of this report, there is not any line item planned for in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan. Given the magnitude of the estimated cost, this additional capital project would require approval at Town Meeting as part of the normal budget process, and would most likely also require a Debt Exclusion and Operating Override via Brookline voters.

Because some of the sites identified are privately-owned, land acquisition may involve the use of eminent domain powers available to the Town of Brookline which would require authorization by 2/3 vote of Town Meeting if the BOS and BSC decide to proceed with steps to build a ninth elementary school, and if the priority site is privately-owned or contains a privately-owned parcel. Legal guidance is required to advise the Town on eminent domain and/or site acquisition negotiations as it relates to the public process.

NEXT STEPS

Timing is critical for the decision-making and planning process related to a ninth elementary school in Brookline. The Town is already renting private properties and using modulars for K-8 classrooms. Therefore, a decision regarding the ninth elementary school must be made in January 2016 to position Brookline to request a Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) partnership and/or to seek funding for this capital project from Brookline voters through a debt exclusion in Fiscal Year

2017. If the BOS and BSC decide on another strategy to solve the enrollment challenge, timing is still critical as budgeting and policy decisions will need to be made quickly.

