



Julie L. Hackett, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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RE: **OVERCROWDING AND CENTRAL OFFICE IN THE NEW LHS FAQs**

DATE: **MAY 15, 2024**

Dear LPS School Community:

Some community members have expressed interest in learning more about designating square footage for the Central Office in the plans for a new or renovated high school. Town boards and committees engaged in a lengthy 2+ yearlong process, carefully weighing the pros and cons before finalizing plans to integrate the Central Office into a new or renovated high school. This memo aims to clarify our decision-making process and address community members' questions and concerns.

1. **Problem**—*Why is the Central Office considered in plans for a new or renovated high school?*
2. **Process**—*What decision-making led to including the Central Office in the plans for a new or renovated high school?*
3. **Overcrowding**—*If the high school faces future overcrowding, could the square footage designated for the Central Office be converted into classroom space for students?*
4. **Athletics**—*How will the relocation of the Central Office minimize the project's impact on student-athletes and residents who utilize the Center Recreation Complex outdoor facilities?*
5. **Cost**—*Will adding square footage for the Central Office in a new or renovated high school cost more than renovating the current building at 146 Maple Street?*

On behalf of the School Building Committee, I hope this communication is helpful. Much time, effort, and thought went into devising the best and most cost-effective solutions for the Central Office to meet the needs of our students and the community. I want to thank everyone who participated in this collaborative effort, which we believe will lead to the best possible outcomes for all involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie L. Hackett".

Julie L. Hackett
Superintendent of Schools

Central Office Frequently Asked Questions

1. Problem—Why is Central Office considered in plans for a new or renovated high school?

The Old Harrington building at 146 Maple Street currently houses the Lexington Public Schools Central Office. In 2022-2023, the Town finalized a 10-year Capital Plan. **The LPS Central Office building has been rated an 'F' in the Town's Capital Plan.**

Asset Group	Replacement Value of		# of	Letter Grade	
	Group	FCI Cost of Group	Assets	FCI of Group	of Group
HIGH SCHOOL	\$ 168,623,718	\$ 50,227,439	6	0.298	D
SCHOOLS - Except High School	\$ 559,746,713	\$ 38,530,216	10	0.107	B
Bowman Elementary School	\$ 24,460,549	\$ 4,027,277	1	0.165	B
Bridge Elementary School	\$ 23,890,746	\$ 3,854,106	1	0.161	B
Clarke Middle School	\$ 55,150,360	\$ 6,936,317	1	0.126	B
Diamond Middle School	\$ 72,119,137	\$ 5,530,949	1	0.077	B
Estabrook Elementary School	\$ 31,498,829	\$ 6,576	1	0.000	A
Fiske Elementary School	\$ 36,190,851	\$ 3,207,934	1	0.089	B
Harrington Elementary School	\$ 35,213,305	\$ 3,062,462	1	0.087	B
Hastings Elementary School	\$ 45,812,553	\$ -	1	-	A
Lexington Childrens Place	\$ 13,092,492	\$ 915	1	0.000	A
LPS Central Administration	\$ 22,317,890	\$ 11,903,680	1	0.533	F
Other Town Buildings	\$ 131,851,376	\$ 16,997,935	9	0.129	B
HIGH SCHOOL Modular	\$ 8,341,593	\$ -	2	-	A
Grand Total	\$ 668,563,400	\$ 105,755,590	27	0.158	B -

Chart 2: School buildings

Moreover, the cost to remediate many structural and mechanical problems is estimated at \$15 - \$19 million, approximately the same as the square footage needed to accommodate the Central Office in the new building. The structural and mechanical failures include a failing roof, poor HVAC systems, the need for window replacement, etc. LDA Architects and Accruent, LLC developed the Facilities Conditions Assessment estimate, indicating that the repairs to remediate these structural and mechanical failures would be at least \$15 million.¹ This \$15 million investment does not address other needs like moving walls or realigning interior spaces for better working conditions, which would increase the price tag to approximately \$15 - \$19 million. Given the hefty price tag of renovating an older building and the documented need for more athletic fields (addressed in question #3), Town staff and various boards and committees began exploring options. We engaged in a lengthy process to determine the best path forward; ultimately, the preferred solution is to include additional square footage for Central Office in the plans for a new or renovated high school.

2. Process—What decision-making led to including the Central Office in the plans for a new or renovated high school?

The Town engaged in a lengthy, 2+ yearlong collaborative decision-making process to consider the merits of including the Central Office in plans for a new or renovated high school. Those involved in the decision-making included Town (municipal and school) staff members, Select Board and School Committee members, Appropriation, Capital Expenditures, and Recreation Committee members, the LPS Master Planning Committee, and various school and community members. Below is a list of important documents representing our community's effort in determining the best path forward.

2021

- [Facilities Conditions Assessment](#)

2022

- [Comprehensive Study of Athletic & Outdoor Recreation Facilities \(2022\)](#)

¹ The table above is intended to show the condition of the school facilities and the letter grade each received. The LPS Central Administration building is an 'F' building and the amounts listed above are assets and not costs associated with remediating structural and mechanical failures.

- [LPS Master Planning Committee Agenda, Minutes & Recording \(09-29-2022\)](#)
- [Space Utilization Study \(10-13-2022\)](#)
- [Review of FY2024 Capital Plan \(11-14-2022\)](#)
- [Master Planning Committee Agenda, Minutes & Recording \(11-15-2022\)](#)
- [MPC Relocation of Central Office \(11-15-2022\)](#)

2023

- [Final MSBA Design Enrollment \(01-05-2023\)](#)
- [Central Office Relocation Recommendation to School Committee \(03-14-2023\)](#)
- [Central Office Requirement Forecast Report \(03-23-2023\)](#)
- [Central Office Land Memo \(05-15-2023\)](#)
- [Budget Summit #2 \(11-15-2023\)](#)

2024

- [Master Planning Committee Agenda, Minutes & Recording \(02-15-2023\)](#)
- [Master Planning Agenda, Minutes & Recording \(03-09-2023\)](#)

3. **Overcrowding**—*If the high school faces future overcrowding, could the square footage designated for the Central Office be converted into classroom space for students?*

Yes. The current massing concepts designate approximately 17,000 net square feet for the Central Office that can be used as classroom space if needed. The typical size of a new classroom will be approximately 850 square feet. **If future overcrowding becomes an issue, the 17,000 net square feet designated for the Central Office could be converted to approximately 15-20 additional classrooms.**

In March 2022, the Massachusetts School Building Authority accepted our Statement of Interest, inviting us into the capital pipeline. The MSBA then hired an independent demographer who started a dialogue with the district and negotiated with Town staff. Through this process, we increased our enrollment by 275 additional students, bringing the total to 2,395.

The MSBA has authorized a final design enrollment of 2,395 students for Lexington High School students, which some community members feel is too low to accommodate the potential for future growth. There are several reasons for this concern:

- Lexington's upsurge in enrollment history, once tripling in size from 1950-1960;
- The unreliability of 10-year projections;
- The trend of substantial overcrowding at the high school in the past several years;
- The uncertainty of enrollment rebounds related to the pandemic;
- The Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA communities (resulting in Lexington's new zoning ordinance that exceeds State requirements)

In our LHS Educational Plan, we asked our Project Team to consider these community concerns, ensuring that the Schematic Design incorporates a plan to build up and/or out should Lexington encounter another significant, unanticipated influx of students.

4. Athletics—How will the relocation of the Central Office minimize the project's impact on student-athletes and residents who utilize the Center Recreation Complex outdoor facilities?

The Recreation and Community Programs Department's unmet need for playing time on athletic fields operates at a 2,500-hour deficit, and students are the primary users of athletic fields and facilities in Town. A high school building project without alternative solutions would mean more potential disruption for students post-pandemic.

As we examined the financial challenges and opportunities related to a Central Office renovation or relocation, we also considered the likely impact a high school project would have on athletics. The Recreation Committee had just participated in a study to review the Town's athletic and outdoor recreation facilities, concluding that the demand for outdoor recreational space exceeds the space available. The Recreation Committee commissioned a study to determine facility and space needs. In addition to the 2,500 hours per year of unmet recreation needs in the Town, many of the Town's athletic fields lack lights and parking, and the three fields at Lincoln Park are at end-of-life, with replacements anticipated in 2025, 2026, and 2027.

Many years ago, there was discussion about demolishing the Central Office building and constructing new ballfields, but no firm plans were implemented to ensure this happened. The Lexington community, Recreation programs and services, and the many high school students they serve would be significantly impacted during the construction of a new or renovated high school. The plan to demolish the Central Office building at 146 Maple Street and construct new athletic fields will address a significant portion of Lexington's 2,500 hours per year of unmet recreation needs.

5. Cost—Will adding square footage for the Central Office in a new or renovated high school cost more than renovating the current building at 146 Maple Street?

No. It will cost approximately the same amount to renovate 146 Maple Street or build new, adding square footage into the plans for a new or renovated high school.

As previously noted, the structural and mechanical failures at the Central Office (Old Harrington) will cost approximately \$15 - \$19 million. This is approximately the same amount the cost estimators identified (\$20 million) for adding additional square footage.

At the Annual Town Meeting, Town Meeting Members overwhelmingly approved the total costs for the renovation of 173 Bedford Street (\$6M). Please note: the renovation of 173 Bedford Street would have taken place with or without the temporary relocation of the LPS Central Office to this location. The Lexington Police Department is housed in this space now, and the amount approved for the renovation is a typical expense each time a swing space is newly inhabited. Additional items awaiting Town Meeting Members' approval in FY26 include the demolition of the Central Office building at 146 Maple Street (\$1.65M) and the construction and installation of new athletic fields (\$6.18M).

6. Ballot—Will the Central Office require a separate ballot and vote from the school project?

No, the Central Office will not require a separate ballot and vote from the school project.