

District: Easthampton
School Name: Easthampton High School
Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic
Date: November 18, 2009

Recommendation:

That the Executive Director is authorized to approve the City of Easthampton, as part of its Invitation for Feasibility Study, to proceed into schematic design for the replacement of the existing Easthampton High School. MSBA staff has reviewed the designer's options for the Easthampton High School and accepts the District's preferred solution to replace the existing building with a new facility as the most cost-effective and educationally sound option.

Background:

The existing 103,000 gross square foot Easthampton High School was built in 1961 and has a current enrollment of 500 students. The District identified a number of building issues associated with the school including structural cracking in the floors and walls throughout the building. A raised plaza at the entrance of the building is a barrier for the handicapped, leaks into the cafeteria below and creates a walking hazard for those entering and exiting the building through the front entrance due to poor drainage. Inadequate ventilation and temperature controls have also been cited as problematic, especially on the first and third floors. In addition to the physical plant issues, the District identified programmatic deficiencies including severe overcrowding and a lack of programmatic space. This has led to the elimination of educational programs. The facility has no auditorium, making it difficult to hold large assemblies.

On November 28, 2007, the MSBA Board of Directors approved staff's recommendation to issue an invitation into the Feasibility Invitation category to further study the problems identified at the Easthampton High School.

Discussion

The District expressed a preference for the most cost-effective solution that met academic program requirements. The Designer investigated several "no-build" options including tuition agreements with adjacent school districts, rental or acquisition of existing buildings, and a "status-quo" alternative. After thorough investigations, these options were ruled out due to transportation logistics, space restrictions, limited available alternative structures, and an existing Easthampton High School that is undersized and at the end of its useful life.

The design team further evaluated the three most viable options, including:

- Option A (renovations within the existing building with additions, including complete relocation of students and staff using temporary swing space).
- Option B (renovations within the existing building with additions, including phased relocation of students and staff using temporary swing space).

- Option C (new construction built adjacent to the existing occupied school).

Code-required seismic upgrades for the renovation options would require extensive modifications to the existing footings and wall/roof framing, and the addition of structural shear walls, as well as the work needed to fix the cracking in the structural floors and walls noted in their Statement of Interest. The Designer and OPM reviewed the potential phasing options and project costs associated with the relocation of spaces required to operate during construction. The renovation and addition options also require a longer construction period to accommodate phased work in an occupied facility.

Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing

Option	Gross SF	Estimated Project Cost
A - Renovation/Addition (vacated bldg)	111,430	\$50,180,200
B - Renovation/Addition (phased, occupied)	111,450	\$52,684,600
C - New construction (existing bldg occupied)	110,300	\$47,965,000

After extensive public, School Committee, and Building Committee review, the District selected “Option C” as its preferred alternative for the following reasons:

- This option can best address academic program requirements.
- New construction provides an opportunity to design the building in its most efficient configuration, compliant with all current codes, and with improved site circulation.
- New construction is more energy efficient and better positions the District with a modern educational facility to serve the students for the next 50 years.
- This option will cause the least disruption during construction due to uninterrupted use of the existing building with a single move, and shorter construction duration, and no costs associated with temporary facilities.
- Most cost efficient solution.

MSBA has reviewed the conclusions of the Feasibility Study and the enrollment data with the District and found:

- 1) All initial paperwork required has been processed including an executed Initial Certificate of Compliance, the composition of the School Building Committee and the enrollment questionnaire.
- 2) MSBA has completed an enrollment projection utilizing the enrollment questionnaire completed by Easthampton, and has reviewed Easthampton’s existing high school capacity as provided by the District and an updated status of development under construction in the District. As agreed upon by the District, the MSBA enrollment projection supports an enrollment of 510 students for replacement of the Easthampton High School on the existing site.

- 3) MSBA reviewed the feasibility study and finds that alternatives investigated were sufficiently comprehensive in their scope and that the District's preferred option is reasonable and cost-effective.
- 4) The MSBA and the District have reviewed the space summary submission and have agreed to further refine their allocation of spaces as it relates to MSBA guidelines.
- 5) MSBA staff will work with the District to establish a design budget for the construction project.

Based on the review outlined above, staff recommends that the City of Easthampton be approved to proceed into schematic design to replace the existing Easthampton High School with a new facility.