

District: City of Fitchburg  
 School Name: Crocker Elementary School  
 Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic  
 Date: October 21, 2020

**Recommendation**

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the City of Fitchburg (the “District”), as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Crocker Elementary School with a new facility serving grades 1-5 on the site of the existing Crocker Elementary School. MSBA staff has reviewed the Feasibility Study and accepts the District’s Preferred Schematic.

<b>District Information</b>	
District Name	City of Fitchburg
Elementary Schools	Crocker Elementary School (PK-4) McKay Arts Academy (PK-8) Reingold Elementary School (PK-4) South Street Elementary School (PK-4)
Middle Schools	Arthur M. Longsjo Middle School (5-8) Memorial Middle School (5-8)
High Schools	Fitchburg High School (9-12) Goodrich Academy (9-12)
Priority School Name	Crocker Elementary School
Type of School	Elementary School
Grades Served	PK-4
Year Opened	1964
Existing Square Footage	73,081
Additions	N/A
Acreage of Site	17 acres
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mechanical systems</li> <li>– Electrical systems</li> <li>– Plumbing systems</li> <li>– Envelope</li> <li>– Windows</li> <li>– Roof</li> </ul> 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 and projected overcrowding.
Original Design Capacity	Unknown
2019-2020 Enrollment	649
Agreed Upon Enrollment	Study Enrollment includes the following configurations: 735 students in the Crocker Elementary School Facility (grade configuration K-4) 820 students in the Crocker Elementary School with McKay Arts Academy as a PK-K (grade configuration 1-5)

<b>District Information</b>	
	845 students in the Crocker Elementary School with South Street Elementary School as a Pre-K-K Facility (grade configuration 1-5) (Preferred Schematic)
Enrollment Specifics	Contingent upon the Board’s approval of the Preferred Schematic, the District will sign a Design Enrollment Certification for 845 students in grades 1-5.
Total Project Budget – Debt Exclusion Anticipated	No

<b>MSBA Board Votes</b>	
Invitation to Eligibility Period	February 15, 2017
Invitation to Feasibility Study	April 10, 2018
Reclassification to Eligibility Period	June 26, 2019
Reclassification to Feasibility Study	April 15, 2020
Preferred Schematic Authorization	On October 28, 2020 Board agenda
Project Scope & Budget Authorization	District is targeting Board authorization on June 23, 2021
Feasibility Study Reimbursement Rate (Incentive points are not applicable)	80.00%

<b>Consultants</b>	
Owner’s Project Manager (the “OPM”)	Colliers International
Designer	Saam Architecture, LLC

## **Discussion**

The existing Crocker Elementary School is a 73,081 square-foot facility located on a 17.38-acre woodland site in the City of Fitchburg. The current facility is one of four elementary schools in the District and serves 649 students in grades PK-4. The original school was constructed in 1964, with one single-story central building and classroom wings on either side. The existing school is connected by enclosed corridors and has three floor levels that transition from the high point on the west to the low point on the east of the site. A single-story modular classroom building was added to the north of the central building in the 1990’s.

The District identified numerous deficiencies in the Statement of Interest for the Crocker Elementary School, including inadequate education spaces, accessibility concerns, building envelope, roof, windows, mechanical and plumbing system concerns, electrical service and distribution system concerns, thermal comfort concerns as a result of inadequate heating/ventilation and temperature control, the presence of hazardous materials and asbestos containing materials, and site circulation issues. The existing facility has an undersized gymnasium, media center, student support spaces, and preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Additionally, the building lacks adequate space to deliver their special education, Title 1, occupational therapy, and physical therapy programs.

In conjunction with its consultants, the District performed a comprehensive assessment of the existing conditions and the 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 (7) seven preliminary options which include a base repair option, three addition/renovation configurations and three new construction options. The following is a detailed list of the preliminary options considered.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Description of Preliminary Options</b>
0	Base Repair (Code Upgrade) for grades PK-4
1	Addition/ Renovation to the existing Crocker ES (Grades 1-5, 820 students)
2	Addition/ Renovation to the existing Crocker ES (Grades 1-5, 845 students)
3	Addition/ Renovation to the existing Crocker ES (Grades 1-5, 845 students)
A	New Construction on the existing Crocker ES site (Grades 1-5, 845 students)
B	New Construction on the existing Crocker ES site (Grades K-4, 735 students)
C	New Construction on the existing Crocker ES site (Grades 1-5, 845 students)

The District considered the impact to all of its elementary students in its evaluation of options for the Crocker Elementary School and determined that options designed for 845 students in grades 1-5 yielded the greatest benefit across the District. The transition to a Pre-K and Kindergarten Early Childhood Center at the South Street Elementary School and transition of its other elementary schools to a grade 1-5 elementary model allows for the most effective use of its existing facilities. Therefore, “Options 1, and B” were eliminated from further consideration as these options did not support the benefits associated with options based on 845 students in grades 1-5. “Option 3” was selected for further development and consideration over “Option 2” as it was less disruptive to existing school operations, leaving four options for further development and consideration in the Preferred Schematic Report.

Upon further review, MSBA staff and the District agreed with the (4) four options recommended for further development and consideration in the final evaluation and development of preliminary design pricing as presented below.

#### **Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing for Final Evaluation of Options**

<b>Option (Description)</b>	<b>Total Gross Square Feet</b>	<b>Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*</b>	<b>Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Estimated Total Project Costs</b>
Option 0: Base Repair	73,081	73,081 \$294/sq. ft.	N/A	\$1,138,861	\$22,623,452 \$309/sq. ft.	\$30,000,000
Option A/ labeled Option 3 in the PDP: Add/Reno	119,714	57,317 \$340/sq. ft.	62,397 \$340/sq. ft.	\$8,608,836	\$49,276,190 \$412/sq. ft.	\$66,000,000
<b>Option B/ labeled Option A in the PDP: New Construction***</b>	<b>114,714</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>114,714 \$371/sq. ft.</b>	<b>\$11,343,959</b>	<b>\$53,906,791 \$470/sq. ft.</b>	<b>\$72,000,000</b>
Option C: New Construction	114,714	N/A	114,714 \$380/sq. ft.	\$12,163,262	\$55,711,977 \$486/sq. ft.	\$74,000,000

\* Marked up construction costs

\*\* Does not include construction contingency

\*\*\*District's Preferred Schematic

The District has selected “Option B”, a two-story new construction building as its Preferred Schematic, as it meets the goals and requirements of enrollment, sustainability, safety, and site responsiveness. The District has indicated this option aligns with the vision of the District’s grades 1-5 elementary school model and fulfills the District’s requirements of the educational program as it offers a uniform approach to learning communities, common space areas, and extended learning spaces.

The District has indicated that the Preferred Schematic also provides optimal building orientation, provides more opportunities for outdoor learning, and improves the daylighting to classrooms. It is anticipated that this option will result in the least amount of disruption to school operations during the construction process and offers the most potential for usage flexibility and expansion in the future. Additionally, the plan layout and configuration of the gym and cafetorium allows public use of the building to be contained, accessible, and easily controlled.

Although “Option 0”, the base repair option, was the least costly of all options, it was eliminated from further consideration by the District because the goals of the educational and enrollment requirements were not satisfied. Existing challenges of the building configuration would continue to remain, and there would be significant disruption to school operations throughout the construction phase.

“Option A”, an addition and renovation option, was the least costly of all new construction options; however, this option was not selected as the Preferred Schematic because it was limited in meeting the goals of the educational program. The District also determined that this option was less flexible for future expansion and would result in significant impact to school operations because of anticipated complex phasing and would result in the longest construction duration of all the options explored.

Although “Option C”, a three-story new construction building oriented East-West on the site, would meet the educational requirements with some potential for future expansion, it was not selected as the Preferred Schematic due to fewer opportunities for outdoor learning and lack of optimal building orientation. This option also had challenges in maintaining safety and security and would result in more disruption to building operations during construction due to limited site access around the building footprint. Additionally, this option resulted in the highest estimated construction cost of all the options explored during the Preferred Schematic phase.

The District presented its proposed Preferred Schematic to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee (“FAS”) on October 7, 2020. At that meeting, FAS members discussed a number of items including, an appreciation for the Educational Program; class sizes and the number of classrooms proposed; the proposed grade reconfiguration; opportunities to enhance flexibility and configuration of the proposed cafetorium; flexibility of the 5th grade classrooms; appreciation of the connections to the outdoors and opportunities to expand engagement with outdoor learning; flexibility in potential building expansion; appreciation for the distribution of the special education spaces; extended learning spaces; and site constraints and the proposed building layout and orientation.

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 and cost-effective and meets the needs identified by the District.
- 2) The District will submit an operational budget for educational objectives and a capital budget for MSBA review.
- 3) 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 is prior to executing a Project Scope and Budget Agreement.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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 recommends that the City of Fitchburg be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Crocker Elementary School with a new facility serving grades 1-5 on the site of the existing Crocker Elementary School.