The LEICESTER SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT

Frequently Asked Questions

UPDATED: June 26, 2020

https://leicester.projects.nv5.com/

https://www.facebook.com/LeicesterStrongSchoolsStrongCommunity/

Q1: When and where can I vote for the new Leicester Middle School project?

A1: In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Select Board voted on 3/23/20 for local voting to move from Spring 2020 to Fall 2020. The new dates are as follows:

Saturday, September 26, 2020

Special Town Meeting (Borrowing Authorization)

Tuesday, November 3, 2020

Presidential Election (Ballot Question to exclude the borrowing from the limits of Proposition 2 1/2)

Note: This FAQ document will be updated and reposted regularly to address new project related questions as they are submitted.

NV5

PUBLIC SCHOOLS LEICESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

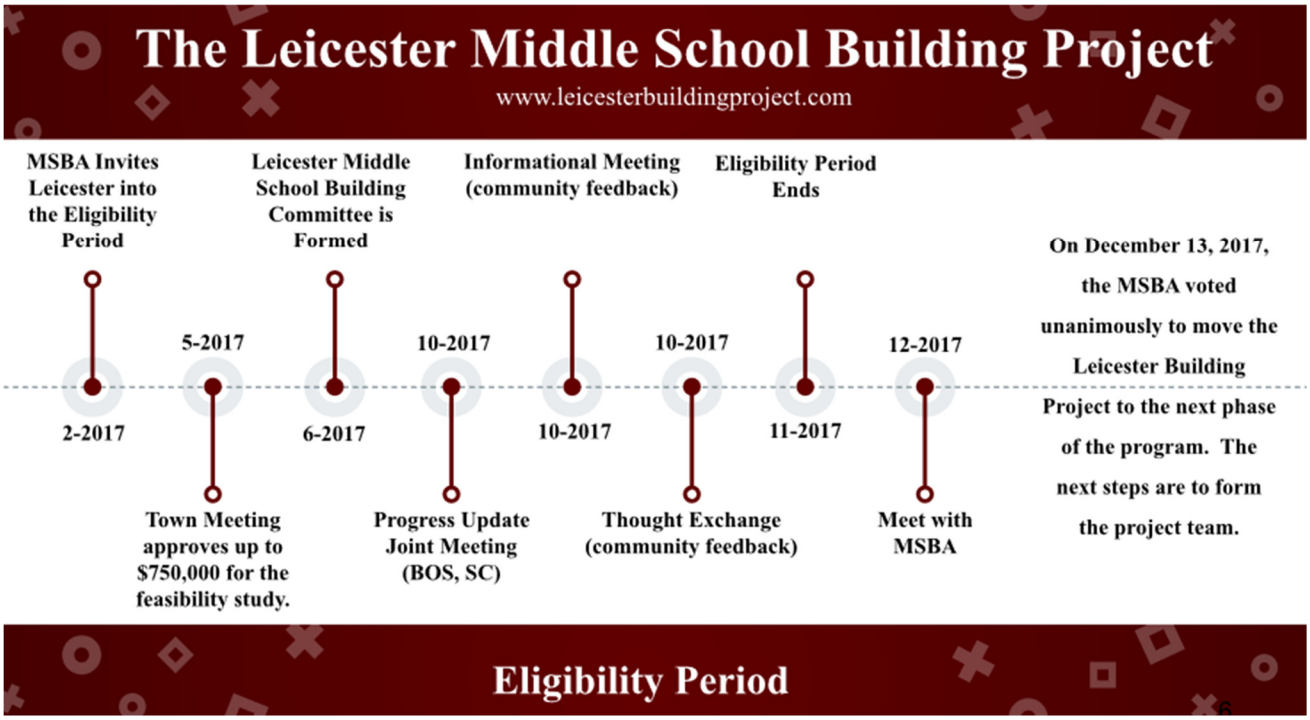
Finegold Alexander Architects

An **approved vote** in November 2020 will allow the project momentum to continue to next steps towards a **NEW SCHOOL OPENING IN SEPTEMBER 2023!**

Note: Although the project votes have been shifted and will be later than anticipated, the project team is working hard, with the assistance of the MSBA, to develop a procurement and construction schedule which would allow the new school to open in the FALL 2023, as originally planned.

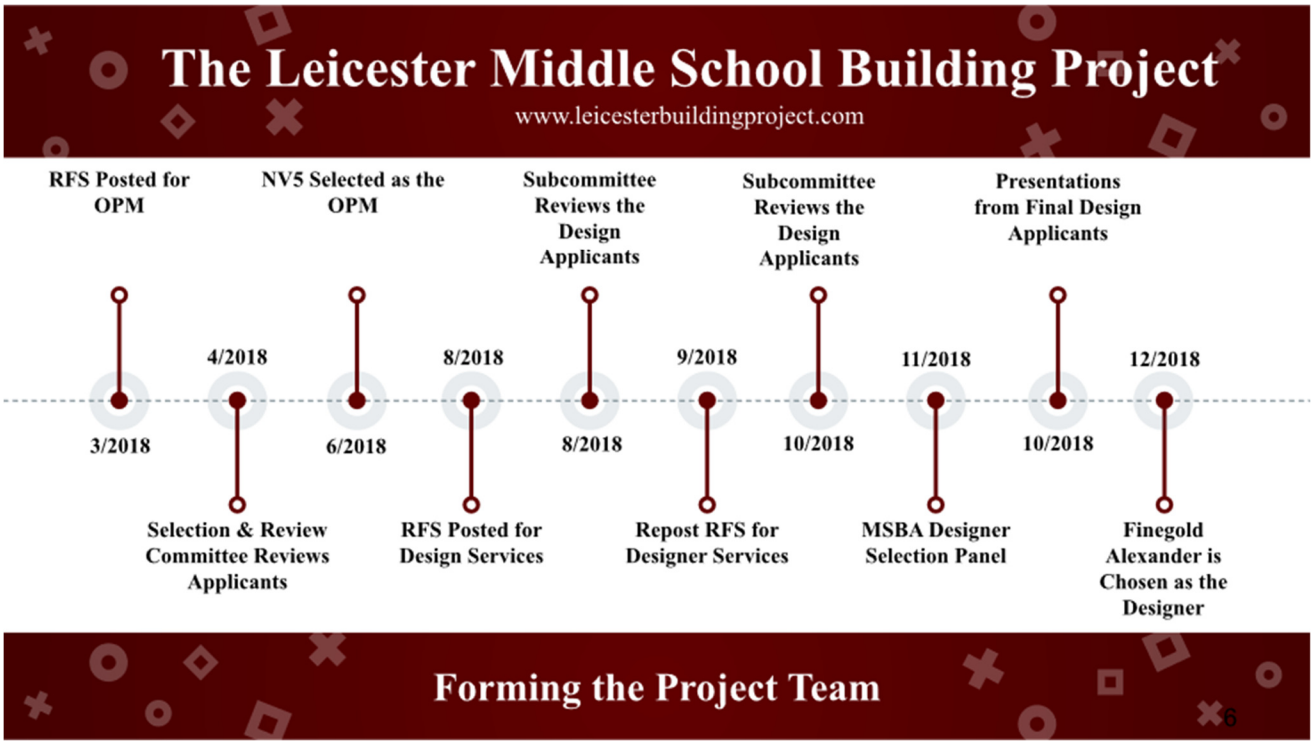
Q2: Can you provide an overview of the project and its timeline?

A2: See progress timeline below:



Back in March 2016, the Town of Leicester submitted a Statement of Interest for the Leicester Middle School. **The MSBA visited the school and immediately saw the urgency to rebuild/renovate**. Subsequently, in February 2017, the MSBA invited the Town of Leicester into the Eligibility period. What came next was community involvement through Thoughts Exchange and the Future Search Committee. At the end of the year 2017 the MSBA unanimously voted to move the Leicester School Building Project to the next phase, which was to form the project team.

2016.03	Leicester submits Statement of Interest to the MSBA
2017.02	MSBA Invites Leicester into the Eligibility Period
2017.05	Town Meeting approves up to $750K for Feasibility Study
2017.06	Leicester School Building Committee is formed
2017	Informational meetings and community feedback
2017.11	Eligibility period ends
2017.12	MSBA voted unanimously to move the Project forward



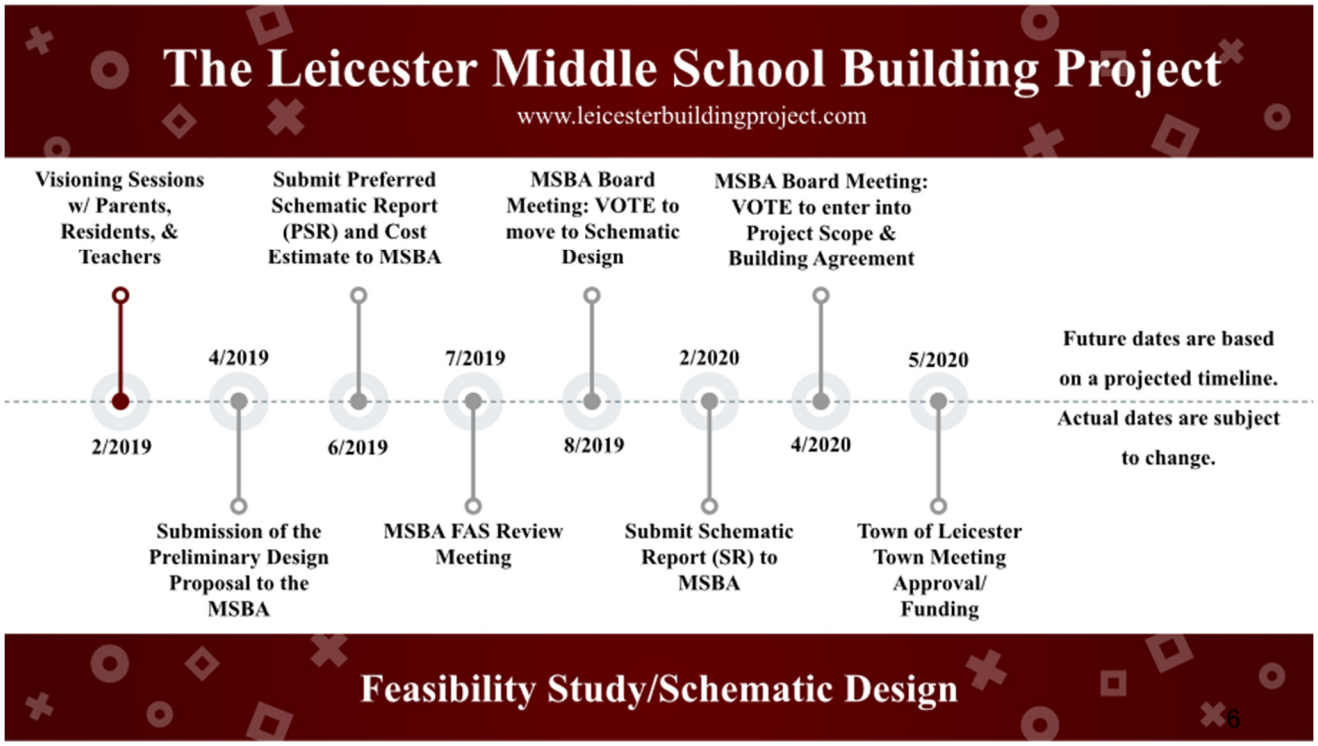
In 2018, the Town of Leicester advertised for proposals, reviewed and interviewed applicants, and ultimately hired an Owner's Project Manager (NV5) and a Designer (Finegold Alexander Architects) to form the Project team.

2018.03	Request for Services (RFS) advertised for OPM
2018.06	Owner's Project Manager (NV5) selected
2018.09	Request for Services (RFS) advertised for Designer

2018.10 Designer proposals reviewed

2018.11 MSBA Designer Selection Panel (DSP) reviews proposals/ presentations

2018.12 Designer (Finegold Alexander Architects) selected



For information on each of the submissions listed below, click on the particular submission on the project website:
https://leicester.projects.nv5.com/presentations/msba-submissions

2019.02 Visioning sessions with teachers, parents, students and residents

2019.04 Preliminary Design Program (PDP) submitted to the MSBA

2019.07 Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) submitted to the MSBA

2020.02 Schematic Design package submitted to the MSBA

2020.04 MSBA shall vote to approve the project to enter into Project Scope & Budget Agreement (Board approval is required prior to local vote)

2020.09 Special Town Meeting (Authorization to Borrow) Town funding approval

2020.11 Presidential Election (ballot question – Excluding the borrowing from the Limits of Proposition 2 ½)

Note: Pending Project approval at the Fall Town Meeting, the next phase of Design Development will begin, followed by construction documents, bidding and ultimately construction on early package work would begin in Fall 2021. Each phase requires MSBA submissions and approvals, as well as cost estimates.

Q3: What is wrong with the current Leicester Middle School?

A3: The current Middle School has infrastructure issues, the boilers are failing and have doubled their life span, the windows are drafty and there are no screens. The education space is not current and cannot support STEM and science classrooms so students have access to the proper technology. General classrooms are very undersized, and SPED programming is severely lacking, according to State guidelines. There is no space available, other than corridor areas, for students to break out into small groups. The auditorium has many broken seats. There is no practice area for band and chorus, thus the program has to be broken into multiple sections to accommodate students. The Living and Learning program is in an old Home Economics room, which limits the number of students who can access the program.

Q4: Of the (3) schools for which Statements of Interest (SOIs) were submitted to the MSBA, why was the Leicester Middle School selected to be rebuilt?

A4: The MSBA personnel who walked through the Middle School immediately saw the need to rebuild/renovate the Middle School due to the structure and age of the building. Of the three schools, the Middle School was determined to be in the most need of repair.

Q5: What is being proposed for the new Leicester School building project?

A5: The new school is being designed to be three stories, at 153,069 SF, with high efficiency building systems and state of the art technology. The underlying concept of the design is two schools under one roof, with the Upper School (grades 5 – 8) in one wing and the Lower School (PreK – 4) in another wing. Shared school and community program spaces like the Gym, Media Center, and Cafetorium will be centrally located in the building for all to share.

- Fully ADA compliant
- Accommodations for Special Education programs
- Accommodations for Pre-K and Kindergarten
- Dedicated spaces for art, music, physical education, media and STEM/Maker Space
- Flexible Learning spaces outside of classrooms, located in each wing
- Separate bus and vehicular traffic
- Maximum use of technology to enhance 21st century learning
- Air conditioned spaces for summer programming
- "Green Building" features will improve overall operational efficiency
- New Gym, Media Center, Cafetorium and Health and Wellness Studio will be available for Community use
- More students can be educated in their home Town, rather than being sent out of district [I would ask the District to confirm this statement]
- A new building is an investment in the future of the children of Leicester

Q6: How many students will the new school accommodate and how many classrooms will there be?

A6: The new school is being designed for 930 students, in grades Pre-K through 8. There will be a total of 49 classrooms broken down as follows:

4	Kindergarten Classrooms
27	General Classrooms, grades 1-6
8	General Classrooms, grades 7-8
2	Science Classrooms, grades 7-8
2	Self-Contained SPED rooms, grades 7-8
5	Self-Contained SPED rooms, grades K-6

Q7: Can the current Leicester Middle School be renovated without building a new building?

A7: The current layout and physical condition, including the compromised building envelope of the existing Leicester Middle School, would make a renovation extremely challenging and would be more expensive than a building new. The overall construction schedule would need to be "phased" in order for students to remain in as many classrooms as possible during construction, and temporary trailers would most likely be required. A renovation would require a full seismic upgrade of the building, which would impact most of the building structure.

Q8: What educational opportunities will the new school provide that current facility cannot?

A8: New classrooms sized according to state standards allowing for a better teaching and learning environment; dedicated STEM and Maker Spaces; equally distributed Special Education classrooms; dedicated Flexible Learning spaces outside of the classrooms.

Q9: Could the Memorial School be renovated instead of the Middle School?

A9: If we tried to expand the number of students with an additional three (3) classrooms in the building, the current road, which leads to and from the school, would not be able to accommodate the increased traffic volume. Therefore, additional roadways would need to be constructed. The configuration of the parcel of land where the Memorial School building is located, is not conducive to adding more students.

Q10: Were other sites considered before deciding to build at the existing Leicester Middle School site?

A10: There are not many suitable sites available to house a facility of this size. Three (3) other sites were considered: The Memorial School property, a portion of the Hillcrest Golf Course and the Leicester Drive-in property. Concerns with these sites included the demolition cost of school building and compacted lot (Memorial), lack of space for playing fields and alteration of the use of another Town property (Hillcrest), and purchase price and traffic (Leicester Drive-In).

The Middle School site offers the space that is needed for both the building and athletic fields, and offers the ability to have the schools grouped together in a campus-style atmosphere.

Q11: What will happen to the current Primary School building?

A11: There are options available for the Primary school building. The building could be leased for non-Town educational programs or the building could be sold to a third party for redevelopment (assuming the proposed use is compatible with the school property). A future option, although much less likely, would be to remove the building for additional fields or parking.

These are all options, but at this point a decision has not been made. The building will not be vacant. As an aside, there are three developers interested in the Memorial School, and it does not have an elevator, like the elementary school has. We believe this will make it much easier to find a new use for the building.

Q12: When would the new Leicester School building project open?

A12: Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the adjusted current project schedule factors in the authorization to borrow at the September 26, 2020 Special Town Meeting, as well as funding approval outside of Proposition 2 1/2 at the November 3, 2020 Presidential Election (ballot question). As noted in Question #1, the project team, including the MSBA, is reviewing procurement and construction options, to determine the feasibility of the **new Leicester School opening in September 2023,** as planned.

Q13: Will the project be done in one phase or several phases?

A13: Given that swing space will not be required, and that the current Leicester Middle School can remain in operation during construction, the intent is that the project can be completed in one phase. Given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, local votes have shifted to Fall 2020. The project team is reviewing procurement and construction alternatives and will determine whether early site package would be reasonable to help the project stay on track per the original timeline.

Q14: Will the students be relocated during construction of the new school?

A14: No. Building on the existing site allows the students to remain in the current Leicester Middle School. Relocation or swing space is not required. The construction area will be separate from the existing building by fencing and screening. A construction logistics plan will prevent conflicts between construction vehicles accessing the site and parent and bus drop-off and pick-up.

Q15: If the current enrollment of the Leicester Middle School is 431, why is the new school being designed for 930 students?

A15: The current Middle School houses 431 students in grades 5-8. The School Building Committee (SBC) explored several options for the Middle School configuration: Grades 5-8, grades 6-8, and grades K-8. Due to the fact that the Memorial School building and the Primary School building are failing and will likely require extensive repair work or full replacement within the next few years, the SBC recognized this as an opportunity to build a K-8 school as the most efficient and economically sound solution. According to enrollment

projections, the MSBA projects that in 2023, when the new school is scheduled to open, the enrollment for grades K-8 will be 930 students.

Q16: What happens if the Project is not approved at the Special Town meeting on September 26, 2020? (Note that local vote dates have shifted to Fall 2020 given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.)

A16: Consequences of the project not passing Town votes on September 26 (for appropriation), and again on November 3 (to exclude the appropriation from the limits of Prop 2 1/2), are the following:

- If Town funding is not approved, Leicester will lose this opportunity for State funding, which is currently close to 65% of eligible project costs.
- The Middle School will require building systems and other upgrades to be done with limited or no MSBA financial support.
- **A failed vote in November 2020** will likely result in Leicester Public Schools being required to submit a new Statement of Interest to the MSBA and await a second invitation from the MSBA to re-enter the Feasibility Study phase. Click here to learn about the MSBA Failed Vote Policy: https://www.massschoolbuildings.org/sites/default/files/edit-contentfiles/Documents/Vote_Requirements/Policy_Statement_Re_Vote_Fail_EP.pdf
- The project will be removed from the State pipeline.
- Project costs will only increase in the future.

Q17: How much will the project cost and how will it be funded?

A17: Based on recent adjustments to the building floor plans, approximately 2000 SF of previously deemed ineligible space is now eligible. The project budget, which is pending approval by the MSBA Board on 4/15/20, is set at $91,404,734. This amount is the estimated cost for the new building, including all site work, as well as a synthetic turf field and new track, upgraded baseball and soccer fields, and replacement tennis courts. The MSBA reimbursement rate has gone up significantly due to some plan changes. Project costs will be partially reimbursed by the MSBA, with an anticipated Maximum Total Facilities Grant just under $42M and the Town share at $49,467,340. The updated budget includes contingency, which was added to the budget to factor in the six-month slide from now until Town approval in November 2020.

There will be temporary borrowing during construction, followed by permanent borrowing for 20 years after the project is complete.

Q18: How much of the Project will be funded by the State?

A18: State funding is calculated by what the MSBA determines as eligible costs, which are based on established formulas for site work, square footage reimbursement, etc. The current allocations between the State and local contributions are based on those formulas. While variations on project costs may affect State or local shares, the overall project cost will be set by the MSBA and the Town vote at $91,404,734. Due to recent building plan adjustments, the project base reimbursement rate increased by close to 2%. Before incentive points the base rate is 61.32%, factoring in an additional 3.72 incentive points brings the total MSBA reimbursement rate to 65.04%.

Q19: Does the $91.4 million Total Project Budget include everything?

A19: Yes. All costs will be factored in including fees for the Owner's Project Manager, the Architect, Contractor and construction contingencies. Furniture, library books, technology and maintenance equipment are also included in the Total Project Budget.

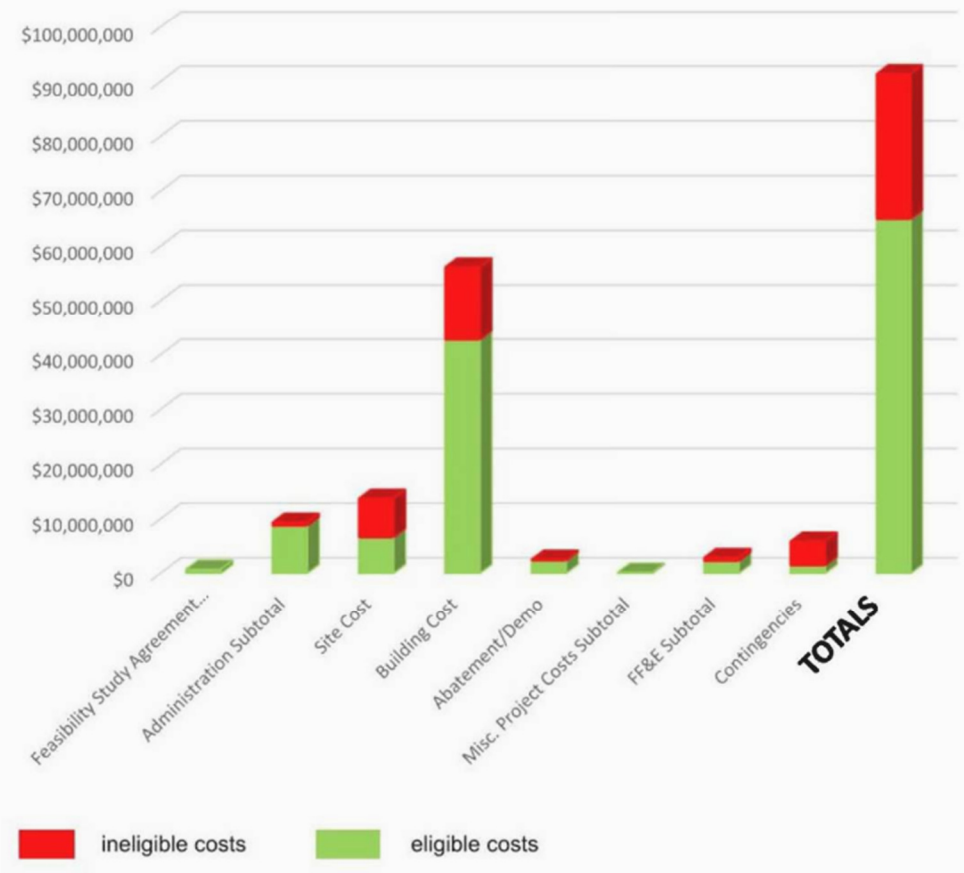
Building SF – Ineligible 3% =	4,684 SF
Building SF – Eligible 97% =	147,780 SF
Total Building SF:	**152,464 SF**

TOTAL PROJECT COST (TPC):	$91,404,734

MSBA Cost Caps			
A	Administrative Costs associated w/Ineligible SF		$655,193
B	Construction Cost Cap = $333/SF		$20,742,364
	1. Site Cap = 8% of Building Construction Cost (incl. in Construction Cost Cap)		$7,151,826
	2. Misc. abatement costs (incl. in Construction Cost Cap)		$200,000
C	FF+E and Technology Cap = $1200 per student		$651,000
D	Contingency Expenditures Cap = 1% of Construction Costs		$4,455,471
MSBA Maximum Facilities Grant			
E	Total Ineligible Costs	(A + B + C + D) =	$26,504,028
F	Total Eligible Costs	(TPC – E) =	$64,900,706
G	Reimbursement Rate		65.04%
H	Cost Recovery for Previous Grants		($274,025)
I	MSBA Maximum Facilities Grant	(F x G) – H =	$41,937,394
J	Maximum Local Share	(TPC – I) =	$49,467,340

Eligible vs. Ineligible Costs

There are two categories of costs that the MSBA will not reimburse: Excluded costs and ineligible costs. All site costs in excess of $3,470,693 are ineligible. The eligible site costs are capped at 8% of the building costs. However, a portion of those ineligible costs are considered excluded costs. The MSBA specifically defines the excluded costs, which are a subset of the ineligible costs, because they will also declare OPM and Designer fees for that portion of the work ineligible. Specifically for this project, the field and track costs as well as the maintenance shed at $125,000 and three (3) Conex boxes at $30,000, are all excluded. Those costs roughly correlate to $2,734,749.



Please check here https://leicester.projects.nv5.com/presentations/meeting-presentations/ for more information which was recently presented at the 6/10/20 Community meeting.

Q20: How much will the new school cost taxpayers?

A20: The anticipated local share of the project, is estimated to be $49,467,340. The Town would borrow temporarily during construction, which is estimated to add $0.06 to $2.54 on the tax rate, increasing annually, based on estimated borrowing amounts. When the debt for the project becomes permanent, the cost on the tax rate is estimated to be $3.50 per $1,000 valuation. On the average single-family home, valued at $259,606, that cost would be $910.

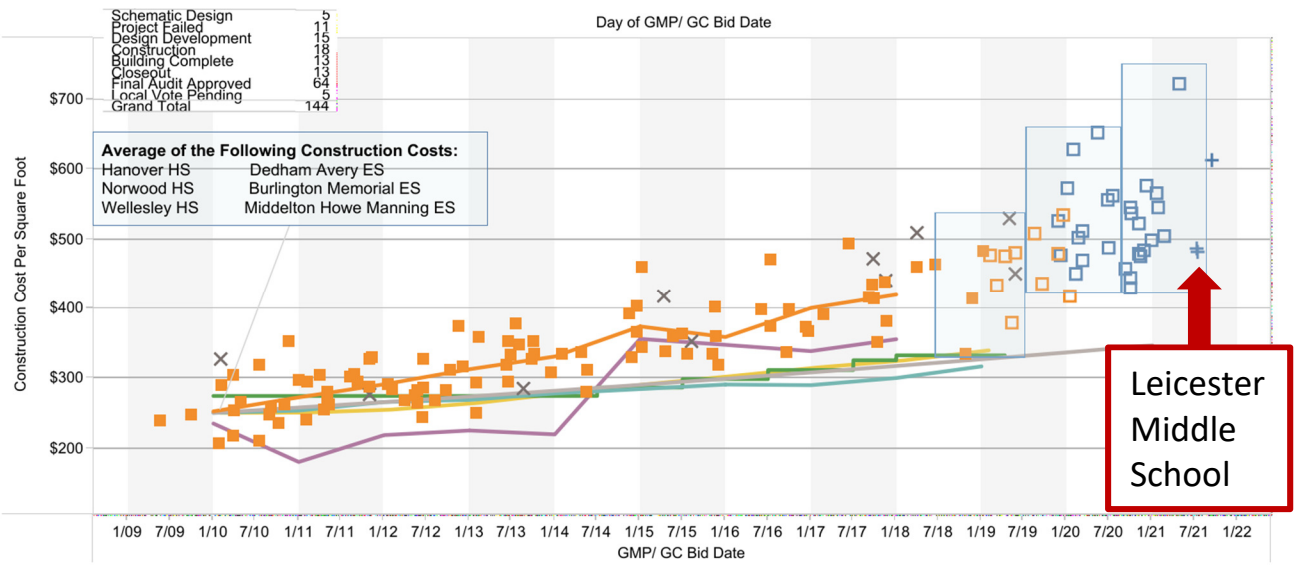
This is a debt exclusion, not an override. Only the annual debt cost can be placed outside of the limits of Proposition 2 ½, and it is only allowable to do so until the debt service is paid.

The timing of the permanent debt is to coincide with excluded debt that is coming off the schedule, including the Police Station, Hillcrest, and the Town Equipment exclusions, which results in a savings of 42 cents on the tax rate, or $109.59 to the average single-family home. The full anticipated debt schedule, including summaries of the old debt and the anticipated school project debt is on the school project website.

Q21: How does the cost of the new Leicester School compare with other similar projects in the State?

A21: As outlined in the table below, the Leicester Middle School costs are directly in line with other similar projects, even being at the lower end of the range:

School	Town	Students	PSBA	Const. $/SF	
Leicester MS	**Leicester**	**930**	**April 2020**	**$473/SF**	
Balmer	Northbridge	1030	June 2018	$476/SF	
Shaw	Millbury	550	August 2019	$546/SF	



For more information about project costs, please visit the MSBA website:
http://info.massschoolbuildings.org/TabPub/TableauCostData.aspx

Q22: Will the Community be able to use any spaces in the new school?

A22: Yes. The Community will have access to the new Gymnasium, the Media Center (Library), Computer Lab and Cafetorium (Cafeteria with a performance stage). Play fields will also be accessible, to be used by the Community.

Q23: How will Leicester community benefit from the new school?

A23: In addition to having access to the Gymnasium, Media Center (Library), Computer Lab and Cafetorium, the new state of the art facility will increase property values in Town. Also, the new school would keep SPED students in the district with appropriate spaces.

The children of the Town of Leicester will have the benefit of an education enhanced by a beautiful new school facility. After all, a new school is an investment in the future of the children and building a new school now is the financially responsible thing to do!

Q24: Will there be sustainable design features?

A24: Yes. There will be sustainable design features, including energy efficient heating, cooling and ventilation; plumbing fixtures with low flush and flow rates; high efficiency kitchen equipment; materials and finishes will be low VOC compliant to contribute to a healthy learning environment. These features will improve the overall operational efficiency and will reflect the Town's commitment to sustainability. The project is targeting LEED for Schools v4 certification.

Q25: Looking ahead to the future, will the new school be open in the summer months?

A25: Yes. Air-conditioned spaces will allow for summer school programs to take place at the new Leicester school. This will allow for other schools in Leicester to close for summer maintenance, if needed, which in turn would save the Town some money.

Q26: Is there any space allotted in the new school to introduce trade instruction, since the 7th and 8th grades will be included?

A26: (Response updated 3/13/20) The new school will have dedicated art, music, physical education, library media center, science and STEM rooms. In the STEM rooms there will be technology for engineering. Each of the classrooms will have digital technology available.

Although dedicated rooms for trades such as plumbing, electrical, construction, auto body and a metal shop, are not included in the program, there are STEM rooms, which will provide space for students to do engineering. The Town of Leicester is not a Chapter 74 school district. Therefore, vocational programs are not part of the curriculum.

Q27: What is the maximum student capacity at the Primary School, Middle school, High School and closed Memorial School? What is the current student enrollment at the Primary School, Middle school, High School? What is the annual operational cost for Middle School (Memorial School was $210K)?

A27: Response below:

School	Year Founded	Original Capacity	Current Enrollment
High School	1995	625	534
Middle School	1961	510	469
Elementary (Primary)	1974	630	504
Memorial	1954	450	0

- FY 2019 operational costs for the Middle School were $189,500.

- FY 2020 budget for operational costs of the Middle School is $221,500.

Q28: There is a drain system illustrated with multiple basins and piping. Where will the end product go? Will it go into the catch basin already at the Winslow/school entrance?

A28: As part of the design, there is a connection from the onsite drainage to the existing drain main on Winslow Avenue. We are not connecting into the catch basin. We are proposing to install a new drain manhole over the existing main.

(Additional response 3/13/20) The location of connections and discharges are based upon where the existing runoff is flowing, either over land or in pipes. There is a significant area, in front of the school, that currently flows to Winslow Avenue. The proposed drainage system will collect runoff from this area, treat the quality of the runoff and provide detention/infiltration to mitigate impacts prior to discharging into the Winslow Avenue drainage system. The proposed manhole to be installed is part of the School project and is included in the Project budget.

Q29: What is the estimate of how much more it would cost to build the school heated by electricity rather than gas, both with and without an electric heat-pump system? There is concern about using natural gas for the following reasons:

(1) Electricity will become less expensive as time goes on, while gas will become more expensive in the long term

(2) Electricity is safer than gas, recalling the Merrimack Valley explosions in September 2018

(3) An electric heating system will provide the school the possibility to be heated by locally produced power, whether solar, wind or hydro-electric

A29: Note that currently there is no natural gas to the building, nor is there a gas connection planned for the design/construction of the new school project.

An all-electric building vs. the VRF based system, which is the design currently proposed, is the most cost effective and efficient system recommended, from both an installation and operations stand point as well as the anticipated life cycle cost. Only the use of gas could improve upon this.

* VRF Heating is cheaper than oil heating.
* VRF Cooling is cheaper than electric.
* VRF Heating on a 15-degree day, or higher, is cheaper than gas.
* VRF Heating on a 15-degree day, or lower, is more expensive than gas.
* VRF Heating over the course of a year, based on temperature fluctuation, balances out and costs about the same as high efficiency gas heating and electric cooling.

Q30: With regard to security, will the new building be designed so there will be less access for access for outsiders? Is there a picture of the front door?

A30: The main entry design will allow a visitor to be let into the vestibule via an electric strike tied to a button at the main office, but not directly into the school. A visitor will be allowed into the administration reception area from the vestibule to be greeted and to sign-in. At that point, a visitor can be let into rest of the school only at the discretion of school personnel. A staff security station has been located within the vestibule in support of the higher volume

of arrival and departure. Neither of the exterior renderings specifically show the front door although the floor plan shows the security vestibule.

Q31: Please explain why the K-8 grade configuration was chosen vs. grades 5-12. Was there consideration to have older students who are ending their academic careers be in the new building, rather than younger students who are beginning their academic careers?

A31: When we met with the MSBA, we asked about a 5-12 school although the High School building is too "new" to replace. Also, per the MSBA, the High School cannot be added onto if the goal is to expand to include grades 5-8. One of the reasons K-8 was explored is that the Memorial School and the Primary School were identified in a study that they were almost near the end of their useful lives and that it would cost the Town a lot of money to renovate those buildings. Therefore, instead of building a 6-8 school and then asking for another new building for the lower grades, it was decided that the most efficient plan is to build one new school for grades K-8, which would save the taxpayers money in the long run.

Q32: How can I learn more and stay up to date on project developments?

A32: Please visit the Leicester Building Project website for general information and updates: https://leicester.projects.nv5.com/.
Questions or comments can be submitted via the "Contact" tab of the project website. You can also sign up to receive future correspondence about the project.

Please visit us on Facebook:

Leicester: Strong Schools, Strong Community

https://www.facebook.com/LeicesterStrongSchoolsStrongCommunity/

Q33: Why are prevailing wage rates required? If the same building was built in the private sector it would cost much less.

A33: Per the prevailing wage law, M.G.L. c. 149 sections 26-27, requires contractors performing work for public construction projects to pay prevailing wages. The prevailing wage law establishes special minimum wages that are paid to employees engaged in public construction projects. Prevailing wage rates for public construction projects are established by the Department of Labor Standards (DLS) within the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Q34: What are the size of the underground retention ponds and what is the depth of the ground water table below the project?

A34: The Civil Engineer notes the following approximate sizes for the underground retention ponds:

Underground Retention System #	Approximate size	Approximate volume
System #1	70.00 feet x 110.00 feet	17,000 cubic feet
System #2	83.67 feet x 175.78 feet	20,000 cubic feet
System #3	113.68 feet x 157.82 feet	18,000 cubic feet
System #4	26.94 feet x 90.71 feet	4,300 cubic feet
System #5	53.73 feet x 68.70 feet	4,300 cubic feet

Note the retention pond sizes are based on schematic design and further delineation of the retention ponds will be examined as we move into future phases.

The Geotechnical Engineer notes the groundwater monitoring reports, and their Final Foundation Engineering Report, indicate the groundwater at the monitoring well locations to be as shallow as 1-foot below grade, which is believed to be the result of surface water run-off infiltrating the ground up hill and traveling across the site on the silty relatively impervious soils.

Q35: How does the current Schematic Design cost estimate reflect what the final pricing will be?

A35: The purpose of the Schematic Design cost estimate is not to capture exact values for cost items. Values will be refined as the design evolves.

With regard to costs listed for specific items, during subsequent phases of project completion, the overall design will be studied more closely and details will be fine-tuned, including site furnishing items which have been asked about. During successive phases of the project, several more cost estimates will be performed, which will offer opportunities for additional value engineering. At the Schematic Design phase of design, which was just completed, some items are budgeted on the higher end to provide some latitude to work within. The costs of the specific items in question are estimates based on this early design phase and do not necessarily represent the absolute final values.

The values shown on the cost estimator's estimates are not comparable to the price one might find in the marketplace. The cost estimator is a construction professional who uses the drawings produced by the designers at various levels of completion to attempt to estimate what the bid costs of the project would be.

As an example, a bench shown on the landscaping drawings may show a cost in the estimate of $4,000. The estimator is attempting to ascertain the entire cost to the project for that bench but that does not equate to the market price one might find on line. Multiple contractors will include costs for that bench in their bids even though only one subcontractor will actually purchase and install the bench. The site contractor will include cost for labor and materials in prepping the earth below the bench, which would include excavating and disposing of the existing soil, importing and compacting new gravel sub-base. The concrete subcontractor will include a cost in his bid for installing the formwork and reinforcing, placing the concrete slab and then removing the formwork. Then the landscaping subcontractor will include his costs for ordering the bench, receiving it in his warehouse and then shipping it to the project site and installing it. Each of these subs will pay prevailing wages, with insurance, bonds and other markups for all labor associated with their work.

The final cost of construction will be determined by the bidding process, not by the cost estimators.