District: City of New Bedford
School Name: Charles S. Ashley Elementary School
Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic
Date: October 21, 2026

Recommendation

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the City of New Bedford (the "District"), as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into Schematic Design to consolidate the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and the Jireh Swift Elementary School and construct a new facility serving 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-Kindergarten, on the site of the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School. MSBA staff has reviewed the Feasibility Study and accepts the District's Preferred Schematic.

District Information	
District Name	City of New Bedford
Elementary Schools	Abraham Lincoln School (K-5) Alfred J. Gomes School (PK-5) Betsey B. Winslow (K-5) Carlos Pacheco (K-5) Casimir Pulaski (PK-5) Charles S. Ashley Elementary School (K-5) Elizabeth Carter Brooks (K-5) Ellen R. Hathaway (K-5) Elwyn G. Campbell (PK-5) Hayden/McFadden (K-5) Irwin M. Jacobs Elementary School (PK-5) James B. Congdon (K-5) Jireh Swift (PK-5) John Avery Parker (PK) John B. Devalles (K-5) Sergeant William H. Carney Academy (K-5) Thomas R. Rodman (K-5) William H. Taylor (PK-5)
Middle Schools	Keith Middle School (6-8) Normandin Middle School (6-8) Roosevelt Middle School (6-8)
High Schools	New Bedford High School (9-12) Trinity Day Academy (6-12) Whaling City Junior/Senior High School (7-12)
Priority School Name	Charles S. Ashley Elementary School
Type of School	Elementary School
Grades Served	K-5
Year Opened	1922
Existing Square Footage	58,383
Additions	N/A
Acreage of Site	3.79 acres
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas:

District Information	
	– Mechanical systems – Electrical systems – Plumbing systems – Building envelope – Windows – Roof – Accessibility In addition to the physical plant issues, the District reported that the existing facility does not support the delivery of its educational program.
Original Design Capacity	Unknown
2025-2026 Enrollment	238 students
Agreed Upon Enrollment	Study Enrollment includes the following configurations: – 275 students in grades K-5, plus Pre-Kindergarten, at the Charles S. Ashley Elementary School – 515 students in grades K-5, plus Pre-Kindergarten, in a consolidated Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School with Newcomer Program capacity – 665 students in grades K-5, plus Pre-Kindergarten, in a consolidated Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School with Newcomer Program capacity and relief of overcrowding at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School
Enrollment Specifics	Contingent upon the Board's approval of the Preferred Schematic, the District will sign a Design Enrollment Certification for 665 students in grades K-5, for a project that will serve grades PK-5.
Total Project Budget – Debt Exclusion Anticipated	No

MSBA Board Votes	
Invitation to Eligibility Period	December 13, 2023
Invitation to Feasibility Study	April 30, 2025
Preferred Schematic Authorization	On October 28, 2026 Board agenda
Project Scope & Budget Authorization	District is targeting Board authorization on April 28, 2027
Feasibility Study Reimbursement Rate (Incentive points are not applicable)	80.00%

Consultants	
Owner's Project Manager (the "OPM")	P-Three, Inc.
Designer	Turowski2 Architecture, Inc.

Discussion

The existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School is a 58,383 square foot facility located on a 3.79-acre site, that currently serves students in Kindergarten through grade 5. The original school building was constructed in 1922.

The Statement of Interest ("SOI") identified numerous deficiencies in the existing facility related to outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; building envelope; as well as accessibility issues. The SOI also identified deficiencies in the existing spaces and notes that the spaces within the facility are not conducive to delivering the District's educational program.

As part of the Feasibility Study, the MSBA accepted the District's request to explore options that include a consolidation of the Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and the Jireh Swift Elementary School student populations, resulting in the following three (3) study enrollment options:

- 275 students in grades K-5 plus Pre-Kindergarten at the Charles S. Ashley Elementary School;
- 515 students in grades K-5 plus Pre-Kindergarten in a consolidated Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School with Newcomer Program capacity; and,
- 665 students in grades K-5 plus Pre-Kindergarten in a consolidated Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School with Newcomer Program capacity and relief of overcrowding at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School (Preferred Schematic).

The existing Jireh Swift Elementary School is a 30,796 square-foot facility located on a 1.58-acre site that currently serves students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5. The original school building was constructed in 1908.

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 fourteen (14) preliminary options that included: two (2) code upgrade options, six (6) addition/renovation options, and six (6) new construction options. The following is a detailed list of the preliminary options considered.

Option	**Description of Preliminary Options**
Option A1	Code upgrade at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School; with an estimated project cost of $52.4 million.
Option A2.1	Addition/renovation designed for 275 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School; with an estimated project cost of $82.5 million.
Option A3.1	New construction designed for 275 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School site; with an estimated project cost of $83.6 million.
Option B1	Code upgrade at the existing Jireh Swift Elementary School; with an estimated project cost of $30.6 million.
Option B2.1	Addition/renovation designed for 515 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School; with an estimated project cost of $115.5 million.

Option B2.2	Addition/renovation designed for 515 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Jireh Swift Elementary School; with an estimated project cost of $118.6 million.
Option B3.1	New construction designed for 515 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School site; with an estimated project cost of $122.4 million.
Option B3.2	New construction designed for 515 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Jireh Swift Elementary School site; with an estimated project cost of $117.2 million.
Option C2.1A	Addition/renovation designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School with an addition to the north; with an estimated project cost of $143.9 million.
Option C2.1B	Addition/renovation designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School with additions to the north and south; with an estimated project cost of $145.1 million.
Option C2.2	Addition/renovation designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Jireh Swift Elementary School; with an estimated project cost of $141.5 million.
Option C3.1A	New construction designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the Charles S. Ashley Elementary School site; with an estimated project cost of $143.9 million.
Option C3.1B	New construction designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the Charles S. Ashley Elementary School site; with an estimated project cost of $144.3 million.
Option C3.2	New construction designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the Jireh Swift Elementary School site; with an estimated project cost of $139.3 million.

As a result of this analysis, the District determined that “Option A2.1” would not be considered for further evaluation because the proposed enrollment for this option would not be able to accommodate the District’s educational program. The District also determined that this option was not cost effective in comparison to the other options studied. Additionally, the District indicated this option would not accommodate the District’s desire to address the overcrowding concerns at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School or allow for consolidation.

The District determined that “Option B2.2” and “Option B3.2” would not be considered for further evaluation because the proposed site is too small to address project requirements and accommodate a facility that fulfills the District’s educational program. Additionally, the District determined that the design enrollment associated with these options could not accommodate the District’s desire to address the overcrowding concerns at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School.

The District determined that “Option C2.2” and “Option C3.2” would not be considered for further evaluation primarily because the Jireh Swift Elementary School site is too small to address project requirements and accommodate the District’s educational program.

Subsequent to the evaluation of preliminary options, the District further developed and renamed "Option B3.1" which is now referred to as "Option B3.1B". Additionally, the District developed the following three (3) new options:

- "Option B3.1A": New construction (Phased construction with no swing space) designed for 515 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, to the north of the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School building.

- "Option C2.1C": Addition/renovation designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School with an addition to the east.

- "Option C3.1C": New construction (H-shaped building) designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-kindergarten, at the center of the Charles S. Ashley Elementary School site.

Upon further review, MSBA staff and the District agreed to explore the following twelve (12) options for further development and consideration in the final evaluation and development of preliminary design pricing as presented below, including: two (2) code upgrade options, four (4) addition/renovation options, and six (6) new construction options.

Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing for Final Evaluation of Options

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option A1: Base Repair for 275 students in grades K-5 (Charles S. Ashley Site)	58,383	58,383 $606/sq. ft.	N/A	$3,993,423	$39,364,764 $674/sq. ft.	$49,205,954
Option A3.1: New Construction for 275 students in grades K-5 (Charles S. Ashley Site)	79,121	N/A	79,121 $742/sq. ft.	$15,988,796	$74,684,710 $944/sq. ft.	$93,355,887
Option B1 Base Repair for 275 students in grades PK-5 (Jireh Swift Elementary School)	35,198	35,198 $674/sq. ft.	N/A	$2,422,063	$26,133,548 $742/sq. ft.	$32,666,935
Option B2.1 Addition/Renovation for 515 students in grades PK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	123,131	60,135 $661/sq. ft.	62,996 $739/sq. ft.	$16,891,594	$103,191,723 $838/sq. ft.	$128,989,653

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option B3.1A New Construction for 515 students in grades PK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	113,099	N/A	113,099 $671/sq. ft.	$18,340,154	$94,192,260 $833/sq. ft.	$117,740,325
Option B3.1B New Construction for 515 students in grades PK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	119,501	N/A	119,501 $678/sq. ft.	$16,966,699	$98,011,082 $820/sq. ft.	$122,513,853
Option C2.1A Addition/Renovation for 665 students in grades PK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	156,567	61,269 $536/sq. ft.	95,298 $729/sq. ft.	$17,491,379	$119,830,013 $765/sq. ft.	$149,787,517
Option C2.1B Addition/Renovation for 665 students in grades PK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	144,951	57,786 $615/sq. ft.	87,165 $729/sq. ft.	$17,207,074	$116,265,460 $802/sq. ft.	$145,331,825
Option C2.1C Addition/Renovation for 665 students in grades PK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	136,526	60,234 $662/sq. ft.	76,292 $729/sq. ft.	$15,916,983	$111,300,143 $815/sq. ft.	$139,125,179
Option C3.1A New Construction for 665 students in grades PK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	133,934	N/A	133,934 $677/sq. ft.	$17,140,535	$107,761,619 $805/sq. ft.	$134,702,024
Option C3.1B New Construction for 665 students in gradesPK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)	133,934	N/A	133,934 $702/sq. ft.	$16,182,111	$110,215,565 $823/sq. ft.	$137,769,456
Option C3.1C* ***New Construction for 665 students in gradesPK-5 (Existing Ashley Site)***	***133,934***	***N/A***	***133,934 $675/sq. ft.***	***$17,283,935***	***$107,681,349 $804/sq. ft.***	***$134,601,686***

* *Marked up construction costs*

** *Does not include construction contingency*

******District's Preferred Schematic***

The District selected "Option C3.1C" as its Preferred Schematic to proceed into Schematic Design as the District determined this option best meets the needs of the District's educational program and aligns with the District's decision to move forward with a 665-student enrollment. Additionally, the District indicated this option is anticipated to support academic and grade-level organization by floor, creating "neighborhoods" of each group with special education support spaces throughout, which was desired by the District.

"Options A1 and B1" were not selected by the District because the District determined that the existing buildings would not accommodate the spatial needs and adjacencies in the District's educational program and these options would not accommodate a consolidation scenario.

"Option A3.1" was not selected by the District because this option does not accommodate the District's desired enrollment of 665-students and would require the District to consider an additional project to address the conditions at the Jireh Swift Elementary School, resulting in additional costs to the District.

"Options B2.1, B3.1A, and B3.1B" were not selected by the District because these options do not accommodate the District's desired enrollment of 665-students and would require the District to consider an additional project to improve the Lincoln School. Additionally, "Option B3.1A" does not adequately allow for grade-level neighborhoods and "Option B3.1B" does not provide the adjacencies desired by the District.

Although "Options C2.1A, C2.1B, and C2.1C" meet the District's desire to consolidate the student population of the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School with Newcomer Program capacity and provide relief of overcrowding at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, these were not selected by the District because these options do not provide optimal solar orientation or the desired grade level classroom neighborhoods when compared to "Option C3.1C". Additionally, these options separate the occupancy time of the Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School students in two different midyear transitions, which the District considered less optimal.

Although "Option C3.1A" results in the lowest overall estimated cost for the new 665 options, meets the District's desire to consolidate the student population of the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School with Newcomer Program capacity, and provides relief of overcrowding at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, this option requires a 4-story configuration, which was not desired by the District. Additionally, this option does not offer optimal solar orientation of the proposed classrooms and does not provide the adjacencies desired by the District.

Although, "Option C3.1B" meets the District's desire to consolidate the student population of the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School with Newcomer Program capacity, and provides relief of overcrowding at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, this option does not offer optimal solar orientation of the proposed classrooms and results in the highest estimated cost when compared to the other new construction options associated with a 665 student design enrollment.

The District presented its proposed Preferred Schematic to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee ("FAS") on September 16, 2026. At that meeting, members of the FAS discussed the following items:

- Appreciation of the thoroughness of the District's Educational Program and inclusion of multilingual/multicultural learning opportunities at the elementary level;
- The distribution of Special Education spaces, with particular attention to the main floor, and the DESE review process during Schematic Design;
- Appreciation for the proposed layout;
- The massing and scale of the building in relationship to the residential neighborhood and as it relates to lower elementary grades;
- Design strategies and opportunities to further refine scale as the design progresses;
- Appreciation for the continuity between the adjacent park and the proposed courtyard;
- Site topography and how the fields and playgrounds will nestle into the site;
- Site access and circulation; and
- Consideration of current supply chain conditions as it relates to the construction schedule and use of Design/Bid/Build construction delivery method.

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 has submitted an operational budget for educational objectives and a capital budget statement 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 New Bedford be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to consolidate the student population of the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School and Jireh Swift Elementary School while providing relief of overcrowding at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School and construct a new facility designed for 665 students in Kindergarten through grade 5, plus Pre-Kindergarten, on the site of the existing Charles S. Ashley Elementary School.