District: City of Somerville
School Name: Winter Hill Community School
Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic
Date: October 21, 2026

Recommendation

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the City of Somerville (the "District"), as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into Schematic Design to consolidate the existing student populations of the Winter Hill Community School and the Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School and construct a new facility serving Kindergarten through grade 8, plus Pre-Kindergarten, on the site of the existing Winter Hill Community School. MSBA staff has reviewed the Feasibility Study and accepts the District's Preferred Schematic.

District Information	
District Name	City of Somerville
Elementary Schools	Capuano Early Childhood Cener (PK-K) Benjamin G. Brown School (K-5)
Middle Schools	Albert F. Argenziano School (PK-8) Arthur D. Healey School (PK-8) East Somerville Community School (PK-8) John F. Kennedy School (PK-8) West Somerville Neighborhood School (PK-8) Winter Hill Community School (PK-8) Next Wave Junior High (6-8)
High School	Somerville High School (9-12)
Priority School Name	Winter Hill Community School
Type of School	Middle School
Grades Served	PK-8
Year Opened	1975
Existing Square Footage	85,700
Additions	N/A
Acreage of Site	1.97 acres
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas: – Structural integrity – Electrical systems – Plumbing systems – Building envelope – Accessibility 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 projected overcrowding.
Original Design Capacity	Unknown
2025-2026 Enrollment	361 students
Agreed Upon Enrollment	Study Enrollment includes the following configurations: – 690 students in grades K-8, plus Pre-Kindergarten served by the Winter Hill Community Elementary School.

District Information	
	– 925 students in grades K-8, plus Pre-Kindergarten at a consolidated Winter Hill Community School and Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School (Preferred Schematic)
Enrollment Specifics	Contingent upon the Board's approval of the Preferred Schematic, the District will sign a Design Enrollment Certification for 925 students in grades Kindergarten through 8, plus Pre-Kindergarten.
Total Project Budget – Debt Exclusion Anticipated	Yes

MSBA Board Votes	
Invitation to Eligibility Period	December 13, 2023
Invitation to Feasibility Study	December 13, 2024
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)	54.14%

Consultants	
Owner's Project Manager (the "OPM")	PMA Consultants, LLC
Designer	Perkins Eastman

Discussion

The existing Winter Hill Community School is an 85,700 square foot facility located on a 1.97-acre site, which served students in Kindergarten through grade 8 and a portion of the District's Pre-Kindergarten enrollment until June 2023. The original school building was constructed in 1974, with portions of the HVAC system and portions of exterior walls renovated in 2008, and roof, windows, and doors replacement completed in 2018. The building was closed in 2023 due to existing conditions and the presence of hazardous materials, resulting in the relocation of students to other facilities within the District.

The District identified numerous deficiencies in the Statement of Interest ("SOI") related to the structural integrity of the building; electrical and plumbing systems; building envelope; accessibility; projected overcrowding; and deficiencies in existing spaces that are deemed incapable of appropriately delivering the District's educational program.

As part of the Feasibility Study, the MSBA accepted the District's request to explore options that include consolidation options associated with the existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School student population, resulting in the following two (2) study enrollment options:

- 690 students in grades K-8, plus Pre-Kindergarten, served by the Winter Hill Community Elementary School; and,
- 925 students in grades K-8, plus Pre-Kindergarten, consolidating the Winter Hill Community School with the Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School (Preferred Schematic).

The existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School is a 26,700 square foot facility located on an approximately 0.6-acre site that currently serves students in Kindergarten through grade 5. The original building was constructed in 1900. The District identified numerous deficiencies related to the structural integrity of the building; mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; building envelope; accessibility; the presence of hazardous materials; lighting and acoustics; and deficiencies in existing spaces that are deemed incapable of appropriately delivering the District's educational program.

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 fifteen (15) preliminary options that included: two (2) code upgrade options, four (4) addition/renovation options, and nine (9) new construction options. The following is a detailed list of the preliminary options considered.

Option	**Description of Preliminary Options**
Option 0	Code upgrade at the existing Winter Hill Community School facility designed for 690 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $83.8 million.
Option 1A	Addition/renovation at the existing Winter Hill Community School designed for 690 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $174.5 million.
Option 1B	Addition/renovation at the existing Winter Hill Community School designed for 925 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $184.9 million.
Option 2A	New construction oriented along Evergreen Avenue (5 stories) at the existing Winter Hill Community School site designed for 690 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $175.2 million.
Option 2B	New construction oriented along Evergreen Avenue (5 stories) at the existing Winter Hill Community School site designed for 925 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $190.2 million.
Option 3A	New construction oriented along Sycamore Street (5 stories) at the existing Winter Hill Community School site designed for 690 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $177.5 million.
Option 3B	New construction oriented along Sycamore Street (5 stories) at the existing Winter Hill Community School site designed for 925 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $193.5 million.
Option 4	New construction (6 stories) at the existing Winter Hill Community School site designed for 925 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $190.2 million.
Option 5A	New construction at the Trum Field site designed for 690 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $177.6 million.
Option 5B	New construction at the Trum Field site designed for 925 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $191.4 million.
Option 6A	Code upgrade at the existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School facility; with an estimated total project cost of $34.8 million.

Option 6B	Addition/renovation at the existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School designed for 690 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $201.5 million.
Option 6C	Addition/renovation at the existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School designed for 925 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $242.8 million.
Option 6D	New construction at the existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School site designed for 690 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $212.2 million.
Option 6E	New construction at the existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School site designed for 925 students in grades K-8; with an estimated total project cost of $251.5 million.

As a result of this analysis, the District determined that the following seven (7) options would not be considered for further evaluation:

- "Option 3A" and "Option 3B" would result in a disadvantageous building configuration and would not meet the District's sustainability goals. Additionally, "Option 3A" does not support the District's preferred enrollment scenario of a consolidated 925 student configuration.

- "Option 5A" and "Option 5B" would not be viable because the Trum Field site was removed from consideration primarily due to cost drivers, community support, and Article 97 permitting requirements. Also, the District determined that these options could potentially result in additional traffic congestion in the surrounding area, which was not desired by the District.

- "Option 6A" would not fully address the needs of the District's educational program. However, please note that this option was included as part of the final evaluation of options for cost comparison purposes only.

- "Option 6B" and "Option 6D" would result in a disadvantageous high-rise building configuration and would reduce available outdoor space, which was not desired by the District.

However, subsequent to the evaluation of preliminary options, the District developed the following sub-options for "Option 4", resulting in two (2) additional new construction options as described below:

- "Option 4.1": New construction (6 stories) with a compact building footprint at the existing Winter Hill Community School site, designed for 925 students in grades K-8 plus Pre-K.

- "Option 4.2": New construction (6 stories) with an expanded building footprint at the existing Winter Hill Community School site, designed for 925 students in grades K-8 plus Pre-K.

Upon further review, MSBA staff and the District agreed to explore the following eleven (11) 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; three (3) addition/renovation options; and six (6) new construction options. As noted above, "Option 6A" was included for cost comparison purposes only.

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 0: (Code upgrade)	93,400	93,400 $602/sq. ft.	N/A	$7,938,106	$64,184,370 $687/sq. ft.	$84,081,524
Option 1A: (Addition/renovation for 690 students at Winter Hill Community School)	173,800	93,400 $742/sq. ft.	80,400 $863/sq. ft.	$16,128,018	$154,857,377 $891/sq. ft.	$202,863,164
Option 1B: (Addition/renovation for 925 students at Winter Hill Community School)	187,470	93,400 $741/sq. ft.	94,070 $830/sq. ft.	$15,901,987	$163,165,116 $870/sq. ft.	$210,483,000
Option 2A: (New 5-story construction for 690 students at Winter Hill Community School site)	152,000	N/A	152,000 $858/sq. ft.	$23,592,149	$153,955,313 $1,013/sq. ft.	$198,602,354
Option 2B: (New 5-story construction for 925 students at Winter Hill Community School site)	186,000	N/A	186,000 $812/sq. ft.	$24,130,436	$175,237,544 $942/sq. ft.	$226,056,432
Option 4: (New 6-story construction at Winter Hill Community School site)***	***186,000***	***N/A***	***186,000 $816/sq. ft.***	***$22,185,463***	***$174,025,908 $936/sq. ft.***	***$224,493,421***
Option 4.1: (New 6-story construction with a compact building footprint at Winter Hill Community School site)	186,000	N/A	186,000 $797/sq. ft.	$20,058,360	$168,233,439 $904/sq. ft.	$217,021,137
Option 4.2: (New 6-story construction with an expanded building footprint at Winter Hill Community School site)	186,000	N/A	186,000 $820/sq. ft.	$22,973,573	$175,552,496 $944/sq. ft.	$226,462,719
Option 6A: (Code upgrade of the Benjamin G. Brown School - Cost Comparison Only)	33,100	33,100 $827/sq. ft.	N/A	$3,198,458	$30,571,486 $924/sq. ft.	$40,048,647

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 6C: (Addition/renovation for 925 students at Benjamin G. Brown School)	195,100	33,100 $797/sq. ft.	162,000 $1,016/sq. ft.	$9,695,181	$200,678,660 $1,029/sq. ft.	$262,889,044
Option 6E: (New construction for 925 students at Benjamin G. Brown School site)	195,600	N/A	195,600 $905/sq. ft.	$14,711,528	$191,773,363 $980/sq. ft.	$247,387,638

** Marked up construction costs*
*** Does not include construction contingency*
******District's Preferred Schematic***

The District selected "Option 4" as the Preferred Schematic to proceed into Schematic Design because the District determined that this option best meets the District's educational program requirements and long-term vision. The District determined that this option takes advantage of the preferred site and would accommodate the desired spatial adjacencies as described in the District's educational program by establishing distinct grade clusters that allow for clear separation of community and educational spaces. Additionally, this option would retain the location of existing playgrounds and fields and would not require phasing or temporary facilities during construction.

"Option 0" and "Option 6A" were not selected by the District primarily because it was determined that these options do not meet the needs of the educational program and would not address the District's sustainability goals. Additionally, these options do not support the District's preferred enrollment scenario of a consolidated 925 student configuration.

"Option 1A" and "Option 1B" were not selected by the District primarily because these options would not address all desired spatial adjacencies as described in the District's educational program. The proposed building configurations would result in interior circulation inconducive to maintaining distinct grade clusters, and both options would result in a reduction of open space on the site. Additionally, "Option 1A" does not support the District's preferred enrollment scenario of a consolidated 925 student configuration.

"Option 2A" and "Option 2B" were not selected by the District primarily because these options would result in a disadvantageous building and site configuration and would not accommodate the desired level of community access to the building. Additionally, these options are anticipated to result in higher estimated construction costs. Furthermore, "Option 2A" does not support the District's preferred enrollment scenario of a consolidated 925 student configuration.

Although the reduced building footprint of "Option 4.1" would likely result in lower estimated construction costs when compared to "Option 4", this option was not selected by the District because the proposed building configuration would not address the desired spatial adjacencies described in the educational program. Additionally, this option would result in the multipurpose field not being accessible from the gymnasium and would also result in disconnected shared and community spaces.

Although “Option 4.2” meets the District’s educational program, this option was not selected by the District primarily because this option would not address all desired spatial adjacencies described in the District's educational program. Similar to “Option 4.1”, this option would result in the multipurpose field not being accessible from the gymnasium. Additionally, this option is anticipated to result in higher estimated construction costs when compared to “Option 4” due to an expanded building footprint.

“Option 6C” and “Option 6E” were not selected by the District because these options would result in a disadvantageous high rise building configuration and limited outdoor play space due to site constraints. These options would also require the use of temporary modular classrooms to accommodate students at the existing Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School during construction. In addition, costs associated with construction logistics and swing space were also contributing factors to the District’s decision.

The District presented its proposed Preferred Schematic to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee (“FAS”) on September 30, 2026. At that meeting, members of the FAS discussed the following items:

- Appreciation of the thoroughness of the District’s Educational Program, especially regarding the diversity in programming to meet the needs of various learners;
- Scheduling considerations, specifically the complexity of offerings;
- The distribution of Special Education spaces and the DESE review process during Schematic Design;
- Opportunities for after school programs and accessibility for all families;
- Clarity on the various entry points throughout the building;
- Site constraints and topography and associated massing and elevation considerations;
- The importance of plans for the maintenance of the rooftop and outdoor spaces;
- Ongoing cost considerations; and,
- Appreciation for the focus on incorporating daylight throughout the building as the design progresses.

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 Somerville be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to consolidate the existing student population of the Winter Hill Community School and the Benjamin G. Brown Elementary School and construct a new facility designed for 925 students in Kindergarten through grade 8, plus Pre-Kindergarten, on the site of the existing Winter Hill Community School.