



Baldwin School Building Project -- Addressing Common Concerns

This document was developed to directly address concerns that have been raised by community members about the Baldwin School Building Project. This version was developed for and distributed at the Baldwin School Project's November 26, 2018 Community Forum. A more comprehensive version of this document will be available on the Baldwin School Building Project's webpage at www.brookline.k12.ma.us/baldwin-expansion

Concern:

The neighborhood surrounding the Baldwin School site has not been listened to by Town officials and proponents of the project.

Facts:

There have been over 74 public meetings since February 2016 regarding the Baldwin site. For a majority of these meetings, community members were able to provide public comment and input. In addition, all community members have had continuous access to public officials and school department staff involved in the project via email. Neighbors also have the opportunity to communicate through an online comment form made available on the town and school department websites.

In response to input from the community members who live in the Baldwin neighborhood, significant changes have been made to the project:

- *The Town has downsized the project twice, from 800 students to 660 students, and then again from 660 students to 450 students.*
 - *The decreased school size reduces school-related traffic and parking.*
 - *The Town has moved away from building on both the Baldwin School and Baldwin School Playground site to a proposed building that is constrained to the Baldwin School site and leaves the Baldwin School Playground as is.*
 - *The Town has moved away from making improvements to the Soule Recreation Center that would have expanded access and parking at Soule and improved the quality of the playing fields.*
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Concern:

During the 2017 site selection process, the Baldwin site was described as infeasible and disadvantageous by the current traffic engineer, even for a reduced school size.

Facts:

The preliminary traffic analysis conducted during the 2016 site selection process was not designed to make a definitive determination of the quality of a specific site. It simply compared the quality of traffic and access between three sites – Baker, Baldwin, and the Stop & Shop on Harvard Street. The 2016 study's evaluation criteria, including "advantageous" and "disadvantageous" designations, were used for



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the purpose of relative comparisons to judge the various potential advantages and disadvantages of these possible school sites, pending further study.

As significant changes have been made to the project through the integration of community feedback, new information and mitigation approaches have been identified which have proven the viability of traffic for the currently planned, scaled down proposal. This new information includes a dramatic reduction of the proposed school's size, as well as traffic improvement measures such as the retiming of the Heath/Hammond traffic signal and adjustment of the proposed school start time. These measures were not considered during the preliminary, town-wide site selection traffic study effort.

In selecting the Baldwin site, traffic was considered among a variety of criteria by the joint Town committees in making their recommendation of the Baldwin site and was balanced against other advantages offered by this site option.

Concern:

Parents attempting to drop off their children at the new school will back up on to Heath Street blocking traffic.

Facts:

The new school will have over 650 linear feet of on-site queuing space which will allow for all queuing to occur off of the surrounding public roads. Baldwin will be the only school in Brookline that provides sufficient on-site vehicle circulation to relieve surrounding public roads from queuing backups.

Concern:

The expanded Baldwin School would not be a walkable school.

Facts:

Four schools (Heath, Baker, Lincoln, and Runkle) all have 40% or more students getting to school by car and bus. Except for those students who live within walking distance of Baker, most students in South Brookline already are driven to school by car or bus. There are 138 public school students who live within ½ mile of the Baldwin School, many of whom could walk to the school. Additionally, when the Baldwin School is rebuilt, we would anticipate additional families would move within walking distance in the coming years.

Concern:

Students walking to the new school will need to cross Route 9 and will be endangered by currently unsafe pedestrian crossings.

Facts:

At various locations, students currently cross Route 9 safely today to attend Lincoln, Heath, and Brookline High School. Like any school, the new school at Baldwin will require improvements to pedestrian



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crossings. These improvements will include crossing guards at Route 9 and other intersections, new sidewalks and signage improvements, school zone flashing and pedestrian signals, and with the cooperation of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, a signalized Route 9 pedestrian crossing at either Dunster or Norfolk Roads.

Concern:

The new school site will force a large number of students who are now walking to get to school in a vehicle.

Facts:

Busing is already commonplace in the Brookline school district. Students in the vicinity of the new Baldwin school who are currently being bused or driven to Heath will now be able to walk to school. Currently Heath, Baker, Lincoln, and Runkle all have 40% or more students getting to school by car or bus. Except for those students who live within walking distance of Baker, most students in South Brookline already are driven to Heath, Lincoln, or Baker by car or bus.

Concern:

The new school will make the Baldwin School playground inaccessible for public use.

Facts:

The Baldwin School playground will be fully accessible to all community members, just as it is today.

Concern:

Renovating and expanding the Baker School is a more effective solution to solve the substandard spaces/overcrowding issue in Brookline.

Facts:

Expanding the Baldwin School to a two-section school will add more capacity (450 students) than expanding the Baker School to a five-section school (203 students). Baldwin's current estimated cost range is \$74-81 million plus possible land acquisition with a maximum cost of \$90 million. Baker's previous proposals had an estimated cost range of \$92-138 million, plus swing space cost. Comparing the two options, the cost per additional seat at Baldwin would be \$202,000 (\$90 million/445 students) versus up to \$714,000 at Baker (\$145 million/203 students – the difference between current enrollment of 762 and projected enrollment of 975), which does not take into account cost inflation in the construction market since the Baker estimates were made.

Concern:

Construction and opening of the new school will be inevitably delayed or prevented by threatened legal action that has been ongoing since 2016.



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Facts:

The new Baldwin School will be built on the site of the old Baldwin School, which is owned by the Town and has no restrictions on it. There are no legal grounds that would prevent the Town from using its own unrestricted school property for the construction of a new school. The logistics of doing so will be developed with input from the SBC who will be listening to the concerns of abutters to the property and will be implemented to minimize any disruption to the community.

There is no reasonable basis for thinking that public school children attending the new Baldwin School can be prevented from using, on a non-exclusive basis, the adjacent Baldwin School Playground that is a part of the school site and has been used by Baldwin School children continuously since 1927 and is currently also being used by children attending nearby private schools and daycare programs. This conclusion was presented by the co-chairs of the SBC in the attached Report of the Co-Chairs, which is supported by Town Counsel and outside Special Town Counsel.