



Baldwin School Building Project -- Addressing Common Concerns (Rev. 11/29/2018)

This document was developed to directly address concerns that have been raised by community members about the Baldwin School Building Project. This document was initially developed for the Baldwin School Project's Community Forum on November 26, 2018, and has subsequently been revised and updated following its initial distribution.

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 recommendations from the current traffic study being done during the 2018 Feasibility Phase continue to be refined to address concerns raised by neighbors during community forums and public hearings and will be shared the week of December 3rd.*
 - *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



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study's evaluation criteria, including "advantageous" and "disadvantageous" designations, were used for 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:

Currently the Town has crossing guards at three locations on Route 9 to help students cross safely to get to Heath, Lincoln, and Brookline High School. Like any school, the new school at Baldwin will require improvements to pedestrian crossings. These improvements will include crossing guards at Route 9 and other intersections, new sidewalks and signage improvements, school zone flashing and pedestrian



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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 Brookline. 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. A family feedback survey conducted in the 2016-2017 school year shows that Heath, Baker, Lincoln, and Runkle Schools 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.

Figure 1: PSB Student Drop-Off Data

	<u>Driven by a parent or guardian</u>	<u>Takes the school bus</u>	<u>Walks</u>
Baker	38%	4%	57%
Coolidge Corner*	23%	35%	41%
Driscoll	26%	5%	64%
Heath	46%	10%	44%
Lawrence	23%	1%	75%
Lincoln	36%	4%	57%
Pierce	16%	1%	81%
Runkle	43%	4%	52%

Source: PSB Family Feedback Survey Results of Questions Related to Student School Drop-off, 2016-2017

*Please note that 6th-8th grade students were being bused to Old Lincoln as a temporary swing space during the Coolidge Corner (then Edward Devotion School) Renovation and Expansion project.

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.



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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 (+18 classrooms, 450 students) than expanding the Baker School to a five-section school (+8 classrooms sections, 213 students). Baldwin's current estimated cost range is \$74-81 million plus possible land acquisition with a maximum cost of \$82 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 \$182,000 (\$82 million/450 students) versus up to \$648,887 at Baker (\$138 million/213 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.

Figure 2: Comparison between Baldwin and Baker

	<u>Baldwin Expansion - Option B (12/2018)</u>	<u>Baker 5 Renovation/Expansion (05/2018)</u>	<u>Baker 3/3 Opt. 1 Renovation/Expansion (05/2018)</u>
Scope	+450 students	+ 213 students	+ 402 students
Total # of students	450 PK-8	1,005 PK-8	1,164 PK-8
Additional Capacity	+108,250 GSF	+115,000 GSF	+136,000 GSF
Classrooms added	+18	+8	+16
Parking	+40 parking spaces below grade	+30 parking spaces below grade	+80 parking spaces below grade
Preliminary Cost Estimate	\$78 - \$82 Million, (\$90 Million including possible land acquisition)	\$93 - \$138 Million, not including Swing Space Costs	\$109 - \$163 Million, not including Swing Space Costs
Cost per Seat	\$200,000 per seat	\$647,887 per seat, including Swing Space Costs	\$405,472 per seat, including Swing Space Costs

Source: 9th School Alternative Site Study, Final Report - May 2018



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Concern:

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

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.

Concern:

The additional vehicles in the neighborhood during morning school drop off will dramatically increase traffic jams and wait times for neighbors.

Facts:

Existing and proposed traffic surrounding the proposed new Baldwin site has been studied extensively through calculations by the Town's consulting traffic engineer. The results of this study and its associated calculations are public record and can be reviewed by any interested party. In short, with the currently proposed student population and mitigation measures recommended by the engineer, and taking into account the number of students arriving and departing by bus and by foot, the new school will cause only incremental increases in traffic wait times during the short period between 7:30 and 7:50 a.m. Any increases in traffic compare favorably with traffic surges in other neighborhoods with Brookline's schools.

Concern:

During the 2017 9th school Baldwin/Soule site feasibility study, conversion of Woodland Road traffic from one to two ways was deemed essential to the viability of traffic.

Facts:

The possibility of such a conversion of Woodland Road was discarded as necessary to traffic flow at an early point in the 9th school study and is not under consideration for this project.

Concern:

Heath Street is an unsafe traffic environment and is an unsuitable location for a new school.



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Facts:

Traffic data published by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation indicates clearly that all intersections surrounding the proposed Baldwin school expansion site have average or above average levels of safety.

Concern:

All the new buses will be highly detrimental to the existing traffic and will cause pollution and noise in the neighborhood.

Facts:

There will only be three buses going to Baldwin. Each bus that transports students results in a significant reduction of vehicular traffic and will reduce traffic in south Brookline as current students who are now parent-driven to remote schools could travel in fewer vehicles. Similarly, consolidation of students onto buses reduces pollution due to the reduction of the number of vehicles on the road.

Concern:

The new site is far too small for the needs of its student population.

Facts:

The site is suitable for a two-section school that will only serve a maximum of 450 students. The site is comparable in size with the Lawrence School, which is a four section school with more than 700 students. The school will be the smallest in town and will have a more favorable floor area to usable open play space ratio than several other schools in the town.

The new school will conform to the long-standing, existing Town of Brookline Zoning Bylaw in all dimensional considerations except for height. This includes setbacks from property lines, overall building density and open and landscaped site area requirements. The new building, while incrementally exceeding the bylaw's height requirements, will be consistent in height with adjoining properties including a neighboring five-story apartment complex.

Concern:

The Town's attention should be focused as a first priority on the Pierce project, not on Baldwin.

Facts:

The much-needed Pierce School project is anticipated to be far greater in cost than the Baldwin project. As such, the Town is aggressively pursuing partnership with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) which could result in between and 20% and 30% reimbursement from the MSBA for the cost of the project - as it did successfully for the Coolidge Corner School. By pursuing MSBA partnership and funding, the Town will maximize the taxpayer dollar where it counts the most. Additionally, it is anticipated that the renovation and expansion of both the Baldwin and Driscoll projects and recently completed Coolidge Corner School will provide relief to overcrowding at Pierce.



Concern:

Student population trends for the future do not justify the construction of a new school.

Facts:

On November 27, 2018, the district presented revised enrollment projections for the 2018-2019 School Year. It acknowledges that the new projections are significantly lower than what was originally presented in 2016, but that the reduced enrollment is still comparable to previous years of enrollment during which schools were at or over capacity.

Additionally, over the past 10 years the equivalent of four 3 section K-8 schools worth of additional students has been forced into existing buildings and rented facilities. This expansion has resulted in dramatically overburdened cafeterias, gymnasiums, guidance and counseling spaces, and other shared school areas.

Specialized spaces needed for contemporary education, which are taken for granted elsewhere, such as those for collaboration and special education, are lacking and are desperately needed for our students to keep pace with those in other districts. Even if enrollment numbers remain stagnant, four school's worth of additional space is desperately needed today.

Ultimately, student population trends do not affect the substandard spaces that Brookline students currently endure in their schools today.

Figure 3: Comparison of PSB School Enrollment and Capacity from 2005-2006 to 2018-2019

	<u>2005-06 Enrollment</u>	<u>2018-19 Enrollment</u>	<u>% Growth since 2005-06</u>	<u>School Capacity</u>	<u>% Over Capacity in 2018-19</u>
Baker	647	762	18%	679	12%
Coolidge Corner	670	873	30%	945*	- 8%
Driscoll	366	614	68%	574	7%
Heath	360	522	45%	553	- 6%
Lawrence	478	705	47%	572**	23%
Lincoln	410	581	42%	437	33%
Pierce	546	865	58%	634	36%
Runkle	427	581	36%	616	- 6%



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Source: PSB Enrollment Data, 2018-2019; MGT Enrollment Capacity and Utilization Report, 2012

**The capacity at the new Coolidge Corner School is 945 students, based on new construction documents effective 09/01/2018*

***Four additional classrooms were added at Lawrence in 2014, but there was no addition of common core spaces or small instructional rooms.*

Concern:

\$4.8 million for the purchase of new property adjacent to the Baldwin school site is an unnecessary expense.

Facts:

The purchase of the site could reduce the need for the construction of underground parking and allow visitors to easily access the school during the school day by utilizing a surface cul-de-sac turnaround. The new site could provide 21,000 more square feet of building area, which could allow for some combination of reduced building height, more outdoor play space and more extensive relationships between interior classrooms and outdoor landscape.
