Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
FAQ – Middle School Referendum

What happens if voters reject the State-funded New Middle School (Referendum Question 1)?

- **Oxford Hills will lose the State funds for a building project**. Responsibility for funding a future project could rest entirely on local taxpayer funding.
    - This is the largest single state investment in the Oxford Hills.
        - $88.1 million in state investment.
        - 99.91% subsidy for Middle School Construction (Question 1)
- **Taxpayers will continue to pay to rent South Campus** because we cannot fit all students in our current middle school.
- The District will be faced with **costly repairs and maintenance to address our existing aging Middle School building**.

What happens if voters reject the Locally-funded Upgrade Options (Referendum Questions 2 and 3)

- The State-funded new Oxford Hills Middle School will be built if Referendum Question 1 passes.
- If Question 2 (locally-funded option for a High School-sized gymnasium and bleacher seating for the full student body) is not supported by voters, the State-funded project includes a Middle School-sized gym and seating for half the student body.
- If Question 3 (locally-funded option for an outdoor classroom "Learning Stair" located in the courtyard) is not supported by voters, the State-funded project includes a two-level courtyard, however, an outdoor stair between the two levels will not be included.

What is the Impact of a Larger Gym (Referendum Question 2 – Locally-funded Upgrade Option)?

- The State-funded Middle School-size gym included in Question 1 would be a reduction from the current OHMS gym (the existing gym is 10' longer than what the State will support for Middle School).
- The Building Committee heard in the community that there is a need for more gym space, so this question gives voters an opportunity to support a locally-funded upgrade that would enlarge the size of the gym to be High School competition-sized. Other benefits could include:
    - Sufficient space to hold school-wide events
    - Additional space for spectators and families during special events
    - Space for community meetings, gatherings, or other events
- The estimated average annual tax impact for this upgrade option (for a $200K assessed home) is $11.84 per year.

What is the plan to mitigate the impact of traffic?

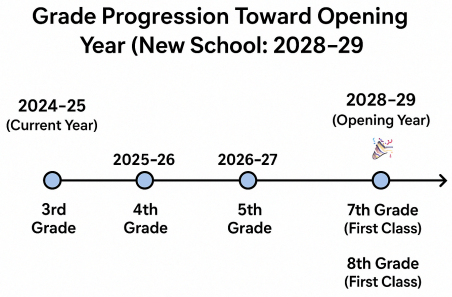
- Site design for the new Middle School addresses safety by developing separate bus and parent drop off lanes, with increased parking space and increased queueing space for parent drop-off to reduce back-up onto the street.
- The plan provides adequate space for safe on-site traffic patterns.
- During larger special events, the bus loop can be utilized for additional on-site parking.
- The Traffic Impact Study (TIS) has been submitted to Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) by the traffic engineer. The traffic engineer has outlined various off-site improvements to mitigate traffic.

How will construction be phased?

- Construction is anticipated to begin in March 2027 after a contractor is brought on, and will happen in multiple phases:
    - The new three-story classroom wing will be constructed first.
    - Once construction of the 3-story wing is complete, 7th and 8th grade students will move into that new portion of the building, and the existing OHMS will be demolished.
    - Construction will then begin on the other (single-story) half of the building. Occupants will be kept separate from construction at all times.
    - When the full building is complete, all 6th-8th grade students in the District will move into the new school. This is anticipated to be in Fall 2029.
    - Site work, such as fields and circulation, will continue until approximately August of 2030.

What is the first class to go through the new building?

- 7th and 8th graders in School Year 2028/29 are anticipated to be the first classes to move into the 1st Phase of the new school (as noted above, the three-story classroom wing will be completed first).
    - Students in the class of 2033 will be the first 8th graders (current 5th grade)
    - Students in the class of 2034 will be the first 7th graders (current 4th grade)



- Whole-building construction is anticipated to be complete for the Fall of the 2029/30 School Year. Students entering 6th grade in that year will be the first grade to spend all three Middle School years in the new school!

What are the Anticipated Cost Savings of this Project?

- Annual operating cost savings of $203,617 are anticipated starting in the first year of full occupancy. This includes eliminating the rent for South Campus; adjusting for differences in utility costs; and assumes maintaining current staffing levels.
- This project will eliminate millions of dollars in deferred maintenance which would have been borne by the local property tax payer. The new school will allow the district to more efficiently share resources and reduce transportation time and costs.
- The Oxford Hills objective is more sustainable and affordable schools by 2030. The middle school project being considered this November will combine with a new consolidated elementary school project before voters in 2026 to invest $150 million in state dollars to right-size and modernize our schools.

What are the added benefits of the new State-funded Middle School?

- Opportunities for STEAM programming (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math). These opportunities will help to support students in exploring Career and Technical Education pathways.
- Safety & Security Features
    - A whole-school approach to safety & security that meets modern day needs both inside and outside the building
- One campus
    - Brings together our students from North and South campus and eliminates the annual lease for South campus
    - Provides equitable learning time and opportunities for all students (approximately 20 minutes of instructional time per day is lost for students at South campus who must travel to North campus for some instruction)
    - Savings for transportation costs between two campuses
    - Consolidates maintenance and custodial costs to one building
    - Improved school culture with all students in one building
- All fields are located on the one Middle School site
- Central location—by remaining on the existing site, middle schoolers are located centrally.
- Improved air quality/ventilation, adhering to modern day construction standards
- More space for community use in the evenings and on weekends.
    - We are looking into the possibility of pickle ball for community use.

What is the impact to taxpayers for this project?

- The new Oxford Hills Middle School (Referendum Question 1) will be fully funded by the State, with the exception of $75,600 of local cost for required project advertising, local permits, and legal fees.

  Question 1's estimated average annual tax impact for a $200K Assessed Home = $0.37 per year

- The upgrade option for an Enlarged Gymnasium & Bleacher Seating for the Full Student Body (Referendum Question 2) will be a locally-funded upgrade option.

  Question 2's estimated average annual tax impact for a $200K Assessed Home = $11.84 per year

- The upgrade option for an Outdoor Classroom ("Learning Stair") Located in the Courtyard (Referendum Question 3) will be a locally-funded upgrade option.

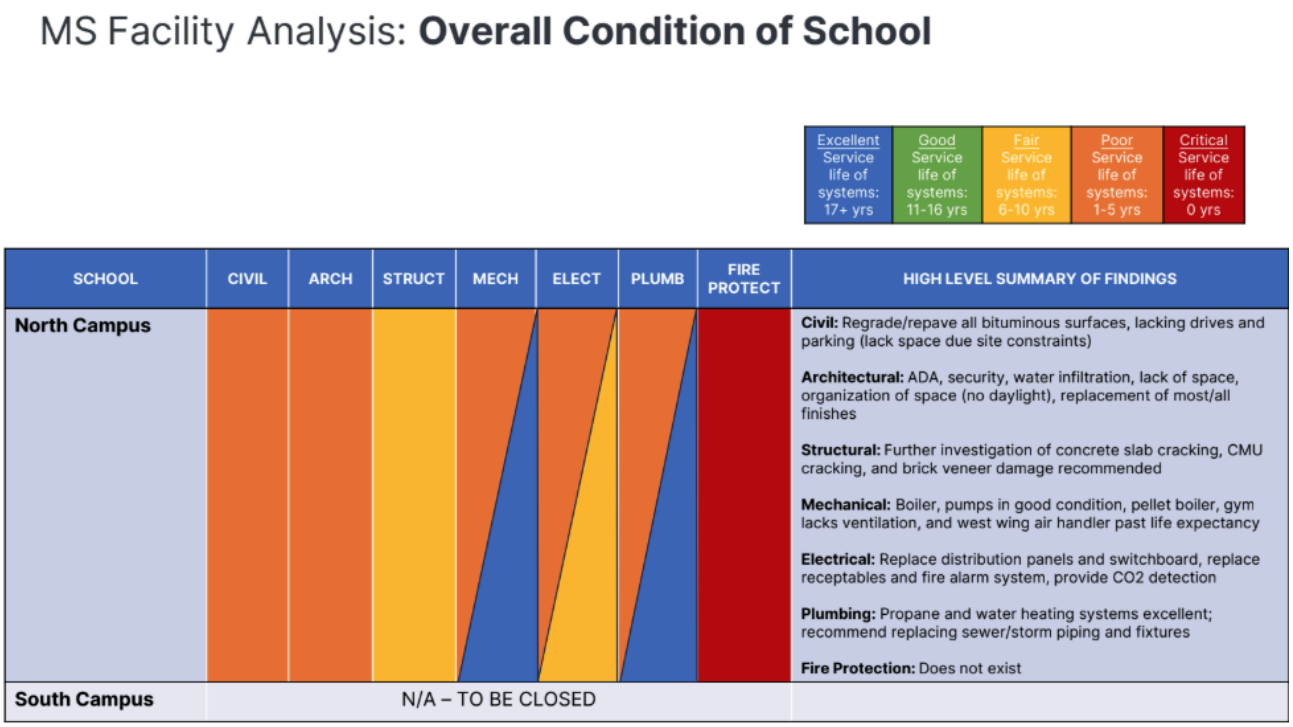
  Question 3's estimated average annual tax impact for a $200K Assessed Home = $0.89 per year

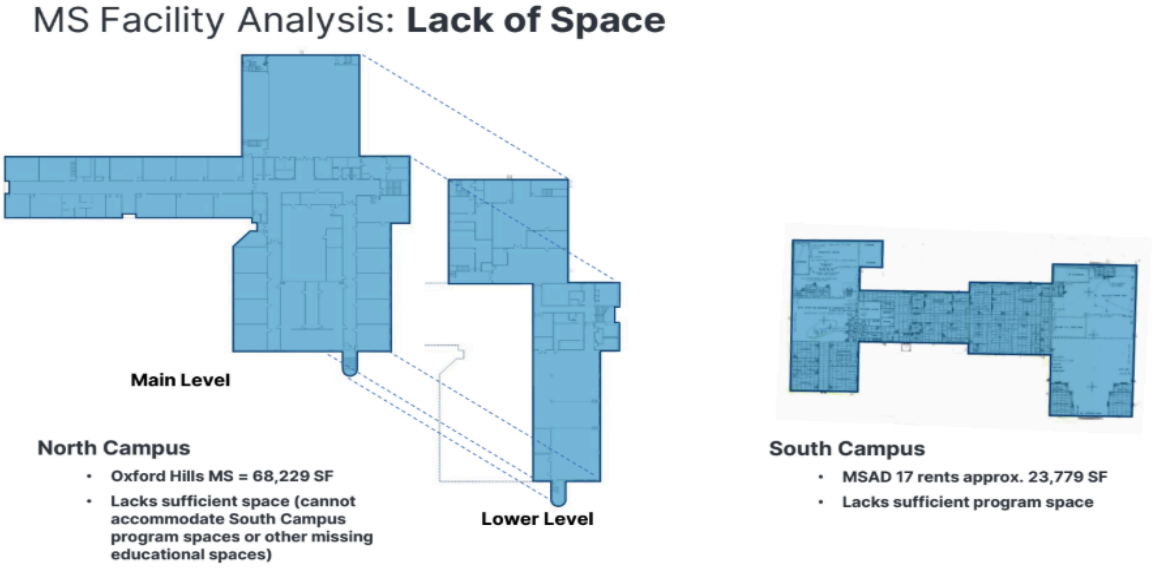
What is the learning stair?

- The learning stair would provide OHMS teachers and students with an opportunity to use the courtyard as a learning space. The space is on a slope so that the stair would provide access to the upper and lower levels of the space. The stair, which would serve as amphitheater seating, would allow teachers to use the courtyard to have class, host guest speakers, have concerts, etc. Additionally, students would be able to utilize the location for extra seating during lunch on nice days. If the stair is not funded, the space will be sectioned off with a concrete wall and a railing. The upper and lower parts of the courtyard would not be accessible to each other.

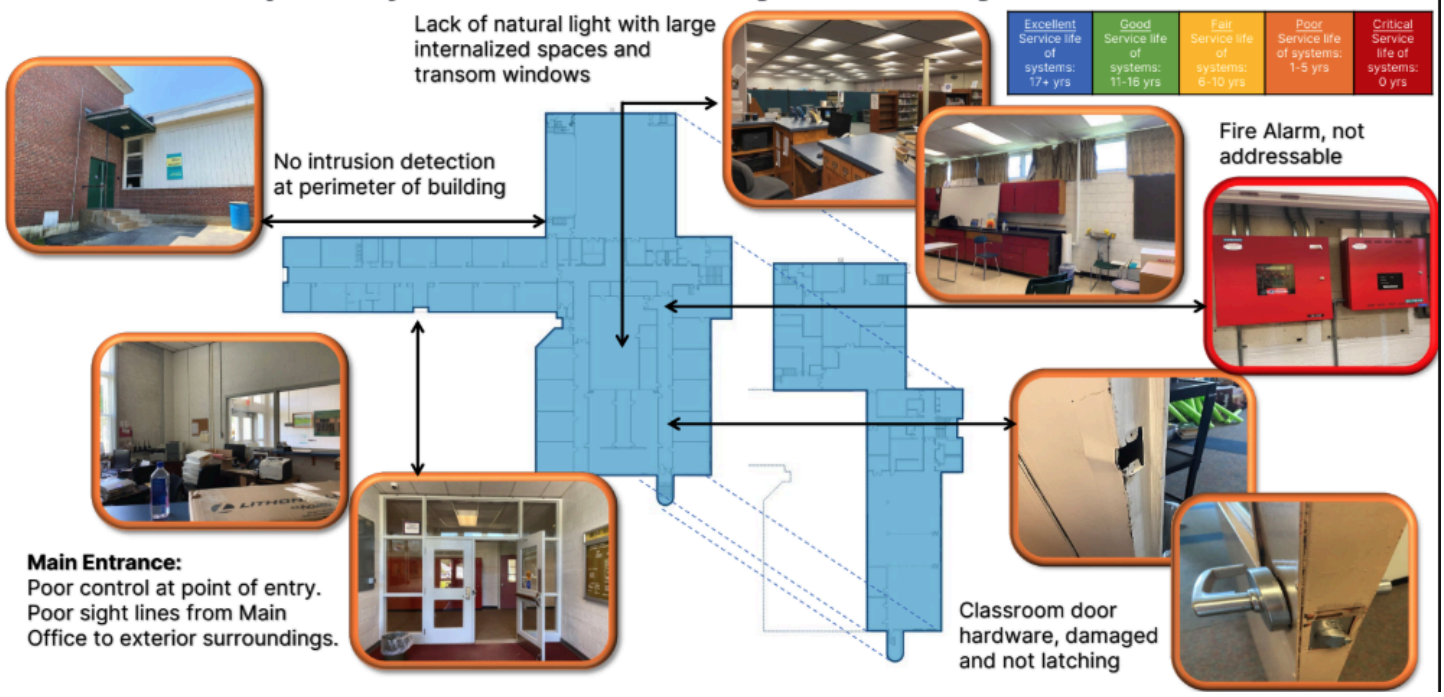
Why do we need a new school? Can't we just fix the old one?

- Part of the 21-step process for a new state-funded school is to do a renovation vs. rebuild study. Through this process, it was determined that **OHMS needed to be rebuilt.**
- The pictures below are from the presentation to the School Board on 11/13/23 about why the building was not appropriate for a renovation:

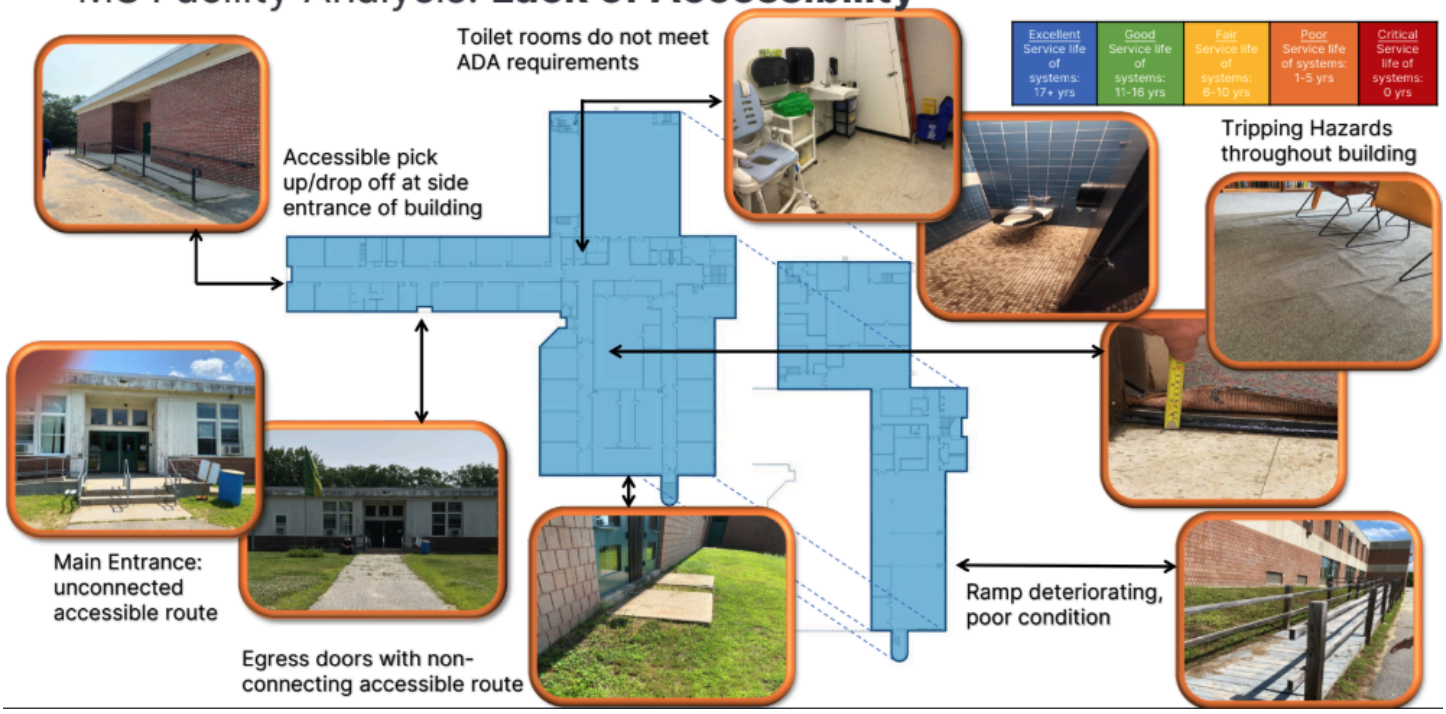




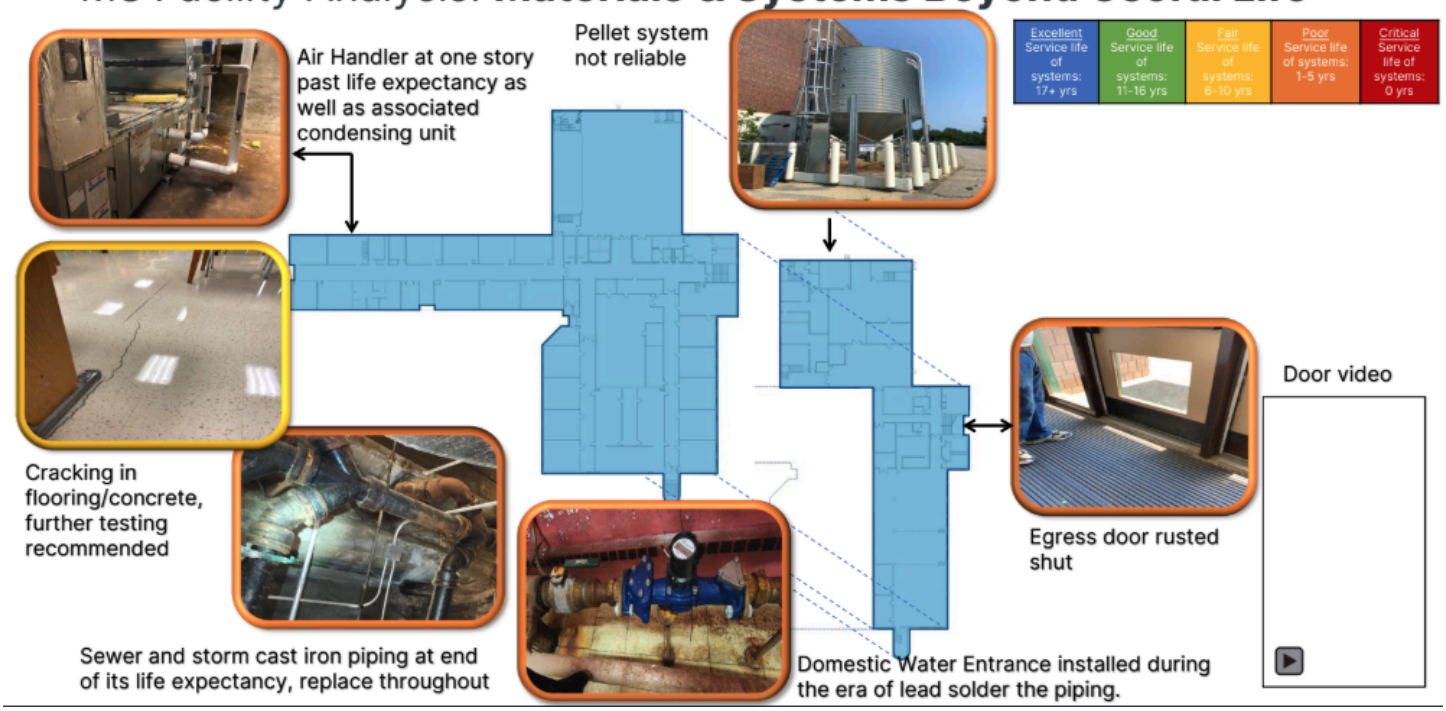
MS Facility Analysis: **Lack of Safety & Security Measures**



MS Facility Analysis: **Lack of Accessibility**



MS Facility Analysis: **Materials & Systems Beyond Useful Life**



MS Facility Analysis: **Water Infiltration**