

The new LHS – Extreme costs that impact taxpayers

Aviram Cohen - July 15, 2024

Considering the risks:

1. Debt exclusion override (Nov. 2025) will not pass – by then, 2 years of huge efforts and intensive discussions will leave us empty handed and back to square one
2. Demographic change: High tax rates will push the middle class and the elders on fixed-income out of town
3. The train station phenomenon: LPS will continue attracting families for its unique education. Upon graduation, they will leave town and force the financial burden on loyal residents of many decades.
4. Lexington debt: currently \$209M. With the new LHS, it will cross the \$700M mark.
5. There are several other planned projects that may require debt exclusion (Slide deck: “Lexington Finance Summit – May 22nd 2024” [Placeholder: Link to the document](#))

LHS4ALL – We are in favor of an improved high school facility that offers the **best education** to our students at a **reasonable cost**. A +\$600M investment for a small town like Lexington, is more than **twice** the annual budget. The town’s limited financial capabilities will require a 30 year loan. The immediate impact calls for an additional tax burden (10%-14% increase) on the residents for the next 3 decades. This is only one project among many others that Lexington is planning for the next few years.

The town has hired the consulting/architect services of SMMA – the latter, reputable, is one of the most expensive firms for such a project. 5 building options are on the table (below). They range between \$600M to \$635M. 4 of the 5 options require the demolition of the existing establishment and erection of a new building. 3 of the 5 will end up relocating the school to the fields – west to its current location. Only one option offers Add/Reno (Renovation & Addition, B.1 below).

We, at LHS4ALL trust that such a mega project deserves a careful feasibility study and a thorough planning as it will affect the town for many decades. We believe that a few more Add/Reno options must be presented to the School Building Committee (SBC) and the residents. Add/Reno options along with a prioritized list of requirements, will significantly bring the costs down and consequently relieve the tax burden. We seek financially reasonable building options in the vicinity of the \$350M mark. It is mainly in the hands of SBC/SMMA.

The LHS investment will require a **Debt Exclusion** override (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/proposition-2-12-overrides-exclusions>) and will happen late next year (Nov. 2025).

We want the debt exclusion to pass with a vast majority. LHS4ALL seeks to have better choices for a cost respectfully add/reno plan. The whole town needs to be able to participate in finding a way to **renew the present campus**. One that does not destroy usable structures. One that does not spend millions

destroying the Town's athletic fields, trying to build a multi story structure on a peat bog. Then spending millions more rebuilding the fields totally disconnected from the Town's open space recreation complex.

Highlights:

1. Budget: Every project must start with a well-defined budget that reflects financial capabilities
 - a. Each of the 5 options (below) crosses the \$600M – The sum will be even higher when it's all said and done
 - b. Important Financial figures:
 - i. Lexington's annual fiscal budget is \$250M;
 - ii. The town's current debt is \$209M;
 - iii. The new LHS will increase the debt to above \$700M (30 years loan)
2. New LHS – Challenges and Goals
 - a. Academic programs
 - i. To meet current and future studying styles
 - ii. That utilize Advanced Technologies
 - iii. That accommodate fluctuating annual registration and growth
 - b. Safety for students, staff and visitors during constructions and after gates open (2031)
 - c. Heavy traffic and Parking
 - d. Sustainability, renewable energy (green) and zero-waste policy
 - e. Environmental issues (wetlands, pollution, carbon emission)
 - f. Field house and swimming pool – These are not part of the LHS renovation
3. Other projects, in upcoming years, that may require debt exclusion:
 - a. East Lexington Fire Station
 - b. Park Improvement – Athletic Field (Harrington)
 - c. Carry Library – HVAC
 - d. Clarke Middle School - HVAC
 - e. Larger Town Office Building
4. New LHS impact on taxpayers
 - a. The tax burden for every household regarding the High School alone, is expected to increase at 10%-14% rate
5. TBD

The 5 building options:

Further details can be found at www.lhsproject.lexingtonma.org

B.1	C.1d	C.2b	C.5b	D.2
				
Renovation & Addition Phased in Place	New Construction On Fields Build new, demolish existing	New Construction On Fields Build new, demolish existing	New Construction On Fields Build new, demolish existing	New Construction Phased in Place on existing footprint

	B. Renovation & Addition	C. New Construction – On Fields			D. New Construction – Phased in Place
Alternative	B.1	C.1d	C.2b	C.5b	D.2
Project Cost <i>School Building Only</i>	\$635,000,000	\$625,000,000	\$600,000,000	\$620,000,000	\$621,300
Construction Duration	5 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	5 years
Floors	2-4	4	4	4	4
Building Location	Existing Footprint	Fields	Fields	Fields	Existing Footprint
Costs are School Building Only NO additions Included (Central Office, Field House, Pool)					