

WALPOLE HIGH SCHOOL RENOVATION

Frequently Asked Questions

NEED

Why does Walpole need to renovate the High School?

The 2013 Municipal Facilities Master Plan Study (Maguire Report) identified the need for additional and updated spaces at Walpole High School, which was originally built in 1908. In 2018, the district incorporated these needs, along with those of the two middle schools, in its initial funding request to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA).

An additional in-depth review of all existing high school programs and detailed visioning/planning meetings determined the following needs:

- Science/STEM classrooms are small, with no options for expansion and “future-proofing” the curriculum
- Space for the music and performing arts departments is insufficient
- Current spaces are inflexible and designed for lecture-style learning; more flexible space is needed to facilitate the teaching of “21st-century skills” like collaboration, communication, digital literacy, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving
- Improvements are needed to the exterior site to ameliorate issues with traffic, parking, and pedestrian safety
- Improve safety at the main entrance

As part of the study, the current gymnasium and administrative spaces were examined as places where renovation or expansion might help to address these priorities.

What does the High School addition/renovation entail?

The Walpole High School renovation project includes:

- A complete renovation to the existing science wing supporting the current science teaching practices and course offerings with proper facilities
- A greenhouse addition allowing for the expansion of the science curriculum
- Additional space for student services and counseling to address the growing social-emotional needs of students
- A flexible, multi-purpose space to address 21st-century learning
- Renovated performing arts spaces to support the music, film, and theater programs
- A new Field House structure supporting many curriculum departments and sports

- programs
- Additional HVAC improvements have been and will be made outside the scope of this project

Does this project address all of the needs at WHS?

This project addresses a substantial number of needs at the school through a responsible use of available money. The goal of the project was to renovate the High School within the available debt limit.

Why are we building a field house instead of more classrooms?

Due to their large open areas, gymnasiums are typically the most cost-effective new construction category. Other program spaces, such as classrooms, have significantly more walls, doors, ceilings, lighting, HVAC, specialty equipment, and casework, all of which drive up the cost per square foot. The large box open format of the field house is conducive to multiple efficient types of construction.

While the field house addition addresses capacity concerns within the existing gym, it is also the key to making other academic programs successful. Relocating the gym to a new field house opens up considerable square footage to currently underserved programs within the high school.

Aside from the field house and greenhouse additions, this project focuses entirely on renovating interior spaces. The additions make room for better utilization of the existing building and accommodate enhanced academic offerings. Key changes include:

- Move music to the gym space
- Move counseling to the front of the building
- More space within the building for new programming, including a multi-purpose area

The new fieldhouse will profoundly impact our physical education department by providing a versatile gym space that supports a range of activities. This expansion will allow for distinct program offerings and a richer curriculum. The addition of a running track will create new opportunities for students to participate in track and field events, and walking lanes for injured students. The facility will also be equipped to host MIAA tournament games, thanks to its increased seating capacity, and will improve access to the Athletic Trainer's office and related facilities. Furthermore, the fieldhouse will serve as a community asset, providing a modern venue for the Town's youth sports programs and fostering greater community involvement.

Does the Field House addition prioritize sports?

The facility will also be equipped to host MIAA tournament games, thanks to its increased seating capacity, and will improve access to the Athletic Trainer's office and related facilities. Our

award-winning community programs, such as Unified Basketball, will also benefit from this expansion. Furthermore, the fieldhouse will serve as a community asset, providing a modern venue for the Town's youth sports programs and fostering greater community involvement.

Where will the Field House be located?

The Field House will be constructed in the parking lot beside the current locker room entrance. It would contain regulation-size basketball and volleyball courts, two separate PE teaching stations, an indoor track, office space for the Athletic Director and Athletic Trainer, and space for Walpole Media.

Does this mean there will be fewer parking spaces on site?

The displaced parking spaces would be relocated to the field next to the tennis courts/in front of Turco Field, and in front of Plimpton. The project will add a net new 60 parking spaces.

Why do we need to renovate the Science Wing?

The existing science classrooms, built in the late 1990s, were designed for class lectures and boilerplate experiments that the whole class performed in unison. As our learning environment transforms, our students need exposure to hands-on education that prepares them for college and career experiences.

The renovation of the WHS Science Department will significantly enhance the opportunities for inquiry-based learning. The expanded classroom sizes will facilitate more effective lab work, group projects, and hands-on activities. In addition to providing more flexibility to allow students to authentically engage in and solve real-world problems, the space will allow for new courses in areas such as environmental sciences, biotechnology, hydroponics, and other future-forward programs.

The proposed renovation will:

- Increase classroom space by more than 25%
- Outfit each lab with movable furniture, providing the needed design flexibility to adapt to future programmatic changes
- Allow for science breakout rooms
- Add a two-story physics space (Drop zone)
- Include upgraded science equipment as part of the the FF&E (furniture, fixtures, and equipment) budget

How does the renovation address other STEM topics?

Now that TEC Collaborative has vacated the Plimpton Building (and instead will be renting a portion of the former Johnson Middle School), that space has become available to support

academic programs at the high school. The proposed long-term plan is to use the Plimpton Building as a center for business and STEM courses. This portion of the renovation is not included in the current building project as many of the needed renovations can be addressed through Capital requests or within the general budget. Moving departments to Plimpton will allow new programs at WHS, like Innovation Pathways and Work Study to grow. It will also provide space for expanding programs like robotics, the film program and the yearbook.

Why are we adding a greenhouse?

Located at the far left-hand side of the front of WHS, with access from the media center, the Greenhouse:

- Grows our ability to provide real-life opportunities for studying botany, ecosystem management, and sustainable farming
- Allows for visual and longitudinal lessons learned in hydroponics, sustainable gardening, and energy conservation, providing the best foundation for the next generation of environmental, physical, botanical, chemical, and biological scientists
- Teaches marketable skills to students and a potential source of fresh food for our Food Service department, the Walpole Food Pantry and, eventually, the community as a whole

Why do we need to create new spaces for music?

The music program is located in a single room that used to be the cafeteria. This space is small, with low ceilings, and is not conducive to accommodating our growing Music program. The current music room suffers from poor acoustics and a disorganized setting, which hampers the effectiveness of instruction. The renovation would provide all necessary classrooms and practice spaces for general music curriculum and ensembles.

Music education can be important for students for many reasons, including:

- Cognitive benefits: greater attention spans, improved memory, and better problem-solving skills
- Improved mathematical skills and spatial tasks, vocabulary and fluency in reading
- Stronger social skills, including collaboration, teamwork, and self-confidence
- Opportunities to foster resilience and the skills of regular practice
- Increased creativity
- Cultural learning concerning music traditions, composers, and the role of music in social movements around the globe

The proposed new Music room will have a dual impact on the music department. First, it will enhance our curricular offerings by allowing us to run multiple ensemble classes, piano lab sessions, and other music electives simultaneously, thereby expanding our course options. Second, it will significantly improve the quality of our music education environment. A new, purpose-built space with multiple rooms will provide an acoustically sound environment and facilitate a more organized and realistic musical experience.

What will the multi-purpose space be used for?

While the space next to the new music program will provide a stage and theater for performances, it will also provide flexibility for:

- Large-group demonstrations in all academic subjects
- Small group assemblies for guest speakers
- Combining classes for project work
- A physics “drop zone” for hands-on physical science coursework
- Rental space for community groups
- Robotics competitions
- Wrestling meets

What changes are being made to support Student Services?

The migration of athletics and music spaces following field house construction allows for the expansion of **Student Support Services**, which would address the needs of all students. This area will greatly improve the daily experience for students by offering a welcoming and accessible space for emotional and academic support. Conveniently located near Administration, the Transition Program, METCO, and Nursing will ensure seamless connections to various support services. This will help students address personal challenges and stress more effectively, enhancing their focus and engagement in school. The area will also support collaboration with college representatives, providing students with valuable opportunities to explore post-secondary options. Additionally, counselors will use the space for confidential family meetings, class instruction on career planning, study skills, and mental health topics. This space may also eventually house a welcome center to support families and students new to Walpole. These renovations will support a robust student support services department that can address social-emotional barriers to learning and ensure that all our students can fully access the academic curriculum.

Additionally, the relocation of the Special Education Department to the vacated School Counseling space will create quiet, designated spaces for assessments and IEP team meetings. It will also offer more accessible and efficient working areas for Special Education teachers, improving their ability to support students effectively.

Why do we need to update the HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) at the High School?

As outdoor temperatures rise, the temperature within the building (particularly the 1908 wing) exceeds 90 degrees more frequently now than in the past, creating a challenging learning environment for students and a working environment for teachers and staff. Additionally, the COVID pandemic has demonstrated the importance of ventilation for student and staff safety. As the WHS HVAC system nears the end of its useful life, the School Administration has taken steps to repair and replace it.

- Any spaces being renovated and added are within the electrification scope still included in the project; only full WHS electrification is removed
- During the summer of 2024, split units were added to the third floor of the 1908 wing to help cool the hotter classrooms. This activity is not included in the total cost of the project
- State funds were used to replace the HVAC systems in the wood shop and cafeteria
- School Administration will continue to work to replace HVAC in other areas of the school

What changes are being made to the driveway?

Changes are being implemented to improve traffic flow during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times. The plan includes:

- Adjusting the bus parking pattern in front of the building
- Changing the drop-off/pickup path so that cars can turn in between Massachusetts Avenue and Clapp Street in a new entrance, which will allow cars to drive off Common Street, thereby improving road safety for all
- Cars will exit next to Field House
- Requiring students with parking passes to enter as they do now; either behind the cafe or at the entrance by Plimpton (exiting via the far side of Plimpton, where a new left-turn lane will be added)

COSTS/FUNDING

What is the estimated cost of the project?

The estimated total project cost is \$35,805,898, including final design costs, construction costs, equipment, technology, fees and contingencies.

How will this project be funded?

Town Meeting will vote in October 2024 to appropriate the funding. This project will be funded within the limits of Proposition 2 ½ **without** the need for an override.

Expected funding sources that Town Meeting will be asked to consider include:

- Borrowing
- Capital Stabilization
- Federal American Rescue Plan Act Funds (per Select Board vote)
- Walpole Media Corporation (subsidizing the renovation of the TV studio)
- Remaining funds from completed capital projects

This funding article will require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of Town Meeting members voting in support in order to pass.

Why did this not happen as part of the Middle School Building Project?

The prior applications to the MSBA that included ideas for building a new high school were not accepted by the MSBA. MSBA cited the two previous renovations in the 1950s and 2000 as part of their reasoning.

APPROVAL PROCESS & TIMELINE

How did we get here?

Project Timeline

- **SPRING 2018:** School Committee submits a Statement of Interest to MSBA grant program, which details priorities at the facility and building history & conditions; MSBA rejects SOI and focuses instead on Middle School
- **FALL 2019:** School Department requests capital funding for a feasibility study for WHS project
- **SPRING 2020:** An RFQ was published for Designer Services to conduct a feasibility study at Walpole High School; a \$20-\$30m project budget was identified. RFQ was canceled due to Covid19 pandemic
- **FALL 2021:** School Department requests capital funding for WHS Driveway Improvements and Retaining Wall
- **WINTER 2021:** RFQ was published for Designer Services to conduct feasibility studies; Select Board awarded designer contracts to Tappé Architects, Inc.
- **SPRING 2022:** RFQ Published for Owner's Project Management services; Select Board awards OPM contract to Vertex
- **SUMMER 2022:** FEASIBILITY PHASE COMMENCES
- **WINTER 2022:** Add/reno feasibility recommendations endorsed by School Committee; priorities established for schematic design; Tappé authorized to advance to the Schematic Design phase
- **SPRING 2023:** SCHEMATIC DESIGN COMMENCES
- **SUMMER 2023:** Schematic Design endorsed by School Committee; Tappé authorized to advance to full design; retaining wall project completed

- **FALL 2023:** DESIGN PHASE COMMENCES
- **WINTER 2023:** School Committee reprioritized order to remove HVAC
- **SPRING 2024:** CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENT PHASE COMMENCES.
Design Development endorsed by School Committee; Tappé authorized to advance to Construction Document Phase: Moved to endorse the Design Development with split units for the classrooms instead of full electrification and advance this to the Construction Document phase of the project.
- **MID-MAY 2024:** 60% Cost Estimate
- **MID-JUNE 2024:** 90% Cost Estimate
- **JULY-AUGUST 2024:** Project out to bid
- **OCTOBER 2024:** Town Meeting

What's the timeline for the building (Pending Town Meeting Vote):

- Full design to be completed July 2024
- Fall Town Meeting (bids in hand) October 2024
- GC/FSB Contracts issued November 2024
- Phased construction begins November 2024
- Estimated 22 +/- months of construction
 - Phase 1A – Parking: Nov to Dec 2024
 - Phase 1B – Field House, Greenhouse, Sitework: Dec 2024 – Dec 2025
 - Phase 2 – Science Wing: June 2025 – Aug 2025
 - Phase 3 – Music/Existing Gym: Jan 2026 – June 2026
 - Phase 4 – Student Services and Sitework: June 2026 – Aug 2026
- Construction complete August 2026

What needs to happen for the Town to approve the project?

Prior to the Fall 2024 Town Meeting, the project was approved/endorsed by the School Committee (5-0-0), Capital Committee (5-0-0), Finance Committee (13-0-0), and the Select Board (5-0-0).

The project and funding will need to be approved by Town Meeting in October, with a two-thirds supermajority of RTMs voting in favor.

Why will there not be a town-wide vote?

As mentioned above, a town-wide vote is not required when we are not borrowing over the tax levy.

What if the town meeting does not approve?

The project will be put on hold. Pricing will increase with escalation at roughly 3% if revisited at Spring 2025 Town Meeting. General Contractor bids will not hold until Spring 2025 and the project would have to be rebid. Members of Select Board, Finance Committee, and Town Officials would have to consider next steps. Additional OPM and Design fees would apply.

DESIGN, LOGISTICS & TRAFFIC

RFQ process

In 2021, the Town of Walpole issued an RFQ (request for quote) for a Feasibility Study to propose a structure to support its High School students programmatically. The Walpole community would further review the proposals to determine the best option based on priorities, fiscal resources, and logistics.

Tappé conducted several months of analysis of existing conditions and user group programming meetings to discover deficiencies in the existing high school.

The architects proposed multiple options to meet Walpole High School's needs, including the field house and various other classroom additions, as well as converting the gym into a two-story space for classrooms. After further investigation, the most cost-effective solution was to construct a Field House.

As such, the simple construction of a largely open box provides additional space for many departments at WHS and unlocks other spaces.

What public meetings or outreach sessions have been held during this project?

- Town Meeting voted on the High School Renovation feasibility study in 2019
- Updates to the HS project have been on the School Committee meeting agenda since Spring 2022, including:

- 12 options presented to the School Committee
 - Final priorities voted on by SC
- Walpole HS Project - Working Group convenes regular meetings on Thursday afternoons. Reports included in school committee meetings
- Permanent Building Committee meetings begin on April 2022 - televised on Walpole Media: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5xP5ipY44Y>
- School Committee presented on the project in Fall 2022 and Fall 2023

Why is there no School Building Committee?

This is a requirement of an MSBA project.

What is the role of the Walpole HS Project - Working Group?

The working group, made up of Town Officials from multiple bodies and the Design agency, is responsible for keeping the project moving. However, it does not have voting rights for project approvals.

What is the role of the Permanent Building Committee?

The Permanent Building Committee is responsible for the construction of any additions to municipal buildings or construction of new municipal buildings in the Town and the acquisition of sites, as directed by the Select Board.

The Permanent Building Committee consists of seven members appointed by the Select Board for a three-year term. One member shall be a lawyer, one member shall be an engineer or architect, one member shall have experience in financial management, there shall be three members at large and the seventh member of the committee shall be serving currently on the particular construction project's petitioning Board, in the case of any school construction, the Superintendent of Schools will be a member ex-officio.

ENROLLMENT

How big is the district?

There are seven public schools in Walpole serving approximately 3750 students. More information can be found here: <https://cleargov.com/massachusetts/school/walpole>