

District: City of Salem
School Name: Salem High School
Recommended Category: Preferred Schematic
Date: August 20, 2025

Recommendation

That the Executive Director be authorized to approve the City of Salem (the “District”), as part of its Invitation to Feasibility Study, to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Salem High School with a new facility serving students in grades 9 through 12, on the site of the existing school. MSBA staff have reviewed the Feasibility Study and accept the District’s Preferred Schematic.

District Information	
District Name	City of Salem
Elementary Schools	Salem Early Childhood (Pk-K) Bates Academy (K-5) Bentley Academy (K-5) Carlton Innovation School (K-5) Horace Mann Laboratory (K-5) Witchcraft Heights (K-5)
Middle Schools	Saltonstall School (K-8) Collins Middle School (6-8)
High Schools	New Liberty (9-12) Salem High School (9-12)
Priority School Name	Salem High School
Type of School	High School
Grades Served	9-12
Year Opened	1976
Existing Square Footage	419,530
Additions	1990 - Addition 2006 Renovation
Acreage of Site	61.6 acres
Building Issues	The District identified deficiencies in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Structural integrity – Mechanical systems – Electrical systems – Plumbing systems – Windows – Roof – Envelope – Accessibility In addition to the physical plant issues, the District reported that the existing facility does not support the delivery of its educational program.
Original Design Capacity	1,500 students
2024-2025 Enrollment	952 students
Agreed Upon Enrollment	Study Enrollment includes the following configurations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1,000 students in grades 9-12

District Information	
	– 1,500 students in grades 7-12
Enrollment Specifics	Contingent upon the Board’s approval of the Preferred Schematic, the District will sign a Design Enrollment Certification for 1,000 students in grades 9-12.
Total Project Budget – Debt Exclusion Anticipated	Yes

MSBA Board Votes	
Invitation to Eligibility Period	December 21, 2022
Invitation to Feasibility Study	February 28, 2024
Preferred Schematic Authorization	On August 27, 2025 Board agenda
Project Scope & Budget Authorization	District is targeting Board authorization on February 25, 2026
Feasibility Study Reimbursement Rate (Incentive points are not applicable)	73.89%

Consultants	
Owner’s Project Manager (the “OPM”)	Accenture (Formally known as: Anser Advisory Management LLC)
Designer	Perkins+Will

Discussion

The existing Salem High School is a 419,530 square foot facility located on 61.6 acre site, currently serving students in grades 9-12. The original school building was constructed in 1976. In 1990, the 7,500 square foot Salerno Automotive Center building was constructed as part of the Automotive Career Technical Education (“CTE”) program. From 2006 to 2008, there was a major renovation project partially funded by the MSBA that included improvements and replacement of the façade and roof, as well as mechanical, electrical, and plumbing upgrades in the academic wing and gymnasium.

The District’s Statement of Interest (“SOI”) identified deficiencies in the existing facility related to structural integrity; outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems leading to high operational costs; the building envelope; and accessibility issues. The SOI also identified deficiencies in existing spaces that are deemed incapable of appropriately delivering the District’s CTE programs; insufficient space for special education programs; and insufficient space for student support services. The SOI also notes that existing spaces within the facility are not conducive to delivering the District’s educational program.

As part of the Feasibility Study, the MSBA accepted the District’s request to explore the following two study enrollment options: (1) 1,000 students in grades 9 through 12; and (2) 1,500 students in grades 7 through 12.

In conjunction with its consultants, the District performed a comprehensive assessment of the existing conditions and the educational program, receiving input from educators, administrators, and facilities personnel. Based on the findings of this effort, the District and its consultants initially studied nine (9) preliminary options that included: one (1) code upgrade option, one (1) renovation option, three (3)

addition/renovation options, and four (4) new construction options. The following is a detailed list of the preliminary options considered.

Option	Description of Preliminary Options
Option A.1.1	Code upgrade at the existing Salem High School facility, designed for 1,000 students in grades 9-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$353.2 million.
Option A.2.1	Renovation at the existing Salem High School facility, designed for 1,000 students in grades 9-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$481.1 million.
Option A.3.2 (Mirror)	Addition/ renovation at the existing Salem High School facility, which proposes an addition of two wings, four floors each, on either side of the existing field house (totaling 371,890 gsf). This option is designed for 1,000 students in grades 9-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$478.3 million.
Option B.3.1	Addition/ renovation at the existing Salem High School facility, which proposes a renovation of the existing building with a 40,100 gsf addition (totaling 451,665 gsf). This option is designed for 1,500 students in grades 7-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$533.4 million.
Option B.3.2 (Mirror)	Addition/ renovation at the existing Salem High School facility, which proposes a renovation of the existing field house with a 4-story addition (totaling 451,665 gsf). This option is designed for 1,500 students in grades 7-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$569.0 million.
Option A.4.2 (Loop)	New construction of a 4-story facility (totaling 364,515 gsf) located north of the existing Salem High School site, prominent to Wilson Street. This option is designed for 1,000 students in grades 9-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$461.5 million.
Option A.4.4 (Wrapped)	New construction of a 4-story facility (totaling 364,515 gsf) located northwest of the existing Salem High School site, prominent to Highland Avenue. This option is designed for 1,000 students in grades 9-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$459.2 million.
Option B.4.3 (Layered)	New construction of a 4-story facility (totaling 443,315 gsf) located northwest of the existing Salem High School site, prominent to Highland Avenue. This option is designed for 1,500 students in grades 7-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$552.0 million.
Option B.4.4 (Loop)	New construction of a 4-story facility (totaling 443,315 gsf) located north of the existing Salem High School site, prominent to Wilson Street. This option is designed for 1,500 students in grades 7-12, with an estimated total project cost of \$548.3 million.

As a result of this analysis, the District determined that all nine (9) options would be considered for further evaluation. However, subsequent to the preliminary evaluation of alternatives, the District determined that “Option A.4.2” would not be considered for further evaluation. This decision was based on the option’s proposed building location, which is in close proximity to both the Horace Mann Laboratory School and neighboring residential properties, and would require demolition of a major, central area of wooded ledge. Additionally, this option is anticipated to require a lower level to meet program needs, which could potentially lead to additional blasting beyond removal of the existing ledge outcropping, which was not favorable by the District.

In addition, subsequent to the preliminary evaluation of alternatives, the District developed one (1) additional new construction option, as described below:

- “Option A.4.5 (Keep Salerno)”: New construction of a 4-story facility (totaling 370,895 gsf) located at the northwest corner of the site and overlapping the academic wing of the existing school building, designed for 1,000 students in grades 9 - 12. This option was proposed with the intent of retaining the existing Salerno Center, which is a separate outbuilding currently used for the Automotive CTE program.

Upon further review, the District determined that “Option A.4.5” would not be considered for further evaluation due to its complex and extended phasing, which could potentially require modular classrooms and create substantial disruptions to students and staff. Additionally, this option could potentially reduce the site’s central area of outdoor space, limiting opportunities for outdoor classrooms athletic fields, which was not favorable by the District.

MSBA staff and the District agreed to explore the following eight (8) options for further development and consideration in the final evaluation and development of preliminary design pricing, as presented below. These include one (1) code upgrade option, one (1) renovation option, three (3) addition/renovation options, and three (3) new construction options.

Summary of Preliminary Design Pricing for Final Evaluation of Options

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)	Estimated Total Project Costs
Option A.1.1: Code Upgrade	419,530	419,530 \$471/sq. ft.	N/A	\$110,644,788	\$298,149,514 \$711/sq. ft.	\$372,686,893
Option A.2.1: Renovation Only (1,000 students in grades 9-12)	399,200	399,200 \$622/sq. ft.	N/A	\$128,426,669	\$376,560,115 \$943/sq. ft.	\$470,700,144
Option A.3.2: Renovation/ Addition (Mirror) (1,000 students in grades 9-12)	369,460	30,800 \$742/sq. ft.	338,660 \$820/sq. ft.	\$96,352,724	\$396,755,242 \$1,074/sq. ft.	\$495,944,053
Option A.4.4: New Construction (Wrapped) *** (1,000 students in grades 9-12)	362,695	N/A	362,695 \$778/sq. ft.	\$81,298,370	\$363,546,214 \$1,002/sq. ft.	\$454,458,158
Option B.3.1: Renovation/ Major Addition (1,500 students in grades 7-12)	451,410	411,300 \$760/sq. ft.	40,110 \$764/sq. ft.	\$83,522,755	\$426,776,336 \$945/sq. ft.	\$533,470,420
Option B.3.2: Minor Renovation/ Major Addition (Mirror)	451,410	30,800 \$760/sq. ft.	420,640 \$790/sq. ft.	\$99,349,963	\$455,214,678 \$1,008/sq. ft.	\$569,018,348

Option (Description)	Total Gross Square Feet	Square Feet of Renovated Space (cost*/sq. ft.)	Square Feet of New Construction (cost*/sq. ft.)	Site, Building Takedown, Haz Mat. Cost*	Estimated Total Construction ** (cost*/sq. ft.)	Estimated Total Project Costs
(1,500 students in grades 7-12)						
Option B.4.3: New Construction (Layered) (1,500 students in grades 7-12)	443,090	N/A	443,090 \$768/sq. ft.	\$101,203,382	\$441,636,283 \$997/sq. ft.	\$552,045,354
Option B.4.4: New Construction (Loop) (1,500 students in grades 7-12)	443,090	N/A	443,090 \$765/sq. ft.	\$99,507,500	\$436,690,504 \$990/sq. ft.	\$545,863,130

* Marked up construction costs

** Does not include construction contingency

*****District's Preferred Schematic**

The District has selected “Option A.4.4” as its Preferred Schematic to proceed into Schematic Design, as the District determined this option best meets the needs of the District’s preferred enrollment configuration serving grades 9 through 12. Specifically, this option was chosen by the District because the proposed design and location of “Option A.4.4” are anticipated to result in a building that maximizes the site’s buildable area. Further, “Option A.4.4” allows the District to keep the majority of the existing parking in place, which would transform the location of the existing school into a green recreational space. Additionally, this option would potentially allow for major improvements to be made to the on-site circulation, focusing on bus, car, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure. Lastly, the proposed building’s compact design is expected to support energy efficiency and achieve the District’s desired programmatic adjacencies.

“Option A.1.1” was not selected by the District because this option does not meet the needs of the District’s educational program, would result in significant disruption to ongoing education during an occupied phased construction, and would require temporary modular classrooms for swing space.

Although “Option A.2.1” results in the District’s preferred enrollment configuration and retains square footage associated with the previous renovation project, this Renovation Only option was not selected by the District because it results in the longest construction duration with multiple, extensive phases and would potentially require a combination of temporary classrooms in underutilized existing spaces and modular classrooms, which could potentially create substantial disruptions to students and staff. Additionally, the District determined that this option does not provide ideal integration between CTE programs and academic programs and could potentially limit the District’s high performance energy goals. Furthermore, this option could potentially provide limited opportunities for outdoor learning environments and offer no change in civic presence, which was not favored by the District.

“Option A.3.2” was not selected by the District due to its complex, multi-phased construction, including the costly removal of existing ledge. The District also determined that the location of this

option could potentially lead to difficulties in stormwater management and create a very tight space for construction due to the building's proximity to the existing electrical easement and wetlands. Additionally, the estimated cost of this Renovation/Addition option is higher than the preferred New Construction option. It should be noted that the proposed scope of work associated with this option retains only the existing Field House.

"Option B.3.1", "Option B.3.2", "Option B.4.3", and "Option B.4.4" were not selected by the District because these options do not support the District's preferred grade 9-12 enrollment configuration. Additionally, the District indicated these options do not meet the goal of maintaining a clear separation between middle school students (grades 7 and 8) and high school students, where separation enables more tailored programming and support to each developmental stage and academic level. The District determined that their 9-12 preference will allow specialized staff and resources to focus on high school curriculum standards and graduation requirements.

The District presented its proposed Preferred Schematic to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee ("FAS") on July 16, 2025. At that meeting, members of the FAS discussed the following items: the size and distribution of the proposed Special Education spaces and DESE review process; opportunity to use the updated Educational Program as a resource for community outreach and engagement; importance of continued faculty and student feedback and involvement as the design progresses; suggestion to create more interdisciplinary, project-based learning opportunities for second semester seniors; appreciation for the proposed layout and flexibility of classroom neighborhoods; the Proposed Project's relationship to the adjacent Horace Mann School, including site coordination, parking, and academic collaboration opportunities; differences in size and prominence between entries for bus and parent drop-off and associated gathering spaces for students; opportunities to further refine ground floor program and adjacencies; appreciation for the site plan and use of green space; interior connections and potential to create transparency between the gym and cafeteria; outdoor learning spaces and public access through the site; integration of CTE and early college program offerings; benefits of procuring a Construction Manager and schedule considerations associated with construction logistics and site phasing; sustainability goals and design factors for building systems; review of the District's decision factors for selecting new construction following prior building renovations; and the importance of an efficient design as it relates to design enrollment, program offerings, and project cost.

MSBA staff reviewed the conclusions of the Feasibility Study and all other subsequent submittals with the District and found:

- 1) The options investigated were sufficiently comprehensive in scope, the approach undertaken in this study was appropriate, and the District's Preferred Schematic is reasonable and cost-effective and meets the needs identified by the District.
- 2) The District has submitted an operational budget for educational objectives and a capital budget statement for MSBA review.
- 3) The District's Special Education submission will be subject to final review and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the Schematic Design submittal, which is prior to executing a Project Scope and Budget Agreement.

- 4) Subject to Board approval, the MSBA will participate in a project that includes spaces that meet MSBA guidelines, except for variations previously agreed to by the MSBA. All proposed spaces will be reviewed during the Schematic Design phase.
- 5) As part of the Schematic Design phase, the District will work with the MSBA to determine a mutually agreeable methodology to differentiate eligible costs from ineligible costs.

Based on the review outlined above, staff recommends that the City of Salem be approved to proceed into Schematic Design to replace the existing Salem High School with a new facility serving students in grades 9 through 12, on the site of the existing school.