

District FAQs

Project Overview

Q: What is the background of this project?

A: A number of years ago, Scituate Public Schools began studying the possibility of upgrading two of its elementary schools: Hatherly Elementary School (built in 1962) and Cushing Elementary School (built in 1964). The SPS community participated in a feasibility study, engaging with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and Designer/Architect (Designer) and stakeholders throughout the Scituate community. Through the feasibility study and a series of visioning exercises, the group concluded that a new building that would combine Hatherly and Cushing schools to be built on the current Hatherly site would be the best option to meet the education goals and economic interests of the community. *This complex decision is clearly outlined in the [slides](#) and [video](#) recording from the public form on August 16, 2023.*

Q: What is the MSBA?

A: The Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA") is a quasi-independent government authority created to reform the process of funding capital improvement projects in the Commonwealth's public schools. The MSBA strives to work with local communities to create affordable, sustainable, and energy efficient schools across Massachusetts.

The MSBA has made more than \$16.5 billion in reimbursements to cities, towns, and regional school districts for school construction projects. Instead of waiting years for reimbursement, districts now receive payments from the MSBA as costs are incurred, usually within 15 days of submitting a request through the MSBA's online Pro-Pay System. To date, Scituate has received a total of over \$19.2 million dollars in grant payments from the MSBA for the Gates project.

Q: Why is this happening now?

A: An [existing conditions assessment](#) [Feb 2023] identified that both Hatherly and Cushing elementary schools are outdated and experience space and design deficiencies in their educational programs, particularly, special education, art, and music. Both have inappropriate space adjacencies: library, gymnasium. Each school needs significant upgrades, including HVAC, plumbing, electrical, exterior windows and envelope, and improvements to meet ADA requirements. And both have temporary, 20-year-old modular classrooms. Hatherly was determined to be in the most need of the four district elementary schools.

Q: Who is the Project Team?

A: The Scituate Public School District (District) selected The Vertex Companies, LLC as the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for the project. The District subsequently selected Dore + Whittier Architects to be the Designer of the project. The Project Team will add a builder later in the process. The Town is represented on the Project Team by the School Building Committee (SBC).

Q: What are the specific roles of the School Building Committee (SBC), Scituate School

Committee, and Owner’s Project Manager (OPM)?

A: The School Building Committee’s responsibility is to “direct engineering and architectural studies to determine the current physical condition of the Town School Department buildings and to make recommendations to the Town relative to proposed rehabilitation, expansion and/or new construction projects.” The School Committee has the authority to make decisions on enrollment, education plans, and the district’s education model. As the Owner’s Project Manager, Vertex will assist the committees and Town with all aspects of the project including providing deliverables to the MSBA.

Timeline and Milestones

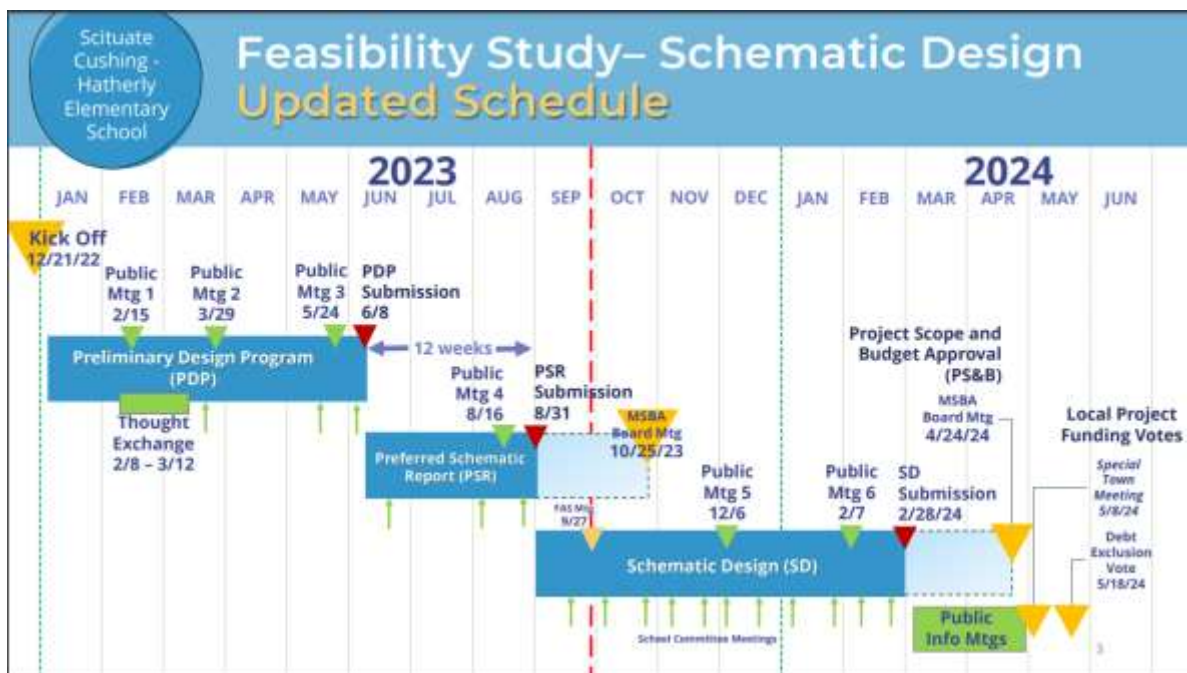
Q: Where are we in the MSBA process?

A: The project is currently in the Feasibility Study-Schematic Design Phase. The Designer with the OPM and the School Building Committee recently submitted the Preferred Schematic Report at the end of August 2023, which specified the preferred option. With MSBA Board approval, the Designer and their sub consultants will then begin Schematic Design to further develop the project design and establish the estimated total project budget and schedule. This plan will be submitted to the MSBA in February 2024 for the Board’s approval in April 2024. The final steps in the approval process include approval at Special Town Meeting on April 29, 2024 and a Town vote in May 2024. For more information on the MSBA process, please visit: <https://massschoolbuildings.org/index.php/building>

Q: What is the timeline for the project and when it goes to a Town Meeting vote are we voting on options we prefer, or will that have already been decided?

A: The School Building Committee in conjunction with the School Committee decided on a project site and a preferred option for the project in August 2023.

The Designer is providing a schematic design (a complete vision for the project including site details, structural details, exterior and interior finishes) for the proposed school based on the selected site and will bring this design, along with a total project budget, to a Special Town Meeting on April 29, 2024 with a subsequent town vote in May 18, 2024. Construction would potentially start in spring 2025.



Input and Approval Process

Q: How has parent and community involvement been part of this process?

A: Since the beginning, parents and community input steered the vision and both will continue to be a crucial aspect of the project. The initial Vision Committee included parents, teachers, students, and community members that weighed in on early design considerations. The School Building Committee has been holding a series of Public Forums throughout the project. You will find dates and times, minutes, presentations, and videos from past events as they are available [on our website](#).

Q: How was the plan approved?

A: After all plans were presented at [Public Forum #4](#) on August 16th, 2023, the School Building Committee took time to hear community members' feedback and took public comments into consideration before voting on the site and design as well as recommending to Town Meeting for funding. The community will vote that Preferred Option, up or down, at the Special Town Meeting on **April 29, 2024** followed by a Debt Exclusion Vote on **May 18, 2024**.

Q: How were all the choices narrowed down to a preferred design and location?

A: The Designer evaluated all the proposed site locations based on a number of criteria including location, size, topography, traffic, walkability, etc. The School Building Committee held community meetings throughout the process to receive feedback. Eventually, the School Building Committee voted on the preferred site and design plan. A detailed overview of this process as well as the plans that were considered can be viewed in this copy of the [August 16, 2023 presentation](#).

Q: Is the decision to approve funding for this project really a Town decision?

A: Yes. This is a Town decision. The OPM, Designer, and School Building Committee will work together to review all potential sites, consolidation, and design options. Throughout this process there have been/will be public meetings to present this information and gather feedback from the community with the OPM and Designer providing recommendations and input. The Town will decide what option is best for Scituate.

Q: How can we stay involved and what do you need from the community going forward?

A: Please stay up to date by visiting this project website regularly. The Project Team will post project updates, frequently asked questions, and information on all upcoming meetings. The Project Team has been and will continue to hold community forums throughout the next year to keep the community up to date and involved in the process. School Building Committee meetings are public, please look for information including meeting announcements [on the website](#):

Please plan on attending the [Special Town Meeting on April 29th to vote on the funding of this project](#).

Costs and Funding

Q: How much will this cost?

A: According to the project team, the estimated total project cost as detailed in the recent Preferred Schematic Report is \$120.1M. As the Schematic Design is developed between now and the February 2024 submission, a detailed Total Project Budget will be developed as part of the Schematic Design submission. Once that submission is made to the MSBA, the MSBA will contact the District to discuss its final calculations for the maximum grant available to the Town.

Q: What is the MSBA reimbursement Rate?

A: Reimbursement rates for MSBA approved, eligible school construction and renovation projects are

calculated pursuant to a formula that is established in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 70B section 10 (M.G.L. c. 70B § 10). The current reimbursement rate for the Feasibility Study / Schematic Design phase of the project is 43%. There are incentives to earn additional reimbursements points including sustainability, the District's maintenance program, etc. Also, it is important to note that the reimbursement rate is only inclusive of **eligible costs**. **There are various costs associated with construction that are not considered eligible in the reimbursement calculation.** More information can be found on the [MSBA website](#).

Q: If the Town does not vote to approve the project, will Scituate potentially lose MSBA funding?

A: Yes. Scituate could potentially lose the funding from the MSBA if the project is not approved and funded by the Town. Please refer to [MSBA failed vote policy](#) for more information.

Q: What is the process for building a new school if we forgo the MSBA funding?

A: The feasibility and design process would be similar. Scituate would not be bound by MSBA requirements and timelines. **The Town would, however, pay 100% of all costs without state contribution (currently a minimum of 43% of eligible costs).** Funding for any new school would be via a Town Meeting vote and debt exclusion.

Q: Have any previous studies considered taking the money allocated for a new school and instead using that money to renovate the two existing schools instead?

A: Yes. The Design Team has explored 23 options ranging from base repair, addition/renovation, and all new construction at both the Hatherly and Cushing schools. As part of the MSBA process, the design team has explored the feasibility of all these options which included base repair of both schools and a phased renovation/addition at both sites. Each option was evaluated based on criteria developed by the Working Group with the input and approval of the School Building Committee.

Design Goals and Considerations

Q: Has the enrollment for the new school been decided?

A: The MSBA and Scituate have agreed to a design enrollment of 460 students in grades K-5 for a proposed project that consolidates the Hatherly Elementary School and the Cushing Elementary School, with an additional 100 seats for PreK students. To ensure Scituate builds an appropriately sized school for today and the future, the MSBA develops an enrollment projection using a formula that analyzes a multitude of factors including birth rates, historic enrollment data, and current populations to name a few. For more information on MSBA Enrollment Methodology please [visit the MSBA website](#).

The Feasibility Study phase included options to include the additional enrollment of one hundred PreK students. The School Committee voted to change the grade configuration for the project from K-5 to PreK-5 and the approved design reflects this. If the project is not approved by the MSBA and the Town, the grade configurations at both schools would remain K-5.

Q: If the School Committee chooses to consolidate schools, how many classrooms will there be per grade in the new school? And how many students per classroom?

A: As a general practice, the district aims for no more than 23 students per classroom for elementary school classes. Currently, over the four elementary schools the class size varies from school to school and from grade to grade. The new building is planned to have four classrooms per grade K-5 and five classrooms for preschool.

Q: What are some of the key features of the recommended design, and why will they benefit our students?

A: The Project Team will work with the community to create the most fiscally responsible and educationally appropriate solution including but not limited to the following:

- Universal Design for Learning + MTSS (Multi Tiered Systems of Support) are made possible by flexible/extended learning spaces (e.g. push out/pull in for reading, specialists etc). Today there are extreme limitations for those educational priorities
- “Education on display”: the design includes a media center, art and music centers right near the front door
- Additional capacity for PreK seats so more of the community’s youngest children can have more options for early child care
- A design that separates “public” (shared) spaces from “private” (academic) spaces, so that the whole community can take advantage of public spaces like the gymnasium and cafeteria/performance space, not just the elementary students and families.
- The floor plan design and individual classroom designs allow for appropriate, purposeful differentiation between and across grades and learning needs.
- Two courtyards to optimize for natural light as well as outdoor learning opportunities while mitigating noise and distraction.

Q: How does the design embrace innovation in Education and meet the town’s education and safety goals?

A: The design is innovative in many ways and furthers the district’s goal in creating an environment where Universal Design for Learning can thrive. The design includes key features that improve accessibility and provide flexible teaching environments to support all students learning, emotional and physical needs:

- Extended learning areas provide alternative space for break out work, group work, and open exploration and lab space not available in classrooms.
- Courtyards provide secure play areas, alternative outdoor education settings, and bring natural light and views of the outdoors deep into the building.
- Special Education classrooms and support spaces are amply programmed and fully integrated with all programs and spaces.
- Small group rooms are directly adjacent to classrooms, minimizing any stigma associated with small group instruction.
- Accessible features and ADA compliance so all students and staff can share full access to the campus.
- Updated safety features and site design to meet current safety standards and based on input from the town’s emergency personnel
- Centralized Community Spaces for both the school and Scituate community

Q: Will the new school incorporate any sustainability goals? And if so, what will those look like?

A: Yes. The new school will incorporate sustainable practices into the design and operations. During the schematic design phase, the community will provide input to the designer on what their sustainability goals are for the project. These goals will become the outline for the project throughout the design process. A Sustainability Working Group has been formed to facilitate this process.

Q: Once the project is complete, what will happen to the existing Cushing School Campus?

A: If the community decides to proceed with the project, then Cushing Elementary School will no longer be used as a school. The School Building Committee’s role is “to make recommendations to the Town relative to proposed rehabilitation, expansion and/or new construction projects.”

Q: Where will the current Hatherly students attend school while the new school is being built?

A: For a new construction building, the plan is for the students to remain at the Hatherly School while a new school is being constructed and then have the students move to the new building once it is complete. Also, all Cushing students will remain on the current campus until the new school construction is complete.

Q: How will the concern that the children will lose the sense of community they have in a smaller school be addressed?

A: We understand this is a concern of many parents and students and this will be considered by the design team throughout the design process. Even with larger enrollments, the principals, teachers, and staff know all the students and work hard to build a sense of community within the larger school. The chosen school plan has lower and upper elementary school wings which will empower grade level teachers to collaborate easily.

Q: In reviewing sites for a new school, did the School Building Committee and School Committee consider the ability of students to walk to school?

A: During the Feasibility Study stage of the project the design team reviewed numerous possible locations within the Town to place the new school. Student walkability was among the many factors considered when selecting a final location.

Q: How has parent and community involvement been part of this process?

A: Since the beginning, parents and community input steered the vision and both will continue to be a crucial aspect of the project. The initial Visioning sessions included parents, community members, students, educators, and support staff that weighed in on early design considerations. The School Building Committee is holding a series of Public Forums throughout the project. You will find dates and times, minutes, presentations, and videos from past events as they are available [on our website](#).

Community and Long-term Impact

Q: What is the potential for redistricting students?

A: Current school neighborhood boundaries will need to be reexamined. The study of redistricting is premature at this point and will need to be completed closer to the opening of the new school to be fair and accurate.

Q: How will a consolidated Cushing/Hatherly Elementary School benefit Scituate?

A: A consolidated Cushing/Hatherly Elementary School:

- will benefit the elementary students and their families for whom safe, accessible, and educationally sound buildings are central to academic excellence and thriving students.
- is designed with the whole community in mind, with the hope and intention that it will be used as a space where diverse community groups and partnerships can meet and thrive, strengthening our sense of community pride.
- will help maintain and increase Scituate property values over time.
- will benefit taxpayers by taking advantage of MSBA reimbursement.

Q: Is there a potential to have a community partnership with this building? Can it be used for community events outside of school hours?

A: Yes. As with other Town schools, facilities are used in a variety of ways by the community for various purposes and events.

Q: How does the Hatherly/Cushing Elementary School project benefit Scituate residents who do not have school aged children?

A: For generations, the citizens of Scituate have invested in and supported their students, as well as other municipal facilities which maintains & increases property values. Over the last decade, that commitment has resulted in the construction of the new Gates Middle School. Additionally, the Town of Scituate has supported the new Public Safety Building, Library, and Senior Center.

Q: How will the other schools benefit from this project?

A: The district is committed to moving all schools forward with both educational programming and capital improvements. Below is a list of some of the many capital projects that have commenced over the last the years or are currently planned:

- Replaced Hatherly Smoke Detectors \$19,956
- Replaced roof at Jenkins \$950,000
- Replaced Jenkins Stairs \$50,000
- Replaced Jenkins Playground (CPC/PTO) \$440,000
- Replaced Wampatuck Flooring \$250,000
- Replaced Wampatuck Portico \$229,000
- Replaced parking lot at Wampatuck School \$303,673
- Replaced of flooring at Scituate High School \$615,000
- Partial roof replacement/repair at Scituate High School \$650,000
- Renovated Scituate High School Locker Rooms Phase One Locker Room \$710,000
- Renovating Scituate High School Girls' Team Room Phase 2 Fall 2023 \$1,061,000
- Renovating Scituate High School Boys' Team Room Phase 3 Summer 2024 \$1,050,000
- Renovated the Scituate High School Coby Cutler Fitness Center \$100,000
- Upgraded Cafeteria equipment (self-funded from revenue) \$325,000

TOTAL \$6,753,629