

Arlington High School Building Project FAQ

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Q: What is the Arlington High School Building Project?

A: The Arlington High School Building Project encompasses all aspects of the planning and renovation/construction of the High School, including selection of the Owner's Project Manager (OPM), designer and contractor, as well as oversight of the project.

The Town of Arlington has been accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority ([MSBA](#)) process for the renovation/construction of Arlington High School. Acceptance by the MSBA ensures that the state, via the MSBA, provides significant financial assistance to the project.

Q: If Arlington High School is a top-rated High School in the state why do we need to rebuild/renovate it?

A: The educational program at Arlington High School remains one of the top in the state. However, the school's facilities are in need of repair and need to be improved in order to be able to deliver a 21st century education.

The original building (now Fusco House) was built in 1914. Major additions were last done in 1960 and 1981. There has never been a major, top-down whole school renovation. At this point, many crucial systems and building components are at or beyond their expected service life.

In addition, in 2013, NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) placed the High School on 'Warning' status for school accreditation, citing inadequate classrooms, science labs, and technology infrastructure, which affect the overall learning environment for the students.

Project Overview

Q: Will the High School be renovated or rebuilt? Where will it be located?

A: The Mass. School Building Authority (MSBA) will require Arlington to look at multiple options, which could include a hybrid approach. This decision will be made later on during the Feasibility Phase. The location, size and configuration of the High School will also be determined during the Feasibility Phase.

Q: Where can I find more information about the project?

A: You can find more information on the [Arlington High School facilities page](#) on the Arlington Public Schools page. For information on the different phases of the MSBA building process, refer to the [MSBA](#) Web site. A dedicated project Web site is being developed.

Q: Where will students go when the project starts?

A: Once the full scope of the project has been determined, discussions will take place on where to house students during construction.

Q: How many students are enrolled at the High School today? Is future growth being considered?

A: In the 2016-2017 school year, Arlington High School served 1,300 students. The school district and the MSBA have agreed on a design enrollment number of 1,755 students for the project to account for anticipated growth.

Q: Will a swimming pool be included in the project?

A: Swimming pools do not qualify for state funds from MSBA. Whether or not the High School building project will include a swimming pool is dependent upon community input and funding approval from Arlington voters.

Q: Who is on the Arlington High School Building Committee and when does it meet?

A: The [Building Committee](#) represents school and town leadership, School Committee, Facilities Department, and community members. The Building Committee meetings are listed on the [Building Committee calendar](#) on the Town website. The Building Committee typically meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6pm in the School Committee room on the 6th floor of the Arlington High School. The meetings are open to the public.

Project Timeline

Q: What is the project timeline?

A: Below is the timeline for the project.

Eligibility Period commenced	May 2016
Form Project Team (AHS Building Committee)	September 2016
Feasibility Phase	Began February 2017 <i>(anticipated to last 16-20 months)</i>
Schematic Design	TBD
Funding the Project	TBD

Detailed Design	TBD
Construction	TBD
Anticipated Completion	2022-2024

Q: How far along in the project are we? When will the community be able to give input?

A: The project is currently in the Feasibility Phase which is anticipated to last 16-20 months. The next steps in the Feasibility Phase include hiring an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and choosing an architect. The High School Building Committee anticipates hiring the OPM by summer of 2017 and selecting an architect in the fall of 2017. After these milestones have been reached, the Feasibility Phase will move to community and school/district staff conversations that will inform planning for the changes to the building. These conversations will begin during the 2017-2018 school year.

Q: When will the project be completed?

A: The Building Committee currently anticipates that construction would begin no earlier than Fall 2019. The length of the Construction Phase will be determined after the design has been completed and funding has been approved. The project is currently anticipated to be completed between 2022 and 2024.

Q: Why will the project take so long?

A: In order to receive state funding for the project, the MSBA requires that each town go through a very specific and detailed process. In addition, there are many checkpoints along the process that require a vote from the MSBA Board of Directors before the project can move forward.

Q: What role does the state - MSBA - have in this project?

A: The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is the government authority through which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts reimburses cities and towns for school construction projects. It participates in the management of any project that qualifies for reimbursement, and studies and designs that are eligible for funding must comply with its process and standards. For more information about the MSBA, visit its [web site](#).

Q: Has a designer/architect been chosen for the project?

A: No. The designer/architect will be selected in the Fall of 2017.

Financing the Project

Q: How much will the Arlington High School building project cost taxpayers?

A: Construction costs will be determined during the Schematic Design Phase. Construction costs continue to rise and the cost of the High School project (design enrollment 1,755) is unknown at this time.

As examples, the new Billerica Middle & High School (design enrollment 1,610) has a budget of \$175 million and the new Somerville High School (design enrollment 1,590) has a budget of \$255 million.

Q: How much will the state (MSBA) contribute financially?

A: For towns like Arlington, the MSBA typically funds 40-45% of eligible project costs. Exactly how much the MSBA will contribute to the project will be determined during MSBA's Funding the Project Phase.

Q: How will the Town pay for its share of the project?

A: When the Schematic Design Phase is completed, Arlington voters will be asked to approve a debt exclusion to cover costs of the project.

Q: Wasn't there already a debt exclusion vote recently?

A: In June 2016, 76% of Arlington residents voted to approve spending \$2 million on a Feasibility Study for the High School which only covers the planning stages of the project.

Q: What is a debt exclusion?

A: A debt exclusion is a temporary increase in taxes to pay for a specific debt – typically a capital expense such as a building renovation or repair. It is not permanent. When the project has been paid for, the temporary increase will be revoked and taxes reduced.

If you have questions that are not addressed in this FAQ, please email them to ahsbuilding@arlington.k12.ma.us