

Planning for New or Renovated Elementary School Buildings

Wildwood Elementary School, built in 1970, and Fort River School, built in 1973, are the schools in which the majority of K-6 students in the Amherst Public Schools are educated. The schools have not undergone significant renovations since their opening almost 50 years ago, despite the fact that they are not well-constructed in terms of educational design, safety, or moisture control. The Wildwood and Fort River buildings were built for a significantly larger population of students than is currently educated in them; however, they were built without consideration for educating students with special needs and other specific populations that are currently critical members of our student population.



Buildings do not meet current code for accessibility and do not meet modern safety and security standards

Why are new or renovated elementary school buildings needed?

Due to their age and condition, the existing Wildwood and Fort River Schools have many problems and deficiencies in both buildings, including:

- Undersized classrooms;
- Inadequate layout for current educational models;
- Open classroom design that is noisy and impedes learning;
- Failure to meet current ADA accessibility codes;
- Failure to meeting current safety standards for front entry access and fire sprinkler systems; and
- Antiquated HVAC systems that are inefficient environmentally and do not provide a comfortable learning environment.

Additionally, the roof at Fort River is in very poor condition and will need replacing in the near future.

What work has been done to study the issues at Wildwood and Fort River?

Feasibility studies have been completed for exploring options on both the Fort River and Wildwood site. The Fort River study was completed in September of 2019 and can be found at https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/48691/2019_09_17_Final. The Wildwood study was part of a previous Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) study completed in 2016 and can be found at <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0By0mz4P0v3bWaG9vUk54emJud2s>.

What are the next steps toward a new school building(s)?

With unanimous votes of the Amherst School Committee and Amherst Town Council, the Town applied to the MSBA process in April. The MSBA will vote on which towns are accepted into the process for the upcoming year on December 11, 2019.

If the Town is invited into the MSBA process, it will receive a date when work can commence on the feasibility study, which will likely be in the spring of 2020. A building committee will be formed to begin the work of hiring consultants to support the Town's exploration of options for consideration.