

Town of Abington and MassDevelopment Adaptive Reuse Study: Abington Center School, Final Report

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Executive Summary

Abington's Center School has the potential to be reused for housing. For this report, in collaboration with Town Staff and the Affordable Housing Trust, we explored several case studies of similar scale schools converted to affordable housing, including some converted to affordable senior housing. Abington is particularly interested in creating affordable senior housing, which is line with both the Town's Master Plan and Housing Production Plan.

These case studies revealed that a financially feasible redevelopment may require expanding beyond the existing building's footprint. A conversion into affordable housing would allow the Town to access low-income housing tax credits to support the school's renovation, and if the school was put on the National Register of Historic Places, Federal Historic Tax Credits could support the project. The school is in reasonable condition, but any redevelopment would require remediation of lead and asbestos, as well as a new roof and windows.



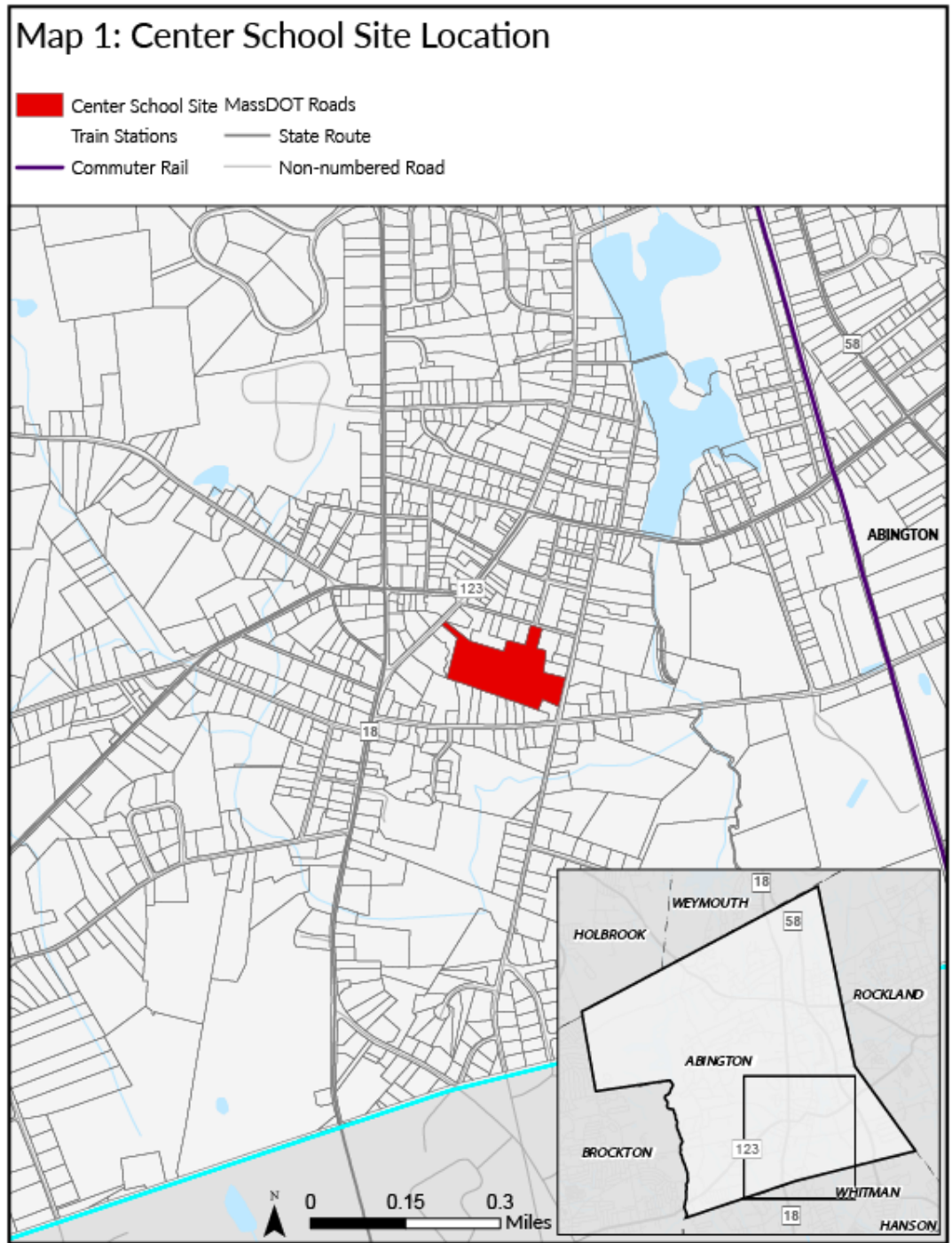
Image 1: Center School, March 2022. Photo by Elizabeth Haney.



Introduction

Barrett Planning Group began work in February 2022 with MassDevelopment and the Town of Abington to evaluate the potential for adaptive reuse of the Center School. Team members from Barrett Planning Group and MassDevelopment conducted a site visit with Town staff on February 28, 2022. Barrett Planning Group then reviewed information about sewer access and traffic provided by the town, as well as data from the American Community Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics and MassGIS to analyze site and neighborhood conditions. This study also draws on several local and regional plans and studies, including Abington's 2019 Housing Production Plan, Abington's 2019 Master Plan Update, Abington's 2018 Surplus School Building Committee Summary Report. Separately, the Town of Abington contracted with Habeeb and Associate, Inc. to do a code review and develop conceptual layouts for a conversion of the school into apartments. This report draws on those findings.





Map 1



Existing Buildings & Infrastructure

Center School Building

Abington's Center School is an 11-classroom former elementary school built in 1939. The approximately 19,800 square foot building also includes a cafeteria, nurses' office, two stairwells, and two communal bathrooms per floor. The building has received no comprehensive renovations since that time.¹

School History

The Center School was constructed as part of the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression and was built at the same time as another of Abington's elementary school, the North School. These schools had nearly identical plans and opened in 1939.² Blueprints for the Center School are not available, but they are available for the identical North School. The Town of Abington provided blueprints from the original North School. The school has a similar layout on first and second floors, as well as a cafetorium (labeled in original blueprints as Gymnasium).

Many in Abington have strong ties to the school, and generations of Abington residents attended or sent their children there. The school has served a variety of grade levels and operated continuously until 2010. The school closed due to budget cuts in 2010, but then was used for preschool and other uses up through 2017. Ultimately the school was in use for over 60 years until this closure. In 2019, voters at a Special Town Meeting authorized the Board of Selectmen to sell the Center School property.³

¹ Town of Abington, School Feasibility Study, 2013.
https://www.abingtonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf236/f/file/section_4_-_educational_visioning_summary_document.pdf

² Town of Abington, "Abington Schools and Historical Milestones", accessed March 21, 2022,
https://www.abingtonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf236/f/file/historical_timeline2014.pdf.

³ Town of Abington, Annual Report, 2019.



Adaptive Reuse Study: Center School, Abington, MA

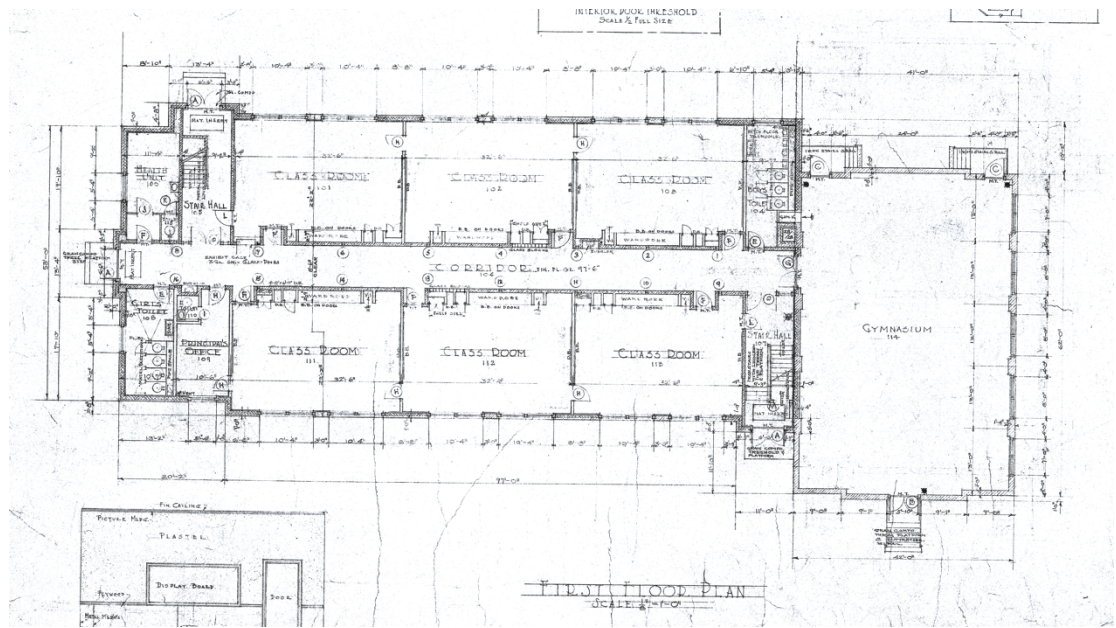


Image 2: North School First Floor Blueprint, Town of Abington.



Image 3: View of Center School from the West. Photo by Elizabeth Haney.





Image 4: School Gymnasium. Photo by Elizabeth Haney.



Image 5 and Image 6: Original tilework around water fountains; peeling ceiling paint in central hallway. Photos by Elizabeth Haney.



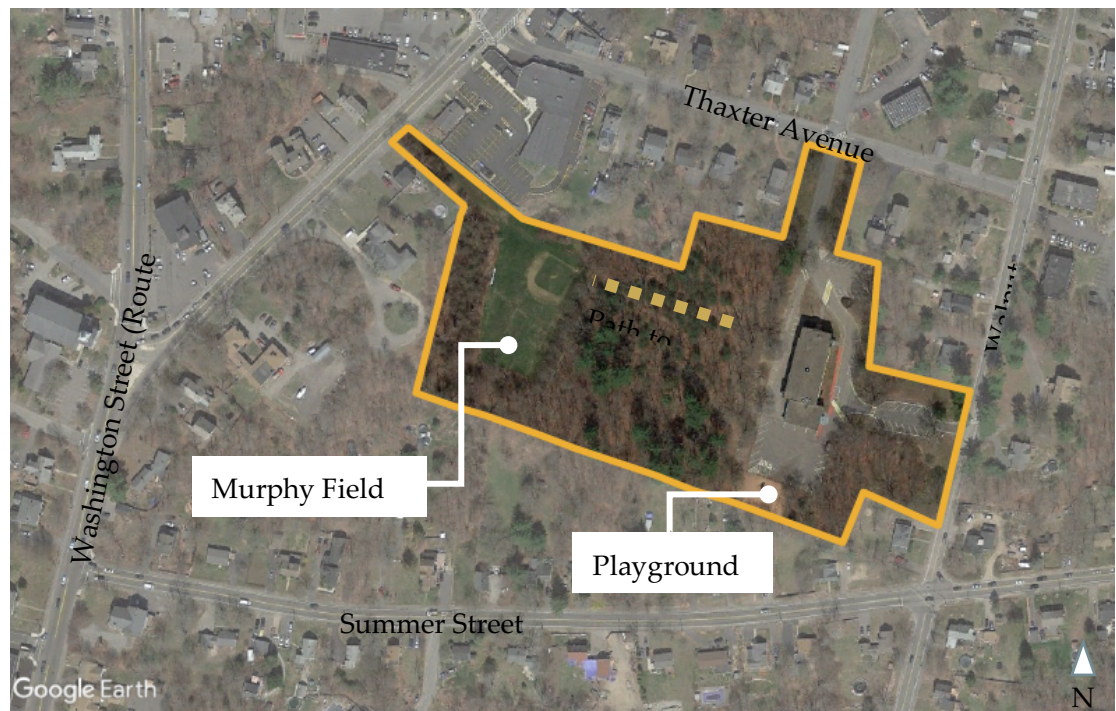


Image 7: Classroom with original wood floors. Photo by Elizabeth Haney.



Site Context

The Center School sits on a 13-acre lot that includes pedestrian access to Washington Street, as well as the vehicular access points on Thaxter Avenue and Walnut Street. The school itself sits at the crest of a small hill, with vehicular access to the north and east. A playground and basketball courts sit to the south of the school. A flat grassy lawn with exposed bedrock and scattered trees is to the west of the school, which then leads to a wooded hill that slopes down to Murphy Field. There is a small path that connects the area northwest of the school to the field. Approximately 5.6 acres of this site is open space that includes Murphy field, a playground, walking paths and a basketball court.



Map 2: Site features. Google Maps, Barrett Planning Group.

Topography & Subsurface Conditions

The Center School is located on soils that are part of the Canton-Chatfield-Rock outcrop complex, where solid rock underlies the soil, or the bedrock is exposed at the surface.⁴ New development might encounter limitations due to a shallow depth to bedrock and might require blasting or equipment if any excavation was required.

⁴ United States Department of Agriculture, WebSoil, Plymouth County, Massachusetts Soil Update, accessed March 23, 2022. <http://nesoil.com/muds/brcomplex.htm>



The property's sewer tie-in cards indicate that an underground storage tank is located just southeast of the existing building. Town staff reported that this was likely used as a sewer tank prior to the installation of sewer lines in the area.⁵

⁵ Scott Lambiase (Town Manager, Town of Abington, MA), informal conversation with Elizabeth Haney, March 2, 2022.



Natural Features

In addition to the unique visibility of bedrock to the east of the school, the Center School site contains several distinct wooded areas, the largest being between the school and Murphy Field. Along the perimeter of the site trees separate the site from many neighboring residential properties. There are several mature trees on the site, including a notable sycamore at the entrance on Walnut Street.

RARE SPECIES

No portions of the site or adjacent parcels are within areas marked as Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife, Priority Habitats for Rare Species or Certified Vernal Pools on the Massachusetts Nature Heritage Atlas, as produced by the NHESP. In addition, the project is not located in an Outstanding Resource Water area.⁶

WETLAND RESOURCES

During the site visit and after reviewing MassDEP's online Wetland and Wetland Change Area maps, Barrett Planning Group did not identify or characterize any regulated wetland resource areas located on or immediately adjacent to the project site. Any development project would need to confirm with Abington's Conservation Commission for a determination of applicability, which is recommended given that there are wetlands within 500 feet of the site.

Infrastructure and Utilities

SANITARY SEWER

The Center School site has access to Abington's sewer service on both Walnut Street and Thaxter Avenue. The school itself only utilized the connection on Walnut Street and was served by 6' PVC pipe.⁷

WATER

Abington shares the Abington & Rockland Joint Water Works with Rockland. The system includes two surface water treatment plants in the South Coastal Watershed and a groundwater treatment plant in the Taunton watershed. The combined WMA authorized daily annual average withdrawal volume is 3.11 MGD, but the system has the potential to increase up to 3.36 MGD. The water system has withdrawn an average of 2.742 MGD for the five years prior to 2021. Procedurally, any new development would need to provide water demand projections to the Joint Waterworks, who would then

⁶ MassGIS Data: Outstanding Resource Waters, March 2010.

⁷ Scott Lambiase (Town Manager, Town of Abington, MA), informal conversation with Elizabeth Haney, March 2, 2022.



evaluate the system's ability to provide additional water and treatment, as well as the condition of the existing water that would serve a new development.⁸

The presence of polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances in the water supply is also of concern for Abington residents because the town's water supply tested above the state's limit for these substances. In the spring of 2022, voters in Abington and Rockland voted to make capital investments to remediate PFAS in the water system, with a total capital investment of \$26,000,000.⁹

STORM DRAINAGE

The existing storm drainage system at the Center School is so old that Department of Public Works staff do not have as built plans of the drainage system. An informal site review by Department of Public Works staff found only two drain basins, and reported that the existing system is likely to be quite minimal.

GAS & ELECTRIC

National Grid serves as both the electric and natural gas supplier for Abington.

Hazard Risks

FLOODPLAIN

Several areas of Abington are exposed to flooding risks, including areas around the Schumastuscacent River, Beaver Brook, and Stream River. The Schumastuscacent River and related flood zone are just to the east of the Center School site, between the site and the area around the Abington Commuter Rail but are not immediately adjacent.

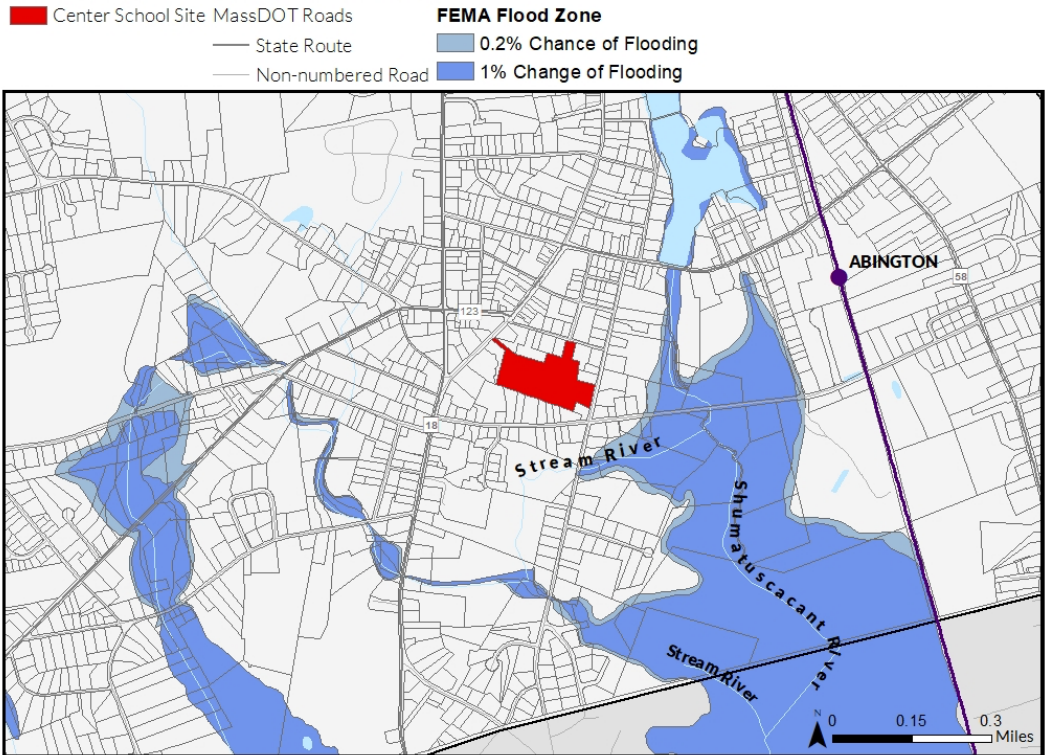
Map 3: FEMA Floodzones in Center School Area

⁸ *South Shore Site Readiness Study*, prepared for the South Shore Chamber of Commerce, MassDevelopment and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, September 28, 202.

⁹ Town of Abington, *Annual Town Meeting Warrant*, 2022; Town of Rockland, *Annual Town Meeting Warrant*, 2022.



Floodzones in Center School Area



UNDERGROUND STORAGE

There appear to be no major hazard risks to the site from active underground storage tanks. The closest underground storage facilities are located at A&D Gas at 115 Brockton Ave and at the Abington Police Department.¹⁰

Transit & Connectivity

VEHICULAR TRAFFIC

The Center School site currently has two vehicular access points on Walnut Street and the intersection of Thaxter Avenue and Dunbar Street. Dunbar Street leads north to Centre Ave (Route 123), while Walnut Street leads to Summer Street, an east-west road that connects to Washington Street (Route 18) to the west and Plymouth Street (Route 58) to the east.

¹⁰ MassDEP Facility Search, accessed March 23, 2022. <https://ma-ust.windsorcloud.com/ust/facility/search?>



The Traffic Study conducted for the Alta Abington Station development showed that the morning peak hour traffic volume along Route 58 were 952 vehicles. The weekday evening peak hour traffic volume was 1,208. The Alta Abington Station development estimated that its proximity to the MBTA Commuter Rail station had the potential to result in a decrease in overall trips to and from that project by up to 16%.

MassDOT crash summary data is available for Street, Thaxter Street, Walnut Street and their respective intersections with each other, Center Ave, Summer Street, Dunbar Street, Washington Street and Bicknell Hill Road.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The Center School site is also within a mile of public transportation services, including the MBTA Abington Commuter Rail Station, as well as bus stops that are part of the Brockton Area Transit Authority. The Abington Station is served by the Kingston Commuter Rail line, which provides connections to South Station in Boston as well as stations at JFK/UMass, Quincy Center, Braintree, South Weymouth, Whitman, Hanson, Halifax, and Kingston.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

The Center School is located within a five-minute walk of several shops, doctors' offices, and restaurants. The site is approximately a fifteen-minute walk from the Abington Commuter Rail. Sidewalks on the site connect the school building to Thaxter Ave and Walnut Street, but there are no sidewalks along Summer Street east from Walnut Street towards the Commuter Rail and Senior Center. Community meeting participants spoke about the lack of sidewalks during the community meeting for this project. The Town was approved for a "Safe Routes to School" project that would have enhanced the sidewalks at the intersection of Walnut and Summer Street, but the school closed before these plans could get underway.



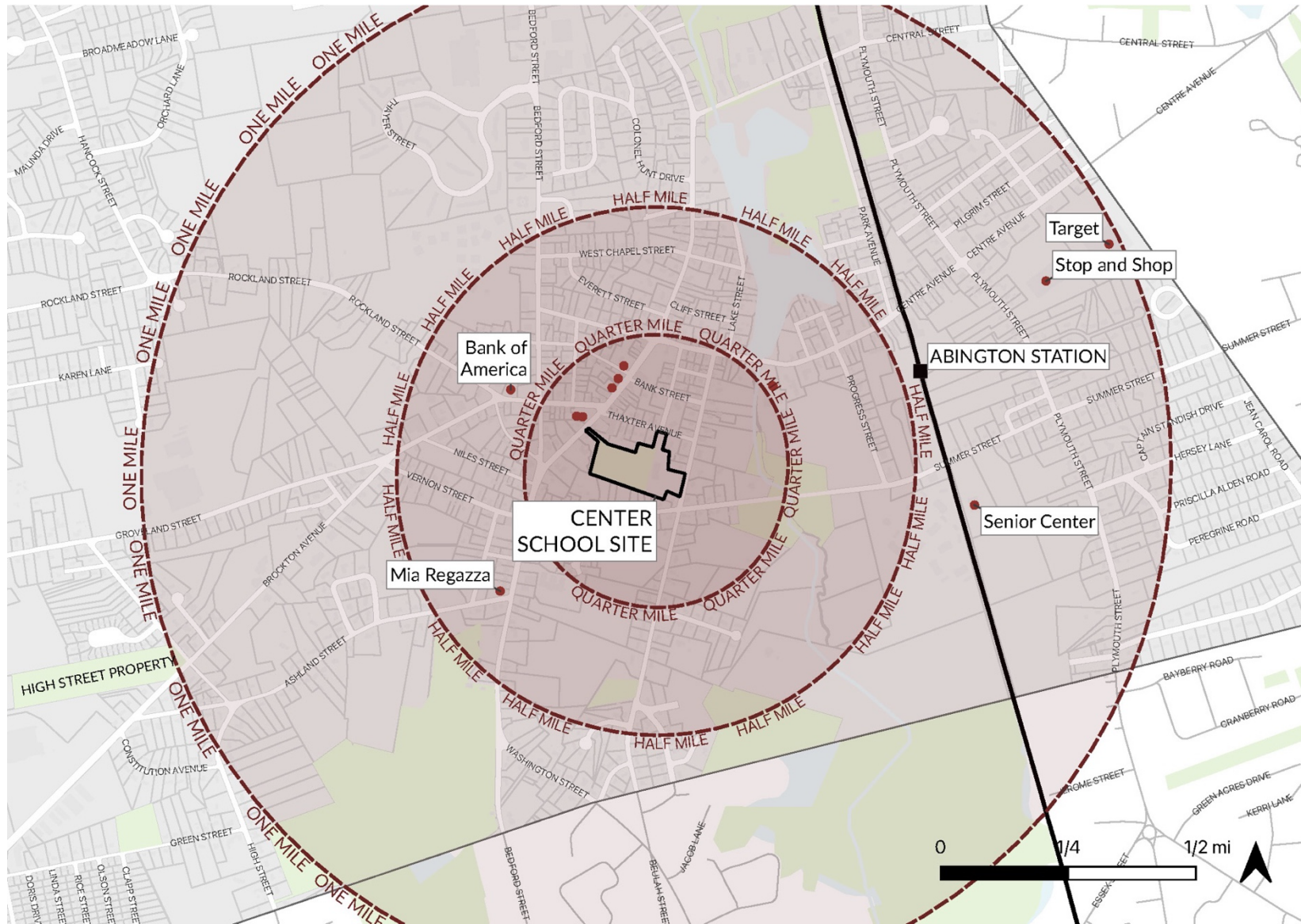
| TABLE 1: WALNUT STREET AND THAXTER AVE CRASH SUMMARY 2019-2022 | |
|---|-----------|
| Site of Crash | |
| Centre Ave Rte 123 w / Walnut St | 1 |
| Centre Avenue Rte 123 w / Walnut Street | 1 |
| Summer St / Walnut St | 4 |
| Thaxter Ave / Dunbar St | 1 |
| Thaxter Ave / Walnut St | 1 |
| Thaxter Ave / Washington St Rte 123 | 1 |
| Walnut St | 8 |
| Walnut St / Bicknell Hill Rd | 1 |
| Total | 18 |
| Year | |
| 2019 | 6 |
| 2020 | 4 |
| 2021 | 8 |
| 2022 to date | 0 |
| Crash Severity | |
| Non-fatal injury | 5 |
| Property damage | 13 |
| Collision Type | |
| Angle | 6 |
| Front to Rear | 1 |
| Head on | 1 |
| Rear to Side | 1 |
| Rear to end | 1 |
| Single Vehicle | 8 |
| Time of Day | |
| Weekday AM 7-9 | 1 |
| Weekday 11AM-2PM | 3 |
| Weekday PM 4-6 | 3 |
| Weekday Other Times | 6 |
| Weekend Other Times | 5 |
| Pavement Conditions | |
| Dry | 13 |
| Wet | 4 |
| No data | 1 |
| Source: MassDOT records, compiled by Barrett Planning Group | |



| TABLE 2: TRAVEL DISTANCE FROM SITE TO AMENITIES | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|----------------------------------|
| Amenity | Walking | Biking | Driving | Transit |
| Abington Post Office | 5 minutes | 2 minutes | 2 minutes | N/A |
| Abington Commuter Rail | 15 minutes | 4 minutes | 3 minutes | N/A |
| Stop and Shop Plaza | 24 minutes | 7minutes | 5 minutes | N/A |
| Abington School Complex | 30 minutes | | 6 minutes | N/A |
| Boston | N/A | N/A | 34 minutes | 51 minutes (15 walk, 36 rail) |
| Brockton | N/A | 24 min | 11 minutes | N/A * RF bus from Stop & Shop |



Map 4: Proximity of Center School to Amenities



Neighborhood Character

Single-family residential properties border the school's lot on nearly all sides. These homes range in age from 1797 to 2021, though the majority are from 1850-1930.¹¹ A spur of the existing lot (the portion containing Murphy Field) borders Washington Street, where the site borders a dental office, residences and is across the street from a 7-11 convenience store.

Though Abington has not adopted any historic districts, the Abington Historical Commission is advocating for the establishment of a historic district. The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Inventory records the Washington Street Area just west of the Center School site as a historic area that includes twenty-eight historic resources. These resources include homes, plaques, and barns from the late 1700s through the Antebellum period.¹²

Relevant Local and Regional Plans

Several of Abington's local plans, as well as regional studies are relevant as the Town determines the next steps for the Center School property. Both Abington's Comprehensive Master Plan update and Abington's 2019 Housing Production Plan (HPP) emphasize the need to add units to Abington's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). The Subsidized Housing Inventory is a state-maintained list of housing developments with housing that is income restricted to households with income at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). If a town does not have at least 10 percent of its housing supply protected as affordable and listed on the SHI, the town's zoning can be overridden if a developer wants to pursue a project with affordable units. This process is called the Chapter 40B comprehensive permit process.

Both the Comprehensive Master Plan Update and the HPP recommend that the Town consider using town-owned land and surplus properties for development as affordable housing. Both plans emphasize the need to add units of senior housing, and the Comprehensive Plan includes a goal to add 40 units of affordable housing to the Abington Housing Authority. Resources to add units to public housing authorities nationally are scarce and the few housing authorities that have added new units in Massachusetts often utilize Affordable Housing Trust or Community Preservation Act Funds to add single units on a sporadic basis. Abington also had goals to promote a

¹¹ MassGIS, "Property Tax Parcels," May 2022, Abington parcels updated in 2021.

¹² Massachusetts Historical Commission, Massachusetts Cultural Resource *Information System*, <https://mhc-macris.net/>



diversity of housing options to meet needs of changing population and to prioritize affordable housing for infill on abandoned/vacant properties.

Abington's 2019 HPP included a needs analysis as well as goals to meet housing needs in Abington. The analysis revealed that seniors have the highest poverty levels in Abington. Fair market rents were increasing and many homeowners as well as renters were cost burdened.¹³

Within the HPP Abington set goals to add enough units so that 10 percent of its housing units would be eligible for the SHI. Other goals included establishing an Affordable Housing Trust and to consider the use of municipal owned land and buildings for creating affordable housing.

As of June 2022, Abington only has 489 units on its SHI, or 7.68 percent.¹⁴ The units at 1015 Plymouth Street counted toward Abington's SHI total in 2019, but DHCD removed them from the SHI due to a lack of construction and occupancy progress. Units are added to the SHI at the time a local zoning board approves a local comprehensive permit. If those units do not go under construction within a year of the comprehensive permit, DHCD takes those units off the SHI until the Town can document the issuance of a building permit for those units.

Abington's HPP recommended utilizing the Local Initiative Program (LIP) and to develop cooperative relationships with private not-for-profit developers of affordable housing. The LIP 40B proposal is often referred to as a "Friendly 40B" because the Town and a developer work collaboratively to move a project forward. In this type of project, the developer works with the Town and the community from the project inception to ensure design, open space, and program respond to Town and community goals.

Abington's HPP recommended the Town screen and identify ideal Town-owned sites for affordable housing. Once the Town identifies sites, it can use discounted/nominal acquisition costs, streamlined permitting, or discounted permitting fees to make affordable projects more feasible.

Abington is in the process of updating its open space plan. Abington completed its last plan in 2014, which was prior to the closure of the Center and North Schools, so the Plan does not discuss those school properties and related open spaces. The 2014 open space plan does outline goals to protect and expand the Town's open spaces, increase

¹³ Town of Abington, *Housing Production Plan*, prepared by Old Colony Planning Council, September 2019.

¹⁴ Department of Housing and Community Development, Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, April 26, 2022.



recreation areas, protect watersheds, and create community connections. The top goals were around restoration of the Wilson Memorial Bridge and Arch, increasing conservation holdings and protecting water resources.

In 2017-8, Abington's Surplus School Building Committee evaluated three scenarios for reuse of the Center and North Elementary Schools. The Committee recommended that the Murphy baseball field be separated from the Center School property and retained as town property. The committee evaluated four scenarios for the schools:

- 1) Demolish at Cost
- 2) "Zero Cost" Option
- 3) Re-use: Senior Housing
- 4) Demo & Build New Senior Housing

The Committee's preferred option for the reuse of the schools was Option 1: Demolish at Cost because the other options required further investigation or decision-making by a wider group. This report did not detail how open space might be programmed in the future, whether for recreational park use or future development.



Demographics and Market Analytics

According to the preliminary 2020 Decennial Census data, Abington's population was 17,062, an increase of 6.74% or 1,077 since 2010.¹⁵ Overall the population is aging. The population is made up of a majority of white residents who live in owner occupied homes.

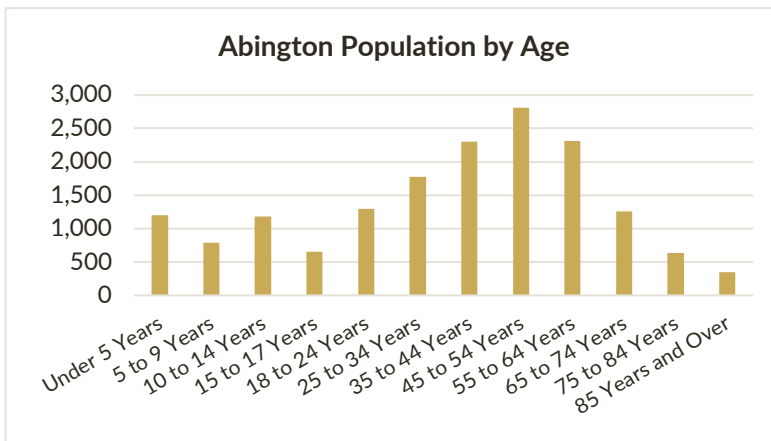


Figure 1 Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey, Social Explorer.

Small percentages of the population identify with two or more races (4.7%), Hispanic (3.1%) Black (2.5%) or Asian alone (3.2%) as their race or ethnicity.¹⁶ Abington's Median Income according to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey was \$106,000, significantly higher than the median income for both Plymouth County (\$92,906) and Massachusetts overall (\$84,385).¹⁷

The household types living in Abington are different from both the County and the Commonwealth's overall population in several ways. Proportionally, Abington has more families with children under 18 but fewer nonfamily households without children than both the state and the county. Abington has more married couple families without children than Massachusetts as a whole, but fewer than Plymouth County.¹⁸

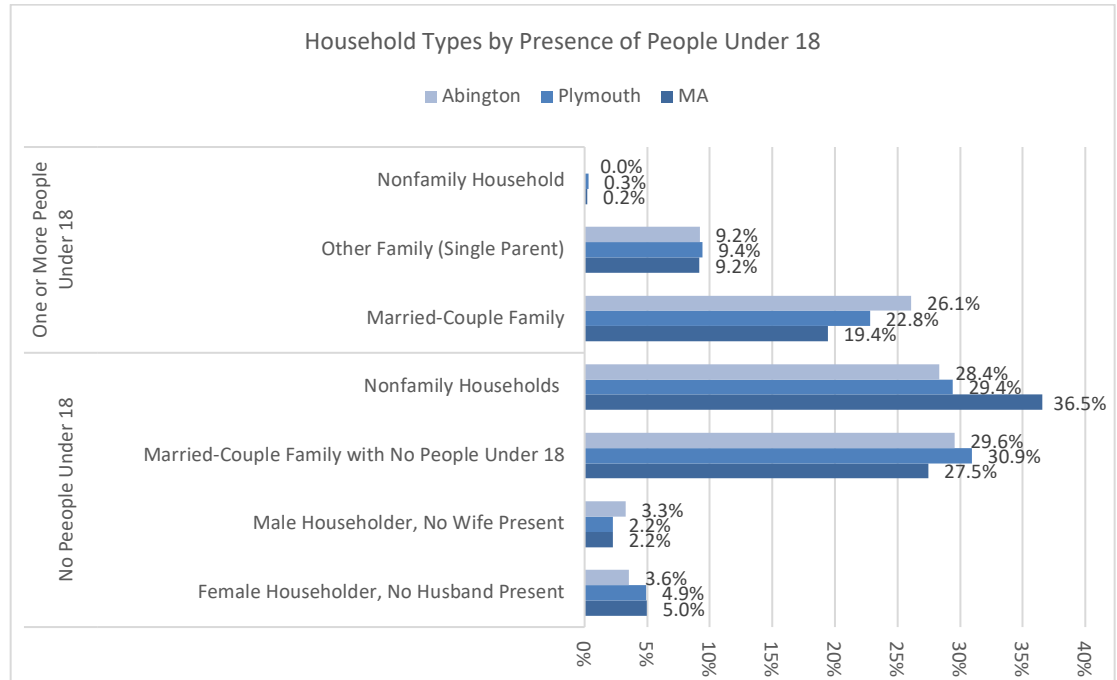
¹⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2020 Summary File 1, "P1: Total Population", <http://data.census.gov>.

¹⁶ Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2020 (5-Year Estimates), "SE:A14006:Median Household Income (In 2020 Inflation Adjusted Dollars)."

¹⁷ Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2020 (5-Year Estimates), "SE:A03001:Race."

¹⁸ Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2020 (5-Year Estimates), "SE:A10008:Households by Household Type."





Out of 6,397 housing units in Abington 74.2% are owner occupied while 25.8% are renter occupied.¹⁹

Abington residents are relatively geographically stable but are less geographically stable than compared to Massachusetts or Plymouth County. American Community Survey data shows that 82.6% of residents lived in the same house 1 year before in Abington, compared with 87.4% for Massachusetts and 89.9% for Plymouth County.²⁰ More Abington residents had moved within the same county (9.4%) or from a different county within Massachusetts (7.1%) than Plymouth County (5.6%, 3.1%) or Massachusetts residents (6.6%, 2.9%).²¹

Multiple population projections predict population growth for Abington over the next 5 to 20 years. Under a status quo growth scenario, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council predicts that the over 65 population in Abington will increase 115%, which is in line with other developing suburbs, but would be larger growth than what is predicted for Metro Boston (73% increase). It's predicted that Abington's population under 15 may decrease 19% by 2030, which is a larger decrease than both similar communities (-11%) and Metro

¹⁹ Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2020 (5-Year Estimates)," SE:A10060:Tenure."

²⁰ Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2020 (5-Year Estimates)," SE:A10060:Tenure."

²¹ Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2020 (5-Year Estimates),"SE:A08001:Residence 1 Year Ago in the United States."



Boston as a whole (-8%).²² Abington’s school enrollments align with the predictions and saw a decline in district enrollment from 2002 to 2022.

| TABLE 3. POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Component | Actual 2010 | Actual 2020 | % Change 00-10 | ACS 2020 (Estimate) | ESRI Projected 2026 | MAPC Projected 2030 Status Quo | MAPC Projected 2030 Stronger Region |
| Total Population | 15,985 | 17,062 | 6.74% | 16,557 | 17,691 | 18,949 | 19,470 |
| Total Households | 6,080 | N/A | N/A | 6,081 | 6,744 | 7,973 | 8,204 |
| Avg. Household Size | 2.61 | N/A | N/A | 2.7 | 2.61 | N/A | N/A |

Sources: Decennial Census 2010, 2020, and 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates, ESRI Business Analyst, and Barrett Planning Group.

Businesses in Abington employ approximately 4,183 employees. Abington’s major employment sectors are in retail trade, education and health services, and leisure and hospitality. Average annual wages in these top 3 sectors range from \$26,208 to \$67,208, while the average annual wage across all sectors was \$51,844.

The workers who come to Abington for work commute from a variety of places, many of which are neighboring communities. The top five communities where Abington workers live are Abington, Brockton, Weymouth, Whitman, and Rockland. There are also workers with longer commutes among the top 10 home locations, with workers coming from Boston, Taunton, and Quincy.²³ The majority of these workers (53%) have less than a 10-mile commute, while a quarter commute between 10 and 24 miles, fifteen percent commute 25-50 miles and 6.4% commute over 50 miles.

²² Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Population and Housing Demand Projections for Metro Boston Regional Projections and Municipal Forecasts*, January 2014.

²³ US Census Bureau, *Home Destination Report - Work Selection Area to Home County Subdivisions Private Primary Jobs for All Workers in 2019*.



Market Profile

Like the larger Metro Boston housing market, Abington has seen continuous home price increases since the Great Recession, with some variation during the pandemic. Home prices are again increasing as quarantine has ended. These higher prices have resulted in worsening cost burden in Greater Boston, and in Abington. A lack of available housing inventory has helped drive these cost increases, which are also reflected in a low vacancy rate among rentals. The lack of housing inventory has also resulted in very little inventory in the housing market for buyers, who now face increased costs due to rising interest rates.

HOMEOWNERSHIP

Compared to Massachusetts as a whole Abington has a larger percentage of housing units than the Commonwealth with 74.2% of housing occupied by owners. Though most housing units in Abington are owner-occupied single-family homes, home builders have built a larger variety of single family and multifamily homes more recently. Eighty four percent of Abington's homeowners live in single family detached homes.²⁴

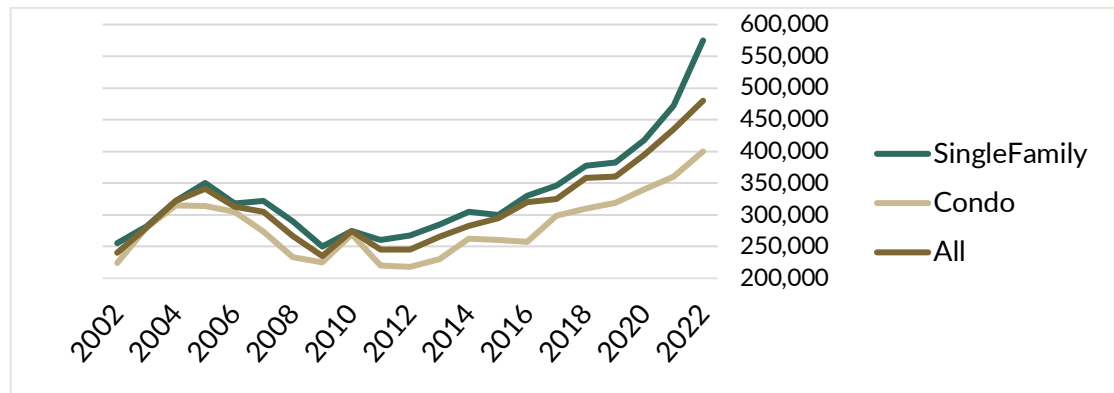


Figure 2: Median Sale Prices 2002-2022, Banker and Tradesmen.

Though 30-year mortgage interest rates have increased in the first half of 2022, home prices in Abington, Plymouth County and Metro Boston have continued to rise.

The median sale price for single family homes in Abington in 2022 was \$575,000 and the median sale price for condos was \$400,000. The number of sales has also declined for the same period. In 2021 there were 78 sales from January to April, while in 2022 there were only 61.²⁵ Since 2018, home prices have risen 52 and 29 percent, meaning buyers who've

²⁴ The Boston Foundation, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Center for Housing Data and University of Massachusetts, Donohue Institute, *The Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2021*, 2021.

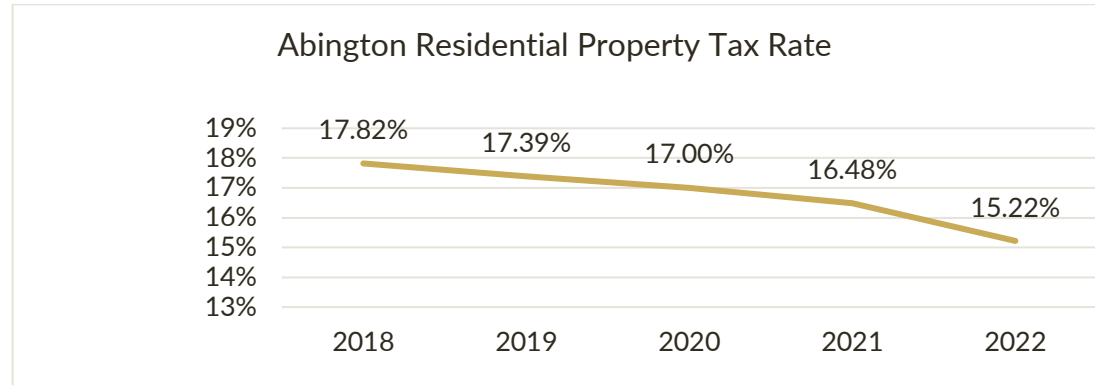
²⁵ ACS20_5yr:B25032. Tenure By Units In Structure



bought into the Abington housing more recently have paid vastly higher prices than buyers 5 to 10 years prior.

These rising prices affect Abington homeowners differently depending on when they moved into their homes. Seventy four percent of Abington homeowners have lived in their homes for at least 8 years. For those owners, in the last five years the Town's residential property tax rate has declined (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Abington Residential Property Tax Rate



Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services.



RENTAL

Rental prices have also increased since the Great Recession and are estimated to continue rising. American Community Survey data for Abington from 2016-2020 found that the median rent in Abington was \$1,364.²⁶ American Community Survey Data includes data for public and affordable housing properties, so that median rent does not fully reflect market rents. CoStar is a market research tool that focuses on properties that are 5 units or larger. The most recent data from CoStar finds that Market Effective Rents are \$1,778 and \$2,369 respectively for 1- and 2-bedroom apartments in Abington.²⁷

These rises have resulted in a situation where 38.2% of renters in Abington are cost burdened—spending more than 30% of their income on rent, but where 17.1% spend more than half of their income on rent. There are extremely low vacancy rates in Abington according to CoStar’s data—a 1.7% vacancy rate and asking rents at \$2.25 per square foot.²⁸

Market Effective Rent Per Unit By Bedroom

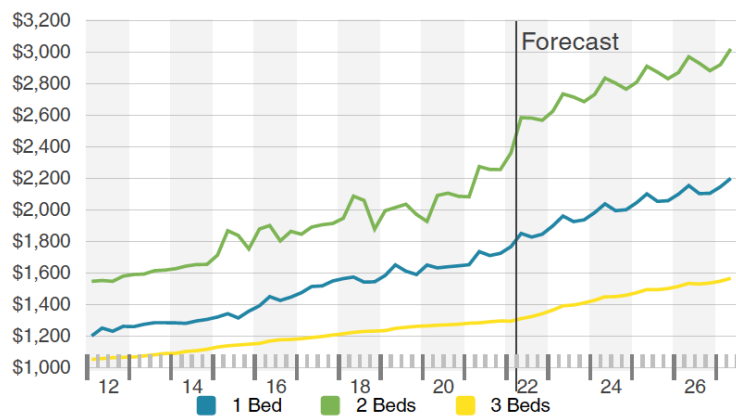


Figure 4: Market Effective Rent Per Unit by Bedroom; CoStar.

The most recent large additions to Abington’s rental market were The Point at Abington and Woodlands at Abington Station, which opened in 2008 and 2003 respectively.

Two large projects are moving through the 40B Comprehensive Permitting process currently. Abington approved the Comprehensive Permit for 1015 Plymouth Street in May of 2019. The proposed project is a 144-unit project, age restricted to householders over age 62 with 36 affordable units restricted to households making less than 80% of

²⁶ Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2020 (5-Year Estimates),” SE:A18009:Median Gross Rent.”

²⁷ CoStar, Abington SubMarket Report, April 2022.

²⁸ Ibid.



Area Median Income.²⁹ The developers came back to the zoning board in the spring of 2022, requesting approval for changes in the plans. These include combining two buildings into one and increasing the number of bedrooms within the project, while keeping the number of units the same.³⁰

Zero Summer Street is a proposed 236-unit project adjacent to Abington’s Commuter Rail Station. Both projects are structured as majority market rate projects, with a 25% or 59-units affordable at 80% AMI.³¹

Despite the pipeline of projects with some income restricted units, increasing rents and increasing home prices overall are causing housing to take up a larger and larger portion of Abington’s workers, renters, and aspiring homebuyers’ budgets. You can see the scale of this gap in Table 4.

| TABLE 4: TOP EMPLOYMENT SECTORS WITH ANNUAL WAGES AND AFFORDABLE RENT & HOME PRICES | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Sector | Number of Employees | Average Annual Wages | Affordable Rent At 30% of Monthly Income | Affordable Home Purchase Price |
| | | Observed Median Market Rent/Price | \$1,364 | \$575,000 |
| Retail Trade | 1,332 | \$37,544 | \$938.60 | \$123,700 |
| Education and Health Services | 690 | \$67,600 | \$1,690.00 | \$222,800 |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 680 | \$26,208 | \$655.20 | \$ 86,400 |
| Source: Barrett Planning Group, ES202 2021. | | | | |

²⁹ Abington Zoning Board of Appeals, “Decision, Abington Senior Housing, Abington, MA,” May 9, 2019.

³⁰ Abington News, “WEEK AHEAD: Zoning changes; 40B discussions; half day Tuesday; HS course signups; playoff game Tuesday; planning, conservation, zoning, affordable housing, charter review, golf course committees to meet,” March 7, 2022.

³¹ Allen & Major Associates, Project Narrative & Drainage Report to Accompany Comprehensive Permit Application: Off Summer Street, Abington, MA, April 14, 2022.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY & ELIGIBILITY

Abington has several scattered site affordable housing units, two large public housing developments reserved for seniors and disabled people (At Leavitt Terrace and Shaw Ave), one large senior project (Chestnut Glen), and one large mixed income housing project that have a proportion of units reserved to households making below 80% of AMI (The Woodlands at Abington Station). Both of Abington’s public housing developments were funded through Chapter 667 and are restricted to households making below 80% of Area Median Income.³²

All of these units count towards Abington’s Subsidized Housing Inventory, as well as market rate units at The Woodlands at Abington Station. As described earlier in the report, as of June 2022, Abington only has 489 units on its SHI, or 7.68 percent of its 2010 housing units.³³

To give a better sense what of what households would qualify for developments with different affordability restrictions, we’ve included HUD’s 2022 Income Limits for Abington below in Table 5, which shows how income limits vary based on household size. The wages listed come directly from data about real Town Employees salaries in the 2019 Annual Report, and 2022 E202 Wage Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

| | Household Size | | | | | |
|--|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 100% Income Limit | 78,150 | 89,350 | 100,550 | 111,700 | 120,600 | 129,550 |
| Low Income (80% AMI) | 55,950 | 63,950 | 71,950 | 79,900 | 86,300 | 92,700 |
| Very Low Income (50% AMI) | 39,100 | 44,700 | 50,300 | 55,850 | 60,350 | 64,800 |
| Extremely Low Income (30% AMI) | 23,450 | 26,800 | 30,150 | 33,500 | 36,200 | 38,900 |
| Source: FY 2022 Income Limits Summary, Department of Housing and Urban Development, MHP. | | | | | | |

³² “How to Apply for Public Housing,” Mass.Gov, accessed June 7, 2022. <https://www.mass.gov/guides/how-to-apply-for-public-housing>

³³ Department of Housing and Community Development, Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, June 7, 2022.



| TABLE 6: INCOME LIMITS COMPARISON TO ABINGTON SALARY INFORMATION | |
|--|---|
| Income Compared to Area Median Income (AMI) | Household Examples from 2021 Q2 Average Wage Data/Abington Employment Base (2-3 examples per category) |
| Median Income (100% AMI) | A single school nurse (\$69,735) A fireman (\$83,554) and a librarian assistant (\$39,929) with four children |
| Low Income (80% AMI) | A single car repairperson (\$47,996) A real estate agent (\$45,136) and a daycare provider (\$29,016 with 3 children |
| Very Low Income (50% AMI) | A single grocery store clerk (\$28,288) A building material supplier (\$51,324) with a stay-at-home partner and two children |
| Extremely Low Income (30% AMI) | A single personal care attendant (\$21,944) A waitress with two children (\$27,196) |
| Source: Abington Annual Report, ES202 | |

There is high demand for the affordable housing units available in Abington. The Abington Housing Authority, by regulation, uses the state Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Programs (CHAMP) waiting list. CHAMP allows applicants to apply for state-aided public housing and the Alternative Housing Voucher Program. When a unit opens at a particular housing authority, the CHAMP system sorts applicants according to seven priority categories. The first priority is for homeless veterans, then homeless residents, then homeless nonresident veterans, followed by other priority categories. After applicants with priorities have been served, then applicants are able to get a preference based on their residence.

The number of applicants for Abington Housing Authority properties are listed in Table 7. There are far more applicants to Abington Housing Authority units than there are units, and the number of applicants dwarfs the number of vacancies. For family units, there are nearly 6,000 applicants for the 2 units that rarely have a vacancy in a single year.³⁴ These numbers include anyone who has chosen to apply to Abington Housing Authority properties within CHAMP, which may include Abington residents, as well as applicants from anywhere across the state who are interested in living in Abington.

³⁴ Thomas Thibeault (Chief Executive Officer, Abington Housing Authority), e-mail with Elizabeth Haney, April 26, 2022.



| TABLE 7: WAITING LIST INFO ABINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Abington Housing Authority Properties | Number of Units | Number of Applicants on CHAMP Waiting List | Typical Number of Vacancies a Year |
| Leavitt Terrace & Shaw Ave | 109 elderly/disabled units | 3,701 applicants | 8-12 |
| Scattered Site | 2 family units | 5,981 applicants | 0 |
| Source: Abington Housing Authority | | | |



Zoning and Regulatory Review

Zoning Review

The school is in the R30 Medium Density Residential District. Under this zoning the only residential uses permitted by right or by special permit are a detached single-family home (by right) and accessory apartments (permitted by special permit). Under this zoning district, the minimum required lot area to build is 30,000 square feet. The site's current lot area is 13 acres, though this may shift if the lot is subdivided for continued town ownership of the baseball field and another use for the portion of the site.

Historic Regulations

Though the Center School is a historic structure, it is not subject to any historic regulations. The school is not listed in the National Register of Historic Places nor is the property located in a National Register Historic District.³⁵

Wetlands

Any development that will affect or alter conservation resource areas is subject to both Abington's Wetlands Protection Bylaw, as well as the provisions of the Commonwealth's Wetlands Protection Act and Regulations.

³⁵ Massachusetts Historical Commission, Massachusetts Cultural Resource *Information System*, <https://mhc-macris.net/>



Code Review

The Town of Abington contracted with Habeeb and Associates to evaluate the Center School building's structural condition, perform a code review, and provide conceptual floor plans for renovation to senior Housing.

Their review made the following conclusions about the building's conditions:

- The roof system has exceeded serviceable life and any redevelopment would require roof replacement.
- The visible roof framing in good condition.
- The visible masonry and floor framing had no noticeable structural deficiencies.
- There is potential deterioration in first floor framing that would need to be confirmed prior to any renovation.
- The building facade is in fair condition with isolated defects.
- Reuse of building would require replacing all windows.

Building and Code Review

Habeeb and Associate's code review classified the proposed conversion of the building to elderly housing as a Level 3 Alteration and a change from Use Group E to Use Groups A-3 (Multipurpose room) and R-2 (Apartments) according to the Work Area Method for Type VB construction (combustible, no structural fire resistance). Their review also included review based on the applicable building, fire prevention, accessibility, electrical, mechanical, plumbing and energy conservation code.

Use Group A-3 is limited to 2 stories or 60 feet in height and 18,000 square feet in area. The existing building is two stories and approximately 10,000 feet in area, well beneath the maximum of 22,500 square feet. New and altered parts of the building will require upgrades for higher fire resistance ratings for the building's structure, walls, floor, and roof construction. The building's exterior wall openings can be deemed acceptable because they are of the same relative hazard. The buildings exit stairs are not required to be enclosed since they only connect two stories. Interior finishes must meet Class C finish ratings, though traditional floor coverings of a variety of types are allowed if the building is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system.

The school has a sufficient number of exits ("means of egress") and exit capacity for the proposed use of apartments. The building does not contain any dead-end corridors and will not be likely to add any in a reconfiguration. A multipurpose room designed to serve more than 49 people would need to have 2 egress doors. All exit signs must have backup power for continuous illumination, which will require replacing egress lighting and exit signs.



Conversion to apartments will also require a NFPA 13 sprinkler system, fire alarm system, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms as well as fire extinguishers. The building will only need to be up to the 2018 international Energy Conservation Code for any elements that are new construction, and the Massachusetts Stretch Code would not apply.

Because of the significant anticipated cost of any renovation, those renovation would trigger obligations to meet certain accessibility requirements. All public entrances would need to be made accessible under Massachusetts 527R, the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board Regulations. An elevator would not be required if common areas were located on the first floor. The building's stairs have abrupt nosings that would need to be fixed. Because the proposed project includes renovation and reuse of an existing building, the units do not need to meet Group 1 requirements and because the conceptual layouts include less than 20 units, the building would not be required to meet Group 2A requirements.

Habeeb and Associate's report did not include evaluating hazardous or asbestos-containing materials or lead paint considerations.



Potential for New Construction

Habeeb and Associates developed 2 conceptual floorplans for converting the existing building into apartment, with no addition. These concepts include one 16-unit conceptual layout (Conceptual Layout A) and one 15-unit layout (Conceptual Layout B).

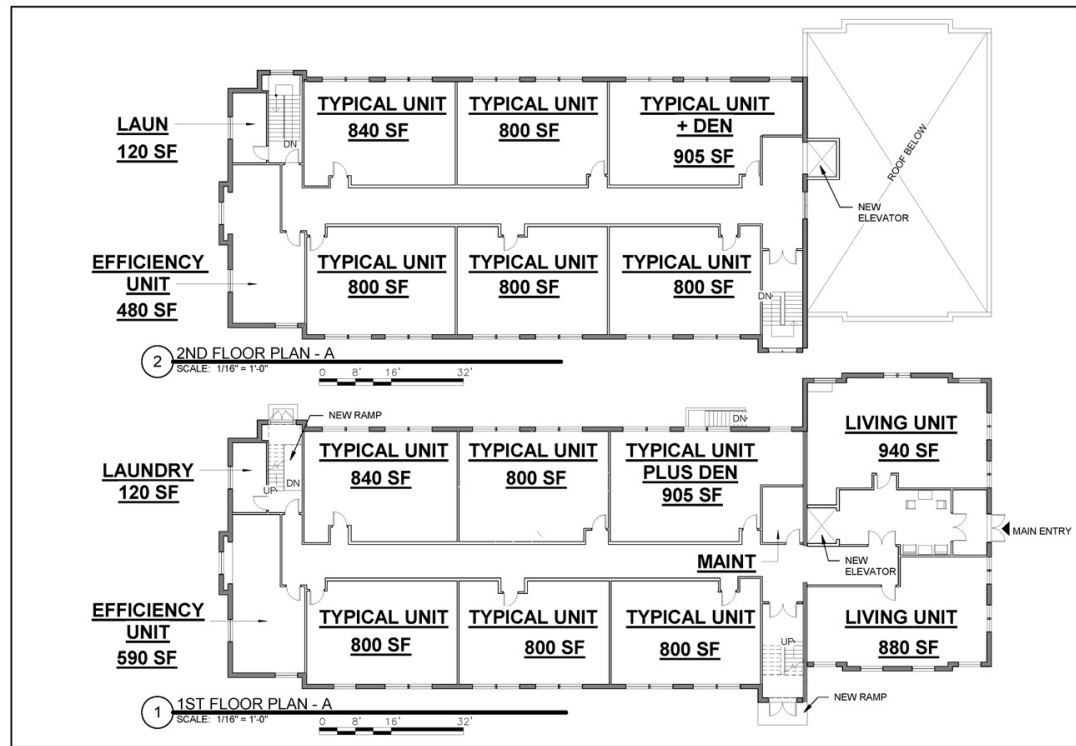


Figure 5: Conceptual Building Plan A



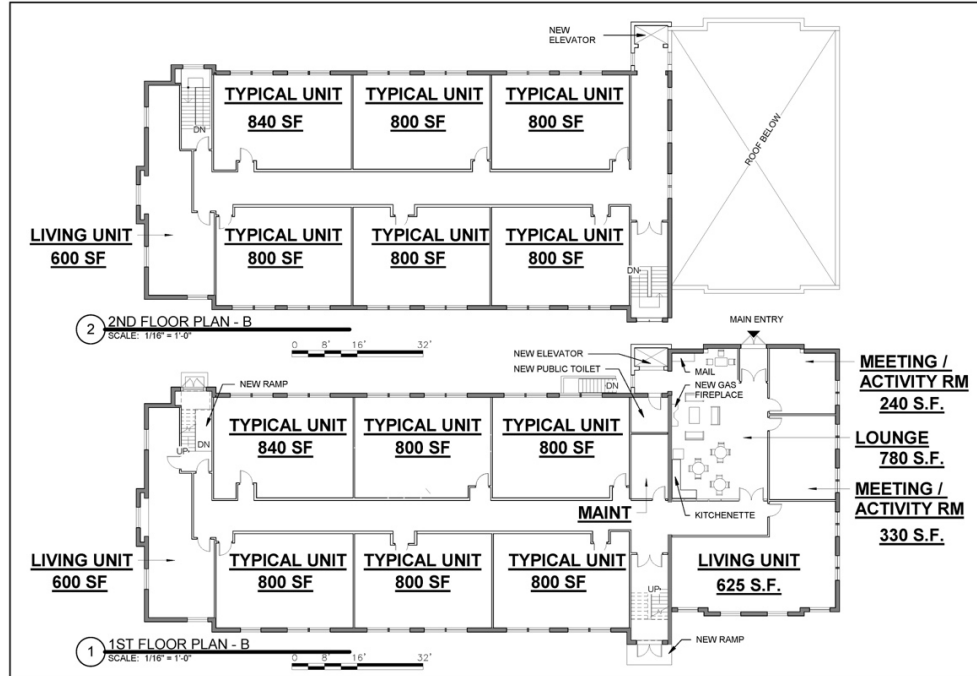


Figure 6: Conceptual Building Plan B

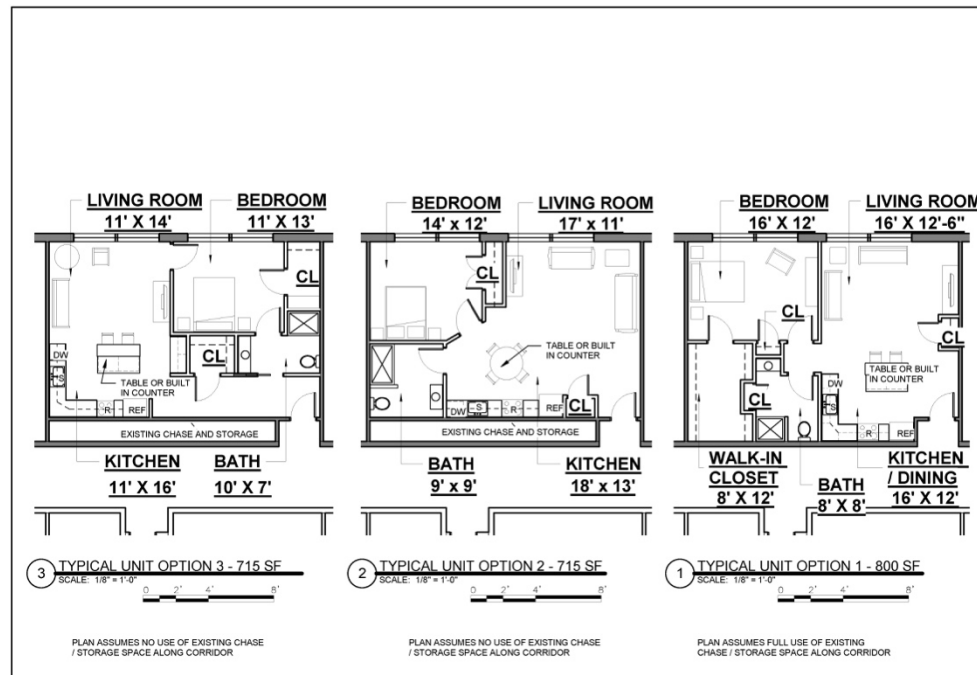


Figure 7: Conceptual Unit Layouts



Case Study Schools

Many other communities in Massachusetts have worked to redevelop unused former school buildings. Their experience engaging the community, developing feasible RFPs and ultimately restoring and reusing historic assets can offer lessons to Abington and its vacant school buildings. Table 8 provides of these school re-use project attributes.

| TABLE 8: CASE STUDY SCHOOL ATTRIBUTES | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| | School Size (In Square Feet) | Year School Built | Year School Closed | Year RFP(s) Issued | Number of RFP Responses | Construction Start Date | Construction Completion Date | Units School | Units New | Total Development Cost Per Unit |
| Swampscott | 31K | 1920 | 2007 | 2016 | 2 | March 2020 | June 2021 | 17 | 21 | \$394K |
| Bridgewater | 19K | 1913 | 1996 | 2017 | 1 | October 2021 | Late 2022 | 16 | 38 | \$507K |
| Auburn-Bancroft | 37K | 1926 | 2015 | 2017 | 1 | March 2021 | Fall 2022 | 8 | 52 | \$405K |
| Auburn- Stone | 28K | 1927 | 2015 | 2017 | 2 | July 2020 | May 2022 | 11 | 44 | \$390K* |
| Templeton | 23K | 1923 | 2019 | 2019, 2020 | 2, 1 | 2023 | 2025 | 16 | 34 | \$370K* |
| Pepperell | 81K | 1838 | 2018 | 2021 | 1 | None | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Abington | 10K | 1939 | 2017 | | | | | | | |



MACHON SCHOOL, SWAMPSCOTT, MA

Swampscott successfully developed their Machon Elementary School into 38 units of affordable senior housing. The school closed in 2007 and in 2015 the Town conducted issued an RFI to solicit ideas for the property and to inform an eventual RFP. The Town received a variety of RFI responses, including 3 proposals for affordable senior housing, one for an educational activity center and a third for live work units with coworking space. In community meetings it became clear the favored community option was affordable senior housing.³⁶ Eventually the Town issued an RFP with a number of criteria (see criteria listed in Appendix B) that prioritized affordable senior housing. Ultimately the Town selected B'niah B'rith's proposal for the school and signed a land disposition agreement for the town, which served as a Purchase and Sale agreement for a ground lease. As part of the land disposition agreement B'niah Brith committed \$50,000 for infrastructure and pedestrian safety. The Town and developer collaborated on a "Friendly 40B" comprehensive permit application, which was a relatively easy process given the strict parameters the Town had set out in the RFP and land disposition agreement.³⁷

It was helpful for B'niah Brith that the Town had gone through an extensive community process, doing a thorough analysis of potential feasible uses. The project applied for affordable housing funds at the state in three different funding rounds and was eventually awarded funds in July 2019. Construction began in March 2020 and completed in June 2021.

The project utilized Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) funds, State HOME funds, Affordable Housing Trust Funds, Housing Stabilization Funds, North Shore HOME Consortium funds, and private foundation support as sources for funding the project. The project's unit mix is 30 units reserved for households making below 60% AMI and 8 for below 30% AMI.

JULIA BANCROFT AND MARY D. STONE SCHOOLS, AUBURN

Auburn's Julia Bancroft and Mary D Stone Schools both closed in 2015. The schools were originally built in the 1920s and had additions put on in the 1950s. In response, Auburn created an Elementary School Re-Use/Disposition Advisory Group to make a recommendation for how the schools should be reused. This group included residents who lived near the school as well as a former principal of the school. At the same time, the Town had a preliminary engineering study done indicated it would be a minimum of that indicated there would be a minimum two-to-three-million-dollar cost to bring the

³⁶ Amanda Otsuni, "Neighbors favor senior housing for Machon School", Salem News, November 26, 2015. https://www.salemnews.com/news/local_news/neighbors-favor-senior-housing-for-machon-school/article_dd7578bb-4ab5-582e-9820-ad997b025d88.html

³⁷ Holly Grace



buildings up to code for office use. The Town Manager reached out to all municipal departments to see if there was any use in redeveloping the school for use as municipal office space, but no department could justify the cost of renovating the building for that purpose. Auburn's advisory group could see from Auburn's HPP that there was a need for affordable senior housing and made a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen that the buildings be put out to bid with priority for projects with senior housing. Despite the fact the Town Manager did extensive outreach, ultimately there was only one bidder on the Bancroft School and two bidders on the Stone School. Ultimately the Town selected the same developer, Pennrose, for both schools. This was because Pennrose had more experience and would create more units than the competing bid.

After being designated as the developer and signing a developer agreement Pennrose worked to move the project forward on multiple fronts. There was a lot of confusion about what "affordable" housing meant in Auburn and Pennrose's team spent a lot of time educating the community about the project, who would be eligible, and how the construction progress would work. Pennrose also helped to solidify community confidence by conducting a design charette that brought together neighbors, reuse committee members, the Council on Aging. This variety of stakeholders could all contribute ideas, many of which ultimately made the project better (community gardens, integration with senior center programming, design features for an aging population). This event could use both the knowledge of the development team and the knowledge of the community to make a quality development and showed the community how committed Pennrose was to make a great place for seniors to live. Pennrose also contributed \$25,000 at each school for improvements to the fields and playgrounds adjacent to the schools.

The process to secure funding for each project took several years. The Town lent its support to the project by having the Town Manager meet with multiple state officials, including the local Congressman, the Lieutenant Governor, the Massachusetts Historic Commission and DHCD. The Town highlighted the project's importance in reaching the goals of its Housing Production Plan. In addition, the town waived or reduced some building fees, which produced significant savings for the projects. The Stone School began construction in July 2020 and opened to residents in May 2022. The Bancroft School went under construction in March 2021 and is scheduled to open to residents in late 2022. Both projects utilized 9 percent federal and state Low-Income Housing Tax Credits as well as HOME, Housing Stabilization Funds and Affordable Housing Trust



Funds. In addition, both projects received a small number of project-based Section 8 rental housing vouchers.³⁸

MCELWAIN SCHOOL, BRIDGEWATER, MA

In Bridgewater, MA the McElwain School closed in 1997. The school was sporadically used for the next two decades, at times for a youth center.³⁹ The town attempted to sell the property several times for profit but weren't able to sell. Eventually Bridgewater worked to get the school onto the National Register of Historic Places in 2013 with the assistance of Jennifer Goldson, a historic consultant.

After the Town Council voted to declare the school property surplus, the town solicited responses to an RFP to purchase or lease the school. One advantage for Bridgewater was that they had put a new roof on the building just before they closed the building in 1997, so the building remained relatively dry despite being mostly vacant for twenty years. Although six companies requested an application, the town received just one proposal for the school. Capstone Communities Development, LLC and MPZ Development, LLC's proposal was to rehabilitate the school and build another structure on the property to create 38 units, a combination of moderate income and affordable units.

As Pennrose did in Auburn, Capstone and MPZ spent a great deal of time working with the public to understand what additional "affordable housing" would mean in their community. The developers worked to help the Community Preservation Commission to understand their ability to fund housing. The project was the first low-income housing tax credit project in Bridgewater, so the community wasn't familiar with what that meant—in terms of levels of affordability, responsible property management, and long-term maintenance.

Capstone and MPZ worked to get the community comfortable with the level of density required for their project through outreach and hosting community information sessions. To meet the parking requirements under zoning for the project, the developers purchased a single family home adjacent to the school, which is being rehabilitated using Massachusetts State Housing Tax Credits. The developers submitted a comprehensive

³⁸ Seniors Housing Business "Pennrose to Repurpose Historic Mary Stone School in Massachusetts as Affordable Seniors Housing", July 20, 2020. <https://seniorshousingbusiness.com/pennrose-to-repurpose-historic-mary-stone-school-in-massachusetts-as-affordable-seniors-housing/>

³⁹ Sara Cline, "Proposal on the table for historic Bridgewater school," *Enterprise News*, November 6, 2017. <https://www.enterpriseneews.com/story/news/2017/11/06/proposal-on-table-for-historic/17262171007/>



permit application to the Bridgewater Zoning Board of appeals in December 2018, which was approved in May 2019.⁴⁰

The McElwain School received its final funding awards in October 2020. The project is utilizing federal and state historic tax credits, federal and state low-income housing tax credits, solar equity, state soft subsidies as well as financing from CEDAC.⁴¹

Construction on the project began in October 2021 and is scheduled to complete in late 2022. The developers reported that the historic building has posed challenges during construction. The school's historic brick façade required a large amount of work. Because of the shape of the original school layout, the project's design isn't particularly efficient; there is more common space than unit space because of wide hallways.

BALDWINVILLE SCHOOL, TEMPLETON

Unlike the other schools described, Templeton issued two separate RFPs for reuse. Templeton's Baldwinville School closed in 2019 and was vacant for two years. In 2019 the town voted to declare the school surplus and issued an RFP for proposals.⁴² The Town advertised the opportunity widely and sent the offering to 50 parties, but ultimately only received two proposals: one for marijuana cultivation and another for conversion to affordable housing. The Town signed a development agreement with 1620 Lab who had submitted a proposal for marijuana cultivation.⁴³ After finding the school's square footage would work for neither marijuana retail or a grow facility, 1620 Lab withdrew in September 2019 and the Town had to issue a second request for proposals. In response to this RFP, the Town only received one response, from MPZ Development, who had also responded to the original RFP.

MPZ Development is in the process of applying for funding for this project. Templeton's Community Preservation Committee has committed \$1,200,000 to the project, and the project will apply for federal and state tax credits through DHCD.

MPZ Development is in the process of applying for a Comprehensive Permit for the Baldwinville School. Currently construction is scheduled to complete in 2025.

⁴⁰ CoUrbanize, "McElwain School Apartments," accessed June 8, 2022. <https://courbanize.com/projects/mcelwainapts/>

⁴¹ Community Economic Development Corporation, "McElwain School Apartments Groundbreaking," October 21, 2021. <https://cedac.org/2021/10/13/mcelwain-school-apartments-groundbreaking/>

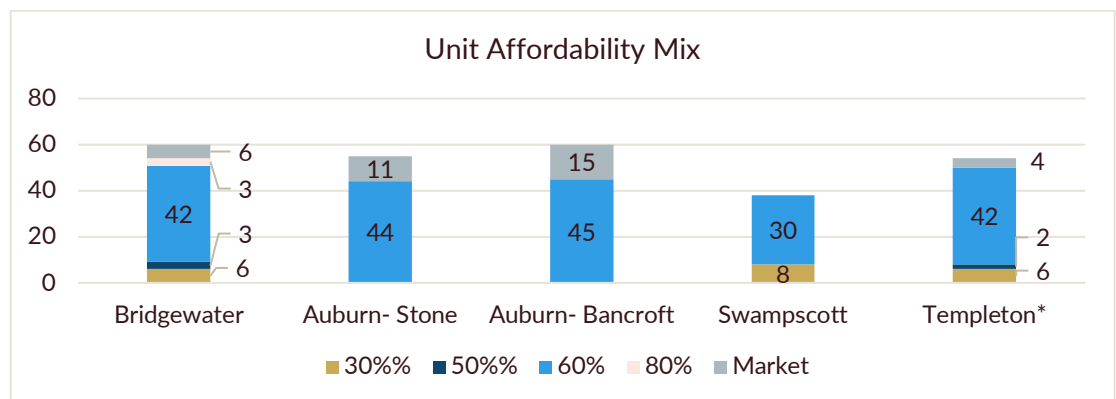
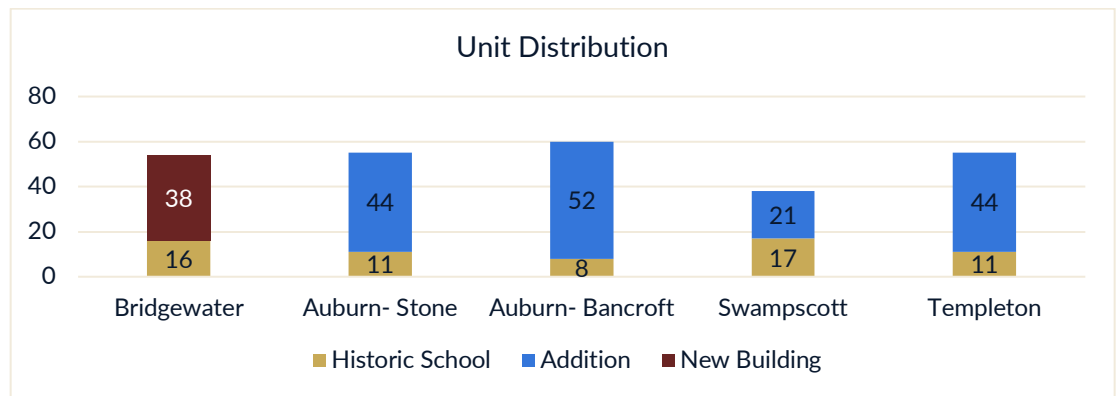
⁴² Stephen Landry, "Residents can weigh in on Baldwinville Elementary School apartments project," The Gardner News, March 21, 2021. <https://www.thegardnernews.com/story/news/2021/03/03/public-meeting-march-8-baldwinville-elementary-school-apartments-project/6891492002/>

⁴³ Kristin Palpini, "Weed Grower Seeks To Do Business In Templeton", *Daily Voice*, August 19, 2020, <https://dailyvoice.com/massachusetts/worcester/business/weed-grower-seeks-to-do-business-in-templeton/792769/>.



SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY SCHOOL FINDINGS

- Using an RFI process was helpful for towns to create successful RFPs.
- Involving the community and neighbors from the beginning is crucial
- Towns usually received few responses—1 or 2 responses
- All projects involved rehabilitating the historic school and adding additional units in additions or separate buildings to make the projects feasible. The additional units made it possible to spread expensive rehabilitation costs across more units, to make projects more competitive for state funding rounds and to ensure the project was big enough to support full time maintenance, property management and resident services.
- Schools with historic designations could access historic tax credits which helped make projects feasible.
- Local letters of support and local financing help projects move faster through the funding process.



Summary of Community Engagement

Getting community input was crucial in evaluating the potential for the adaptive reuse of the Center School. In order to understand the Abington community's preferences for the reuse of the Center School, Barrett Planning Group hosted a virtual community meeting on April 27, 2022, and conducted a community survey from April 11 to May 6, 2022.

Virtual Community Meeting

The Town of Abington hosted a virtual community meeting on April 27 with Barrett Planning Group. Approximately 53 people registered via Zoom and 40 attended. Selectman Alex Hagerty hosted a group of 7 Abington residents at Town Hall to log in to the zoom.

The meeting had four breakout groups to discuss residents' desires for the site, top considerations, knowledge about housing conditions and "dealbreakers" for the future of the site.

Participants across all groups emphasized preserving access to open space. Several wanted clarity on the status of Murphy Field, as it is currently part of the Center School parcel. Over the course of the Meeting, Town Manager Scott Lambiase clarified that it is the town's intention to retain Murphy Field for use for recreation. In addition, residents value the wooded areas on the site and opportunities for walking.

In each small group, some of the participants supported converting the school to affordable senior housing for several reasons. These included long waiting lists for Abington's existing senior housing units, and because this type of project might be 100% affordable, as compared to recent 40B projects. Some personally knew seniors in Abington's existing affordable housing and felt other seniors should have a similar opportunity.

Other participants were not supportive of using the school for senior housing. Reasons included a desire to expand green and recreation space, as well as concerns about a new residential development increasing demand on water, schools and police, and increasing traffic. Despite the relative proximity to the Senior Center and shopping, the school is not so close that walking would be an option for seniors who might have stamina or ambulatory difficulties.

One major concern or dealbreaker for some participants was "keeping the building the way it is" with "no increase in footprint or height." Others wanted to be sure the Town pursued a course of action that would see a historic building preserved as best as



possible. Many participants said that if the building had to be housing, it should be affordable senior housing. One participant with personal knowledge of the school was concerned about condition of the school and potentially exorbitant rehabilitation costs.

Community Survey Summary

Respondents to the Center School reuse survey had similar desires, concerns and conflicts as the people who attended the community meeting. People across a number of age ranges responded to the survey and most were longtime residents of Abington. Less than 15% of respondents currently use the site weekly or more, and most rarely or never visit the site. The primary concerns for survey respondents about potential redevelopment were about the strain on the water supply, increases in traffic and potentially losing the historic school building. Top priorities for the reuse of the site included the preservation of wooded areas on the perimeter of the site and between the school and Murphy field. When asked what the top three most important considerations for reuse were, Abington residents named preservation of the wooded areas between the site and abutting properties as most important (39.3%). Next most important factors were keeping the wooded area between the school and the fields (32.6%) and providing affordable senior housing (32.1%). In contrast, the next most important priority was creating more open space by demolishing the school. If the site is to be developed for housing a majority of respondents supported that the housing be reserved for seniors.

The full survey summary is available in Appendix A.



Opportunities

Open Space Preservation

Because of the shape and size of the Center School parcel, any redevelopment should have the ability to preserve open space on the site. It is the Town's intention to preserve Murphy field, and the clearings to the north, south and east of the school may allow for an addition or

Preservation of Historic Structure

Because the Center School was a Works Progress Administration project, it has historical significance as well as personal meaning to generations of Abington residents and preserving the building would retain the unique character of this school as well as its history. Currently the school is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places nor is it located in a local historic district or National Register Historic District. One of the Abington Historical Commission's current projects is establishing a local historic district. As of April 2022, the school is not listed on the Massachusetts' Massachusetts Historical Commission's Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, but the area of Washington Street just to the west is listed as a historic area.⁴⁴

Meet Need for Affordable Senior Housing

The redevelopment of the school could provide an opportunity to provide greatly needed senior housing in Abington. Providing housing for seniors has been a goal in both Abington's Master Plan and Housing Production Plan and could help the town reach the 10% threshold for 40B.

It's also possible that redevelopment of the Center School could be a 100% income restricted project, whether focused on a senior or family population. Some community engagement participants noted this would be a benefit, especially when compared to recent majority market rate Chapter 40B projects, where just a portion of the units are income restricted to below 80% AMI. There were also mixed understandings in the survey and public meeting participation about who exactly would qualify for affordable housing. Using real life examples, like those in Table 6 can help deepen residents' understanding of who might live in and benefit from affordable housing.

⁴⁴ Massachusetts Historical Commission Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). <http://mhc-macris.net/>



Neighborhood Improvements

It's possible that with the redevelopment of the school, a developer might provide public benefits. Community engagement participants frequently mentioned the lack of sidewalks along Summer Street. The Town had pursued safe routes to school improvements at Summer and Walnut Street with state funding, but those plans did not move forward when the Center School closed. The case study school redevelopments show that in some school rehabilitations, the developers invested in wider community benefits like:

- A public park and two playgrounds at Bridgewater's McElwain School
- \$50,000 for playground/fields improvements at the Marty D. Stone and Julia Bancroft Schools in Auburn
- A public walking trail at the Baldwinville School in Templeton



Constraints and Challenges

The Center School site has several constraints and challenges to future development.

Building Condition & Hazardous Material Remediation

The condition of the Center School will pose a challenge to the town, whether the school is demolished or rehabilitated. In either scenario, hazardous material will need to be remediated. The code review noted the presence of asbestos and due to the age of the school it is assumed the school contains lead paint. If the Town determines it is best to move forward with demolishing the school, it's likely the Town would need to seek funding at Town Meeting. Estimates to demolish the North School for a new fire station were \$750,000 for hazardous waste remediation and \$500,000 for demolition.⁴⁵

Any project to convert the building to residential use would also need to remediate hazardous materials but would not have to pay for the cost of demolition of the school. Habeeb and Associates' code review shows that it would be possible to convert the building for residential use, but that this would require replacing the roof and evaluating the condition of the first-floor framing at the minimum, as well as all other requirements as outlined in the code review.

Project Feasibility within Historic Footprint

Feasibly rehabilitating the Center School within the historic footprint may pose challenges for the Town. Habeeb and Associates' conceptual floor plans show a maximum of 15 to 16 units possible within the existing building footprint. This may also be an overly ambitious number given that some of the proposed efficiency units have awkward layouts that may not meet DHCD's Requirements for Group 1 bathrooms in all units. Additionally, if the project is focused on meeting the needs of seniors, some of these narrower units may not adhere to Aging in Place Guidelines, which recommend 60" turning radiuses in bathrooms and kitchens.⁴⁶

Total development costs (according to publicly available data) for case study schools that have finished construction ranged from \$394,000 to \$507,000 a unit. Fifteen units would not be eligible for the largest source of subsidy in Massachusetts, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). DHCD requires that projects be at least 20 units to apply for LIHTC funding and has historically funded most projects that contain around 50

⁴⁵ Kaestle Boos Associates, Inc., Abington Fire Station Feasibility Study, April 6, 2020, page 158.

⁴⁶ Department of Housing and Community Development, *Recommended DHCD Design Improvements Checklist For Senior Housing Developments*, July 2020. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/senior-housing-aging-in-place-guidelines-new-72020/download>



units. There is a small amount of funding through the Community Scale Housing Initiative for smaller projects, but the total per project maximum for CSHI funds is \$1 million, and a \$350,000 minimum total development cost per unit.⁴⁷ These realities reveal why the case study schools have each leveraged low-income housing tax credits to undertake their projects, and why all pursued new construction additions or new detached buildings. It's unclear what scale of project would be feasible for a developer at the Center School, and whether a feasible project would meet the community desire for neighborhood scale redevelopment (including some sentiment to keep any redevelopment within the historic footprint of the school).

Shallow Bedrock

Potential redevelopment requires excavation could incur higher costs because of bedrock just beneath the soil surface. Typically, these types of conditions require more intensive work to break up rock for removal, rather than soil that can be easily excavated.

Strain on Local Water Supply

A major community concern across Abington is the impact of new development on the local water supply. The local community is concerned about water bans, as well as the presence of PSFAS. Abington and Rocklands' Joint Waterworks would evaluate the water demand projections for any new development, to ensure the system has the ability to provide additional water and treatment, but the community remains concerned about the impact of new development. The Town should ensure any developer is aware of the specific concerns around water in Abington, as well as keep the community informed about the water treatment plant capacity upgrades, as well as PFAS remediation.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Department of Housing and Community Development "Community Scale Housing Initiative (CSHI)", accessed June 16, 2022. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/community-scale-housing-initiative-cshi>

⁴⁸ Meg McIntyre, "Rockland, Abington look to lead water," *Patriot Ledger*, November 14, 2021. <https://www.patriotledger.com/story/news/2021/11/14/abington-rockland-joint-water-works-awarded-2-24-m-state/8587430002/>



Report Findings and Recommendations

In conclusion, Barrett Planning Group recommends the Town of Abington undertake the following actions:

Engage developer community in RFI process

The Town can issue a Request for Information or Ideas from the developer community to get a better sense of whether a project within the school's historic footprint is feasible. If this is not feasible, responses can demonstrate how many more units and construction would be needed, and the Town can determine whether it would still like to pursue a project at the Center School. This was helpful in communities like Swampscott to eventually issue an RFP that received favorable responses.

Clarify status of Murphy field

Because the Murphy Field is on the same parcel of the Center School, and it is the Town's intention to preserve the fields, the Select Board should include this intention in any RFI or RFP. It is worth clarifying for the community that the Town also intends to preserve parking and access for the fields, which would need to be factored into any site planning around housing and parking around the school. It is for this reason the Town likely would not subdivide or create an easement on the parcel, until a developer solidified site plans.

PURSUE NATIONAL REGISTER DESIGNATION

If the Town determines redevelopment of the school for affordable housing is appropriate, the Town should work to get the Center School (and possibly its sister North School) on the National Register of Historic Places. This designation makes it easier to access Federal and State Historic Tax Credits. The historic designations at the schools in Auburn also ensured that new construction's styles and height had to be in keeping with the historic school, which may be a comfort to neighbors concerned with the project.

ENGAGE THE PUBLIC ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Not all members of the public are supportive of affordable housing in Abington or at the Center School site. The developments on Summer Street and Plymouth Street, both of which used the Chapter 40B comprehensive permit process, have not been entirely popular in the community. Several survey respondents described feeling like Abington is being over developed. Other responses reflected misconceptions about the quality of construction or types of households who would qualify for affordable housing.

In the case study communities, community information sessions and design charrettes were very helpful for gaining neighborhood and community support. These are



opportunities to clarify what professional property management and maintenance would look like, how, and which households might qualify, and create channels of communication during construction.

UTILIZE THE LOCAL INITIATIVE PROGRAM

If the town ultimately issues an RFP and receives an advantageous response, the Town can use the Local Initiative Permit (LIP) program to work collaboratively with a developer to move a project forward, with assistance from the state. Abington could work with the selected developer on a design that is favorable to the Town, and work with the developer to submit a local comprehensive permit as a “Friendly 40B.”

KEEP NEIGHBORS ENGAGED AND INFORMED

Whether the Town decides to demolish or rehabilitate the school, both scenarios would involve construction vehicles, staging, and debris removal in a residential neighborhood. In affordable housing development, most general contractors will develop Construction Management Plans, detailing how construction vehicles will access a site and which roadways they will use. It is very important to keep neighbors informed about these types of details, as well as the project schedule. Even before the construction of an affordable housing project, it's important to keep the community informed about next steps and target dates. In the case study communities, community information sessions and design charrettes were very helpful for gaining neighborhood and community support. Electronic mailing lists and project websites were also useful tools to keep neighbors informed about project progress, and it can be especially helpful for immediate neighbors to know the general contractor's site supervisor. Selecting a developer who has worked successfully with residential neighbors in previous projects should be a consideration in any RFP.



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Appendix A Community Survey Summary

From April 11 to May 6, 2022, Abington residents had the opportunity to respond to an online survey about the future reuse of the Center School site. The purpose of the survey was to poll residents about their preferences and concerns, identify unmet needs within the community, and develop a vision for the future of the site. The survey received from 450 people.

Who took the survey?

Almost all the survey respondents currently live in Abington (95.2 percent, or 334 out of 351 people who reported where they live). The remaining 4.8 percent live elsewhere or did not respond. Of 332 Abington-resident respondents, 290 own their homes (87.3 percent). Less than 10 percent rent their home and 3.4 percent live with family or have other living arrangements. Figure 1 shows how long residents have lived in Abington. Over three quarters (78.7 percent) have lived in Abington for more than ten years.

Figure 8. Duration of Residence

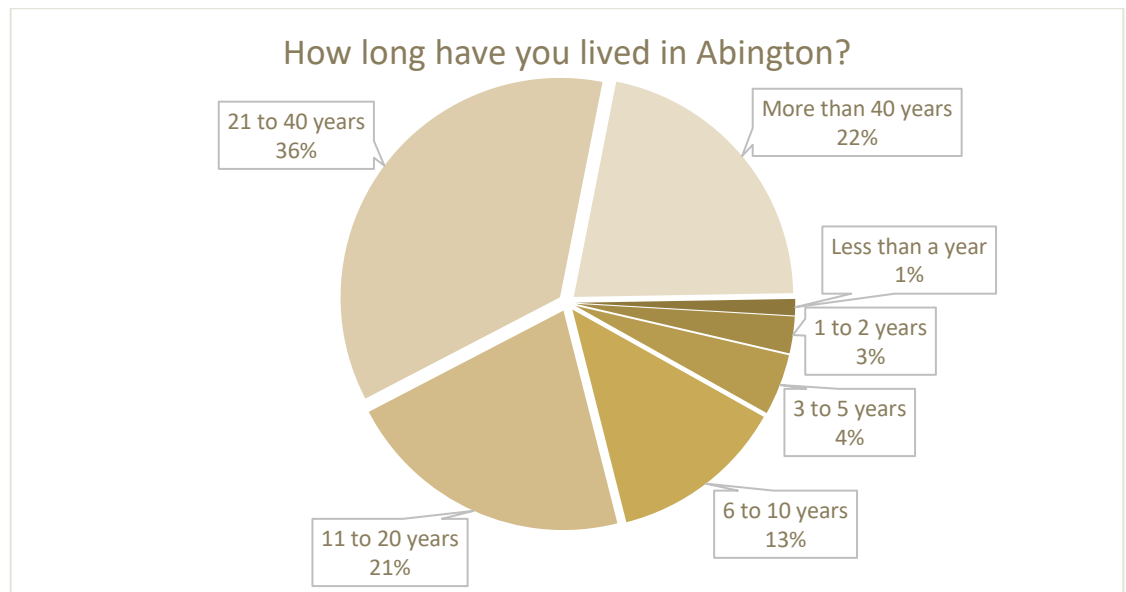
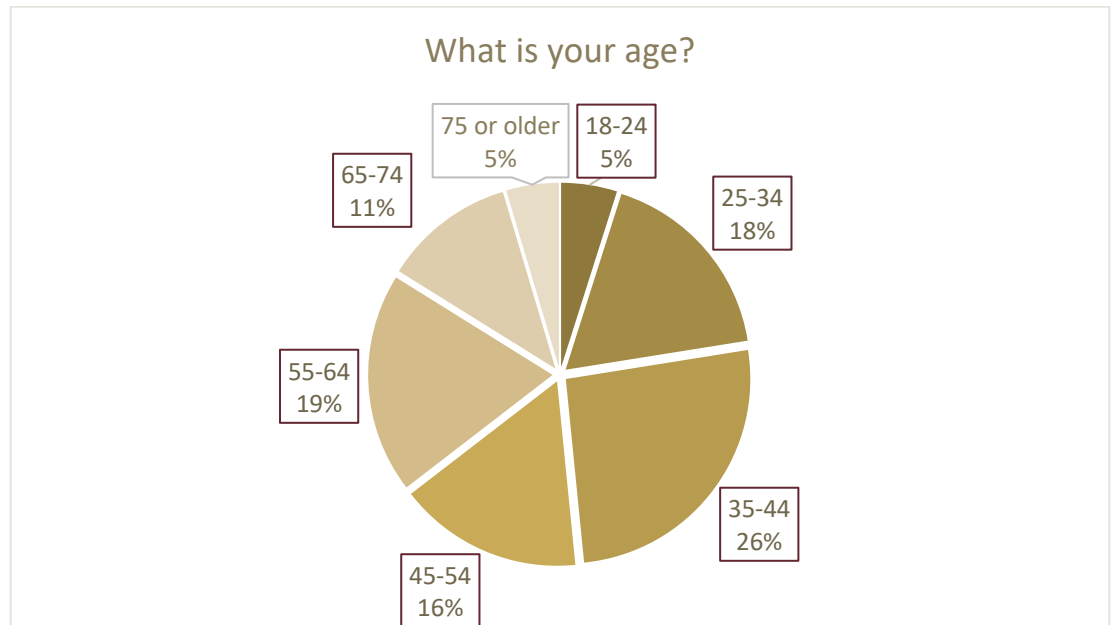


Figure 2 shows that respondents represented a wide range of age groups. The median age range was 45-54.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates 2016-2020 reports a median age of 39.8 for Abington residents.



Figure 9. Age of Respondents



Among the respondents from Abington, almost all drive their own vehicle as their primary means of transportation (332 or 95.7% of respondents).

Relationship to the Site

When asked whether they live within a 10-15 minute walk from the Center School site, 189 respondents said they lived in the area. Less than 20 percent of respondents said they currently walk, play, or visit the center school site every day (6.9%) or weekly (7.2%) and the majority of respondents rarely or never visit the site (54.2%).

Site Reuse

Survey respondents identified their suggestions and preferences for, and concerns about the site's reuse. Their primary concerns (Figure 10) for the reuse of the Center School site was about the strain on the drinking water supply (the primary concern for a quarter of respondents), followed by traffic (19.5%) and the potential loss or deterioration of the historic school building (13%). Respondents also had an option to select an "Other" option, which was chosen by 50 respondents, whose responses varied. Some had no primary concern (six), while others declined to choose because of concern about all options presented (four) or indicated fear of losing open space (four). Several respondents said they are concerned that the school might be developed into apartments and condominiums, leading to overdevelopment. Other respondents specified concerns



both about strain on the drinking water supply or other public services such as police, fire, and school capacity/overcrowding. One respondent said that without action, the surrounding neighborhood might continue to see vandalism and break-ins at the school and homes in the area. Other respondents were concerned about any added costs to renovate or demolish the school, and still others were concerned about the ultimate impact on taxes. When asked to identify their top 3 other concerns about the reuse of the site, 20 percent or more of respondents identified: traffic, strain on the drinking water supply, or loss of access to the ballfield.

Figure 10. Primary Concern

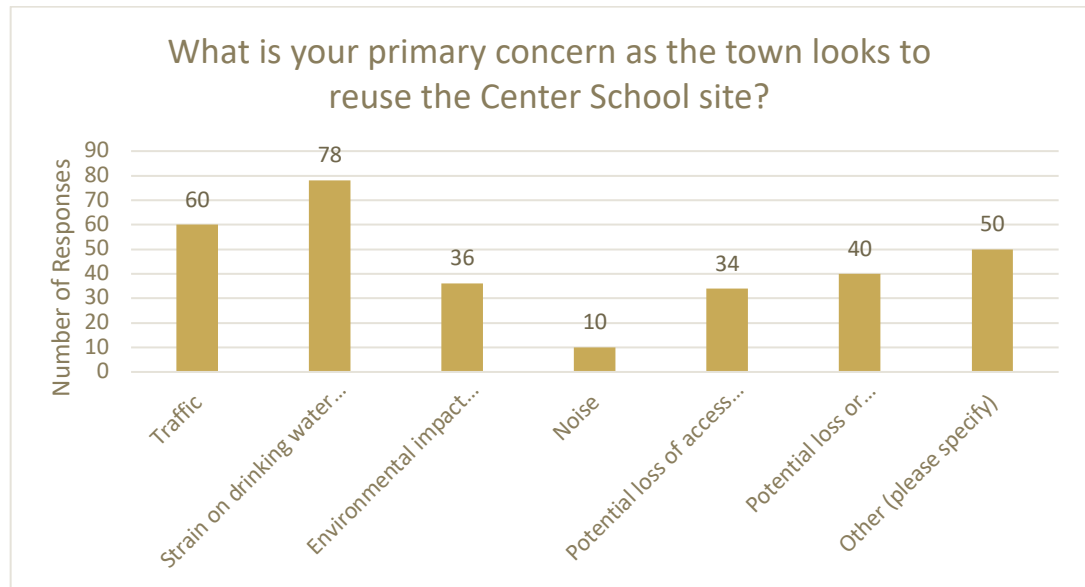
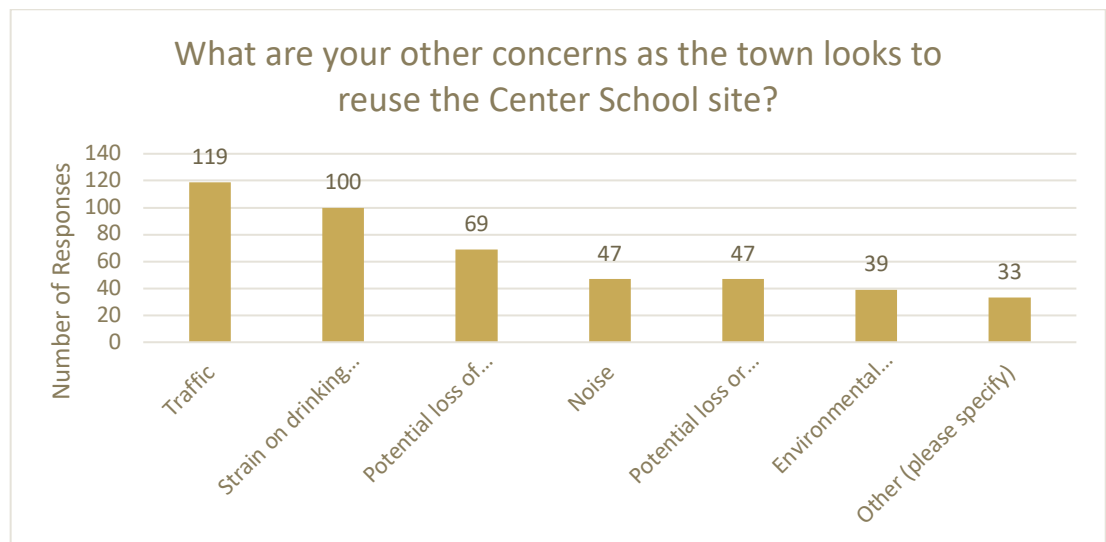


Figure 11. Other Concerns



Respondents were then asked what their top three priorities were for the reuse of the site (Figure 12). Preservation of wooded areas between the site and abutting properties (39.2%) and between the school and fields (32.7%) emerged as the top priorities—a sentiment that aligns with the previous question. The next highest priority was to provide affordable senior housing (29.8%), followed closely by a priority for demolishing the school (29.0%). Among respondents who selected “Other,” answers varied. Several respondents said the property should be used for youth or educational purposes (e.g., gym, recreation, teen center, or satellite college location). Other responses varied, with some asserting that affordable housing would be an eyesore while others promoted specific examples of senior or affordable housing. When these answers were cross referenced to see how answers varied among between residents and non-residents, residents supported providing affordable housing at a higher rate (32.1%) than overall surveytakers (29.8%) and residents supported demolishing the school at a lower rate (26.7%) than overall surveytakers (29.0%).

Figure 12. Priorities for Reuse

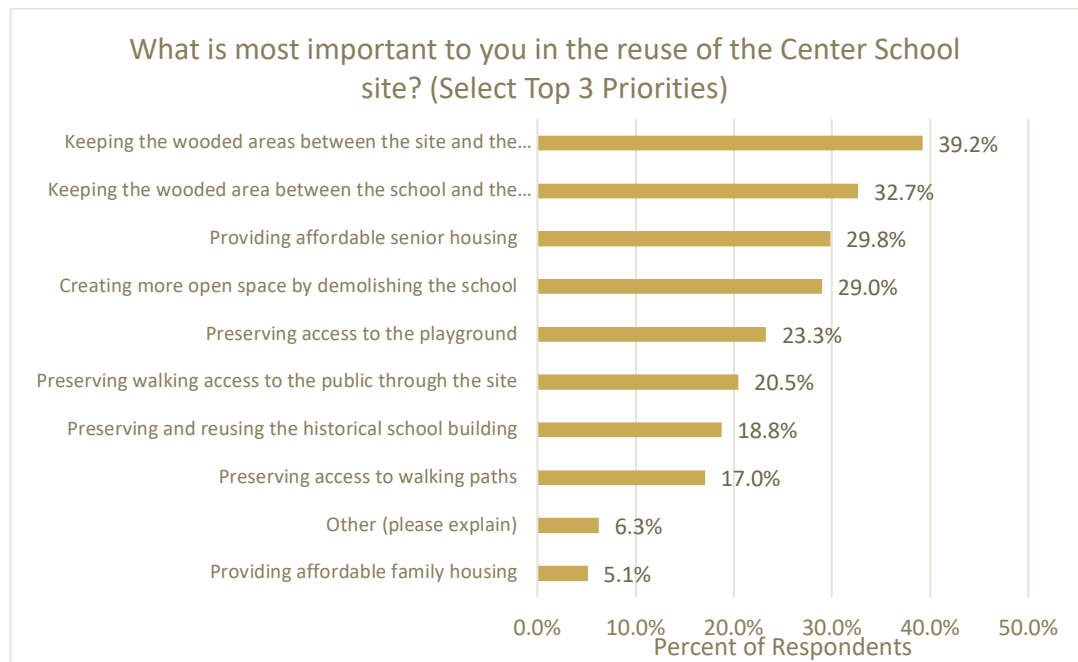
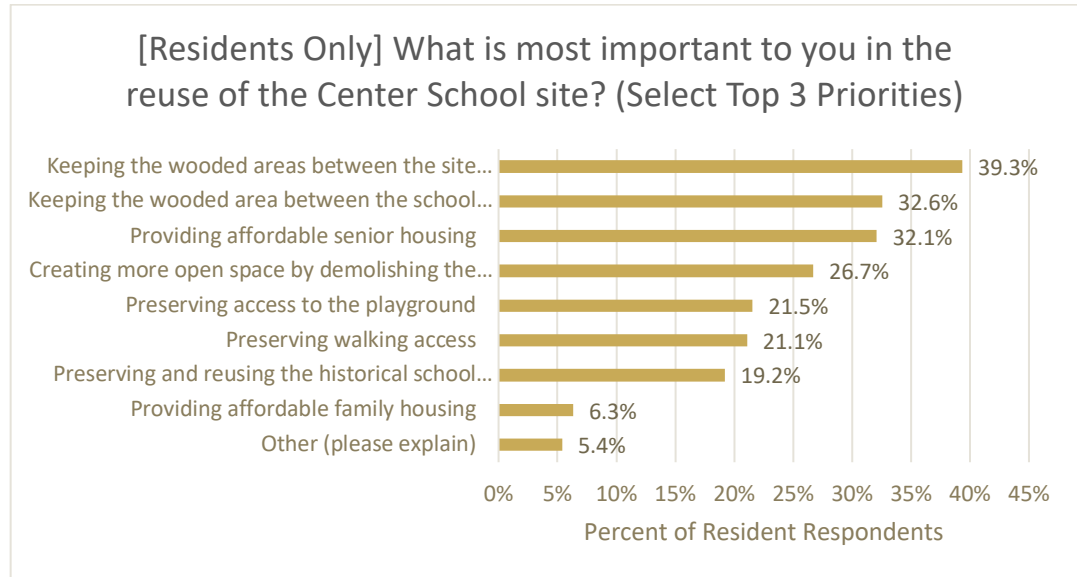


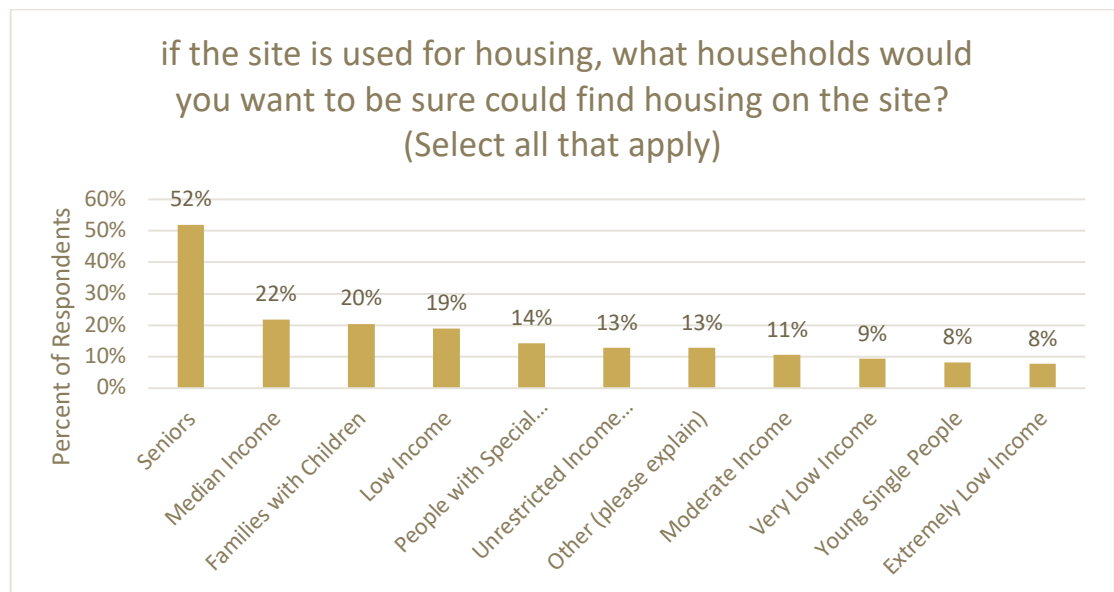
Figure 13. Priorities for Reuse Among Abington Residents





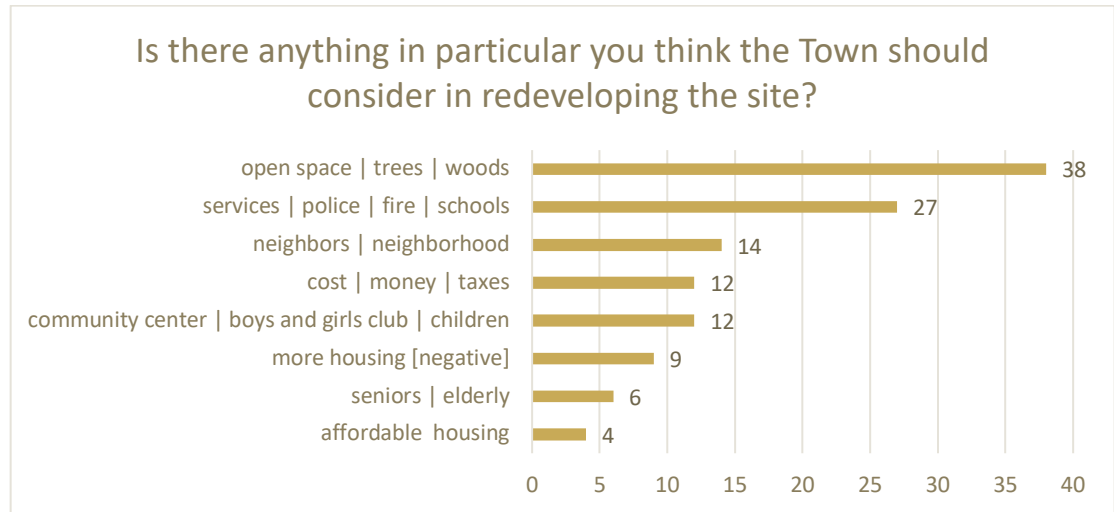
Over half of all respondents (52 percent) expressed support for senior housing if the site is to be developed for any kind of residential use (Figure 14). A later question asked if the survey taker personally knew anyone who struggled to find housing in Abington. Here, respondents described seniors struggling with long waitlists for senior housing and few options for downsizing (“There should not be a list that are so long that people die before they get to live there”). Some other respondents mentioned that they personally struggled—with some describing rent increases of \$500 in one year, while others described a lack of studios, one bedroom units, or otherwise accessible entry-level housing for young people to rent or buy.

Figure 14: Housing Priority Populations



The final question of the survey asked respondents if there was anything in particular the Town should consider in redeveloping the site.

Figure 15: Town Considerations in Redevelopment



The largest consideration mentioned, by far, was for preserving or enhancing open space on the site (open space or related words were mentioned in 38 responses). Respondents who supported the conversion or use of the site for open space pointed out that the existence of the current open space is very helpful for the current neighborhood. The neighborhood is bordered on two sides by busy connector roads, so the safety and quiet of walking paths, fields and parking lots are helpful for dog walkers, folks with strollers, children learning to ride bikes, and the general public. Some respondents suggested adding a dog park or track and field. On the other hand, some respondents questioned the Town’s capacity to maintain additional parks.

Several responses emphasized the importance of evaluating the true cost of the project (12 responses), both in term of potential renovations or demolition as well as ongoing impact on Abington’s taxes and impact on public services like school, fire, police, and water (27 responses). Some suggested the Town be sure to pursue all possible grants in subsidies in reusing of the school, while others suggested the Town should sell the school for revenue.

Many respondents emphasized the need both to consider and keep neighbors informed about the reuse decision process and any eventual actions related to potential development or demolition of the school (14 responses). In discussing what is appropriate from a neighborhood perspective, some respondents supported creating a park while others said that small-scale senior housing, duplexes, or single-family homes nestled in the residential neighborhood could be appropriate. Several respondents expressed concern about the current state of the school. They said it is currently often



used as a hangout site for youth who have vandalized the school and used it as a site for drinking. Others mentioned the need to improve connectivity and pedestrian access, specifically to get to the MBTA station and to install a sidewalk on Summer Street between Walnut Street and the train station/ Senior Center. Some respondents expressed a desire to see the building preserved, and a belief that use of the site for affordable housing would mean the loss of the historic structure (“There are and will be plenty of multi dwelling developments here in Abington - we should not risk sacrificing a historic structure/property for such a purpose.” There was a lack of understanding among some of these responses that the conversion of the building to affordable housing might in fact be a way to preserve it.

In addition, a proportion of respondents opposed development of new apartment buildings or condominiums on the site and saw it part of a larger trend of overdevelopment in Abington. Several respondents mentioned the two recent Chapter 40B developments (0 Summer Street, currently under review by Abington’s Zoning Board of Appeals; 1019 Plymouth Street, received comprehensive permit in 2019).

By contrast, several other responses expressed support for affordable housing, with senior housing more frequently mentioned. One respondent suggested that the creation of new senior units might allow for phased renovations at other senior housing developments in town.



Appendix B: Case Study School RFP Criteria

| Swampscott | Auburn-Stone/Auburn- Bancroft | Templeton | Bridgewater | Pepperell |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Comparative Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Experience • Community & Neighborhood Support • Financial Capacity • Site Reuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: Purchase ○ A: Lease ○ N: Neither • Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: Senior or 55+ ○ A general ○ N: No housing • Nonresidential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: Service or benefit generates tax revenue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property and Development Experience • Community & Neighborhood Support • Financial Capacity • Site Reuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purchase vs. Lease ○ Housing for 55+ ○ Nonresidential (tax generating service or benefit) • Experience | <p>Goals: economic climate, avoid blight, historic characteristics</p> <p>Comparative evaluation criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness to submission requirements • Impact on economic conditions • Feasibility & Financial Strength of developer • Project Plan and Schedule • Compatibility with needs/characteristics of neighborhood • Address parking needs • Preservation of historical aspects of building • Consistency with 2017 Master Plan • Skill and experience in adaptive reuse of buildings | <p>Comparative Criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completeness • Experience- 20 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: 7+ ○ A 4-7 ○ N: Less than 4 • References- 15 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: All positive ○ A One positive ○ N: Two negative • Level of investment in 24 mo.- 10 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: 2.5M ○ A 1.5M ○ N: Less than 1.5M • Annual Tax/lease/pilot revenue- 5 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: 100K+ ○ A 70K+ ○ N: 40-70K ○ UN: <40K • Historical & Neighborhood considerations- 15 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: Compatible/positive ○ A Compatible/acceptable | <p>Comparative Criteria- To be included in final report</p> |



Adaptive Reuse Study: Center School, Abington, MA

| Swampscott | Auburn-Stone/Auburn- Bancroft | Templeton | Bridgewater | Pepperell |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------|---|-----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A: Service or benefit no tax revenue ○ N: No benefit, no tax revenue • Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: 10+ ○ A 5-10 ○ N: Less than 5 | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ N: Not compatible, unacceptable impact • Affordable housing - 5 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: 25%+ affordable ○ A Less than 25% ○ N: No affordable • Public benefits- 15 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: Public improvements ○ A One public improvement ○ N: No public improvement • Preservation of Existing Building- 5 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: Largely preserve ○ A: Preserve facade ○ UN: No preservation • New Buildings- 5 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H: Additional buildings, historic preservation standards ○ A No additional buildings ○ N: Additional buildings, incongruent with historic preservation ○ | |



Appendix C: Center School Housing Assessment

Habeeb and Associates, Inc.





May 23, 2022

Mr. Scott Lambiase
Town Manager
Town of Abington
500 Gliniewicz Way
Abington, MA. 02351

RE: **Center School- Senior Housing Assessment**
H&A Project No 2117.03

Dear Scott,

In accordance with our proposal, Habeeb and Associates (H&A) has performed an evaluation of the Center School to review the condition of the structure, perform a code review, and provide conceptual floor plans for renovation to senior housing.

No original design plans were available for Center School, but partial plans for sister North School prepared by S.W. Hayes & Associates Architects, dated October 21, 1938 were provided for review. The school is a two-story structure, with partial basement housing the mechanical room and workroom. There is a main classroom wing, plus a one-story common area that formerly served as a gymnasium.

Information regarding building framing was provided on the plans for a sister school, North School. The roof framing over the classroom wing consists of wood roof deck spanning between 3x14" wood joists at 16" on center over the classrooms and 2x10's over the corridor. The joists span from exterior masonry walls to steel beams which run the length of the corridors. The steel beams frame into I-shaped steel columns. Along the exterior load bearing masonry walls, steel lintels have been installed over the windows to support the roof and floor framing. The second floor and first floor of the classroom wing is framed similar to the roof, with the exception of the framing being rotated at the toilet rooms and stair entries. The exterior walls appear to be constructed of 12" thick brick masonry walls.

Roof:

The roof was accessed via a hatch off the second floor corridor. It extends through a narrow opening in the roof. The flat roof is a stone ballasted EPDM membrane. The majority of the membrane was concealed with ballast, and in some areas the ballast was displaced around drains and at the main east entry. It is likely the roof system will have exceeded its serviceable life and any renovation project would include roof replacement. No active roof leaks were reported or observed.

The roof over the gymnasium consists of wood decking and wood joists that span between a 21" deep steel beam that clear spans the room. The floor of the gymnasium consists of wood joists that span between steel beams, with a line of column supports in the middle of the room in the crawlspace area. The crawl space below the first floor could not be accessed to view the condition of the first floor wood framing due to asbestos contamination.

Framing:

With the exception of a limited area of roof framing near the access hatch, the remainder of the framing was concealed by ceilings and walls. The roof framing observed in this location appeared to be in good condition. Based upon our visual review of existing masonry and floor framing, no structural deficiencies were noted.

As access in the crawl spaces below the first floor framing was prohibited, it is recommended that the condition of the first floor framing be confirmed prior to consideration for renovation, due to the potential for significant deterioration of the framing as a result of moisture in the crawl space cavity.

Façade:

The façade is uninsulated solid masonry construction with isolated ornamental precast stone trim elements. The façade was generally in fair location, with isolated defects observed throughout the façade. These deficiencies include mortar joint deterioration requiring repointing, cracking through the brick and step cracking in the mortar joints between the brick units. More significant deficiencies were observed by the double doors to low roof where wider cracks were observed (via drone imaging) at each side of the door header. Cracks were also noted on each side of the chimney above low roof. The steel lintels should be replaced due to rusting, which has resulted in the cracking and displacement of masonry. In numerous locations throughout the façade, the steel lintels above the louvers have rusted and damaged the surrounding brick; these lintels should also be replaced.

The original windows have been replaced with a Kalwall panel, with operable project out hopper units in the lower sections in the classrooms. Kalwall has also been used to replace the two-story glass block in stairwells, with the exception of two locations where the original glass block is still in place at the east main entry and southeast entry. In this location there is extensive deterioration of the plaster finishes on each side of the glass block. We would expect that any reuse of the building would require replacement of all windows

Interiors:

The original ceilings consist of a combination of wire lath and plaster and adhered tiles suspended from the wood joists above. Throughout the building, acoustical ceiling panels and grid have been suspended below the existing ceiling finishes. At the second floor, the suspended ceilings are located below the window heads.

In the gymnasium area, there is extensive paint peeling on the inside face of the three exterior walls. The wood floor has cupped and buckled throughout. The corridor ceilings have a lath and plaster finish and have extensive peeling paint surfaces.

There is a 3' deep area that backs up to the corridor in each room that contains storage space and built ins closet areas along with ventilation grill. It is unknown whether other utilities are run in this shaft. Sections of radiators run along the exterior wall.

Attached to this report are Photographic Documentation that shows typical conditions of the building. Drone images are included in several photos, and a link has been provided to the Town with all the drone images. We have also attached the Code Review which addresses requirements for reuse of this building for housing. Lastly, we have provided two conceptual options for layout of the floors for apartments, along with 3 options for apartment unit layouts. We have included the option that keeps the existing 3' closet area along the corridor as unusable space for utility distribution.

Please note that this evaluation did not evaluate hazardous or asbestos-containing materials or lead paint considerations.



H A B E E B & A S S O C I A T E S
A R C H I T E C T S

We trust this serves your needs at this time. Please call should you have any questions regarding this evaluation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth P. Lewis, PE, MCPPO
Structural Engineer/ Senior Project Manager
Habeb & Associates Inc.

Attachments:
Photographs
Code Review, prepared by RWS Code Group
Conceptual Floor Plans

150 LONGWATER DR
NORWELL, MA
02061-1647

100 GROVE ST
SUITE 303
WORCESTER, MA
01605-2630

781-871-9804
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1. North elevation – front entrance.



2. East elevation.



3. South elevation.



4. West elevation.



5. Overall view from northeast corner of the site.



6. Overall view from the south end of the site.



7. Lintels are rusted, with rust formation starting to displace brick masonry.



8. Isolated area of cracked and displaced masonry on south wall at chimney above low roof.



9. The brick façade is generally in good condition, but there are isolated cracks throughout the façade.



10. Brick cracks and displacement were typically observed at classroom vent openings.



11. The Kalwall windows are in poor condition with extensive fiber bloom on the exterior lamination.



12. Areaway with stairs to basement boiler room.



13. Overall view of the roof area, with ballasted EPDM roof membrane at the end of its lifespan.



14. Roof hatch has very small opening and offsets at ceiling level.



15. View of roof framing near roof hatch, with plywood strips used to hang ceiling joists.



16. Existing ceiling consists of original spline ceiling tiles with new acoustical ceiling grid and tile system installed below.



17. Existing cafetorium space.



18. Existing cafetorium space.



19. Cafetorium space with storage rooms created above.



20. View of main corridor between classrooms.



21. Typical classroom space.



22. First floor stairwell with glass block.



23. Second floor stairwell with glass block.



24. Tile work around water fountain.



25. Existing toilet rooms.



26. Boiler room in basement.



27. Boiler room exterior access to areaway.



28. Workroom in basement adjacent to boiler room.



Code

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HVAC

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Electrical

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Plumbing

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Fire Protection

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Commissioning

Center School Renovation

Abington, Massachusetts

Code Report

May 4, 2022

Sullivan Code Group
R.W. Sullivan Engineering
617.523.8227
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Prepared By: Donald E. Contois, P.E.

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Introduction

The Center School located at 65 Thaxter Ave. in Abington, MA is an existing vacant school building. The proposed project includes renovations to convert the building into apartments for elderly housing. This code summary is based on existing condition plans as well as a site visit conducted on April 28, 2022. The following is a list of applicable codes:

| Code Type | Applicable Code (Model Code Basis) |
|----------------------------|---|
| Building | 780 CMR: Massachusetts State Building Code, 9 th Edition (2015 International Building Code (IBC)) (2015 International Existing Building Code (IEBC)) |
| Fire Prevention | 527 CMR: Massachusetts Fire Prevention Regulations (2015 NFPA 1) |
| Accessibility | 521 CMR: Massachusetts Architectural Access Board Regulations |
| Electrical | 527 CMR 12.00: Massachusetts Electrical Code (2020 National Electrical Code) |
| Mechanical | 2015 International Mechanical Code (IMC) |
| Plumbing | 248 CMR: Massachusetts Plumbing Code |
| Energy Conservation | 2018 International Energy Conservation Code |

International Existing Building Code

The 2015 International Existing Building Code with Massachusetts amendments allows for 3 separate compliance methods, the Prescriptive Method (in general, altered areas must comply with the code for new construction), Work Area Method (level of compliance is based on the classification of work), and Performance Compliance Method (numerical method that allows tradeoffs for deficiencies). This report is based on the Work Area Method.

1. Work Area and Classification of Work:

The proposed work includes renovations to convert the building into apartments for elderly housing. The work is classified as a Level 3 Alteration. Level 3 Alterations include the reconfiguration of spaces, the addition or elimination of doors and windows, the reconfiguration or extension of systems, and/or the installation of additional equipment in more than 50% of the aggregate area of the building. Also, the project will be changing the use of the building from a school to residential apartments. Therefore, the work must comply with IEBC Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10.

2. Occupancy Classification:

Non-separated mixed uses

- Use Group A-3 (Multipurpose Room)
- Use Group R-2 (Apartments)

3. Construction Type:

- Type VB Construction (combustible, no structural fire resistance rating)

4. Height and Area Limitations:

Since the change of use from Use Group E to Use Groups A-3 and R-2 is to a higher relative hazard per IEBC Table 1012.5, the building must comply with the height and area limitations of 780 CMR (IEBC 1012.5.1). As shown in the following table, the building complies with the height and area limitations for the most restrictive use (Use Group A-3) based on Type VB construction.

| Code Reference | Type VB – Use Group A-3 | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Height | Area |
| <u>780 CMR Tables 504.3, 504.4 & 506.2:</u> Tabular Value | 2 St. (60 ft) | 18,000 ft ² |
| <u>780 CMR Section 506.3</u> Frontage Increase (100% Open Frontage; 75% Increase) | - | 4,500 ft ² |
| Height and Area Allowed | 2 St. (60 ft) | 22,500 ft² |
| Actual Height and Area | 2 St. | ~10,000 ft² |

5. Fire Resistance Ratings:

The new and altered building elements require the following fire resistance ratings in accordance with 780 CMR Table 601 and various sections of the code.

| Building Element | Fire Resistance Rating (Hrs) |
|--|------------------------------|
| Primary Structural Frame | 0 |
| Exterior Bearing Walls | 0 |
| Interior Bearing Walls | 0 |
| Exterior Non-Bearing Walls | 0 |
| Interior Non-Bearing Walls | 0 |
| Floor Construction | 0 |
| Roof Construction (not including Primary Structural Frame) | 0 |

| Building Element | | Fire Resistance Rating (Hrs) | Opening Protectives (Hrs) |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Exit Access Corridors (780 CR Table 1020.1) | | ½ | ⅓ ^A |
| Existing Shafts (780 CMR 1023.2) | | Maintain Existing | Maintain Existing |
| New Shafts, if provided (780 CMR 713.4) ^B | | 1 | 1 |
| Elevator Machine Room, if provided (780 CMR 3005.4) | | 1 | 1 |
| Dwelling Unit Separation (780 CMR 708.3) | | ½ | ⅓ |
| Electrical Rooms | With Sprinklers | 0 | |
| | Without Sprinklers (NFPA 13) | 2 | |
| Furnace room where any piece of equipment is over 400,000 Btu per hour input | | Smoke Resistant | |
| Rooms with boilers where the largest piece of equipment is over 15 psi and 10 horsepower | | Smoke Resistant | |
| Laundry rooms over 100 square feet | | Smoke Resistant | |
| Waste and linen collection rooms over 100 square feet | | Smoke Resistant | |

^{A.} Smoke and draft control doors per UL 1784 are required including elevator doors (780 CMR 716.5.3.1). If an elevator is provided, elevator doors are not smoke / draft control rated. Therefore, the elevator openings need to be protected with a lobby, smoke curtain, or pressurized shaft.

^{B.} In lieu of rated shaft enclosures, the annular space around penetrations and ducts may be protected by approved noncombustible material that resists the passage of flames and smoke and a fire damper is provided at the floor line (780 CMR 717.6.1). If a shaft is not provided, ceiling radiation dampers must be provided where the ducts penetrate the ceiling of the fire resistance rated assembly of the dwelling unit separations (780 CMR 717.6.2).

6. Exterior Wall Openings & Fire Resistance Rating:

Since the change of use is to the same relative hazard per IEBC Table 1012.6, the exterior walls including openings can be deemed acceptable (IEBC 1012.6.2).

7. Vertical Floor Openings

Since the change of use is to the same relative hazard per IEBC Table 1012.4, the protection of the existing vertical openings can be deemed acceptable (IEBC 1012.7.2 & 1012.7.3). Any new vertical openings are required to comply with 780 CMR 712.

Per 780 CMR 1019.3(1), the exit stairs are not required to be enclosed in fire resistance rated construction since they only connect 2 stories.

8. Interior Finishes:

Due to the change of use, the interior finish of walls and ceilings must comply with the finish ratings contained in the following table (IEBC 1012.3).

Walls & Ceilings (IBC Table 803.11)

| Building Component | Use Group A-3 | Use Group R-2 |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Exit Enclosures and Passageways | N/A | Class C |
| Corridors | Class B | Class C |
| Rooms & Enclosed Spaces | Class C | Class C |

Note that where exit stairs and exit access corridors serve all use groups, the most restrictive interior finish is required.

New Floor Finishes

Since the building will be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system, traditional floor coverings such as wood, vinyl and other resilient floor coverings as well as carpeting passing the DOC FF-1 pill test are allowed throughout the building, including all exits, exit passageways and exit access corridors (780 CMR Section 804.4.2).

9. Means of Egress:

Since the change of use is to the same relative hazard per IEBC Table 1012.4, the means of egress is required to comply with IEBC 905. In addition, the means of egress including the exit signs, egress lighting, number of exits and egress capacity must be sufficient for the number of occupants on all floors (780 CMR 102.6.4). The calculated occupant load for the proposed use, the corresponding required number of exits, the provided number of exits, and the provided egress capacity are summarized below (780 CMR Table 1004.1.2, Table 1006.3.1, and Section 1005.3).

Means of Egress

| Floor | Occupant Load | Number of Exits | | Exit Capacity (persons) |
|-------|------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------------------|
| | | Required | Provided | |
| 1 | 204 ^A | 2 | 5 | 800 ^B |
| 2 | 38 ^C | 2 | 2 | 320 ^D |

A. 7,500 sf residential / 200 gsf per occupant + 2,500 sf multipurpose / 15 nsf per occupant

B. 2 School Stair Exits: 48" stair / 0.3" per occ. = 160 persons each
34" door / 0.2" per occ. = 170 persons each
3 Multi-purpose Exits: 48" stair / 0.3" per occ. = 160 persons each
34" door / 0.2" per occ. = 170 persons each

C. 7,500 sf residential / 200 gsf per occupant

D. 2 School Stair Exits: 48" stair / 0.3" per occ. = 160 persons each
34" door / 0.2" per occ. = 170 persons each

As shown in the previous table, the building is provided with sufficient exit capacity for the proposed use and occupancy.

General Egress Requirements for Reconfigured Areas:

- The required maximum exit travel distances for a fully sprinklered building are listed below (780 CMR Table 1017.2, Table 1006.2.1, and 1020.4).

| Occupancy | Exit Travel Distance | Common Path of Travel | Dead-End |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| A-3 | 250 ft. | 75 ft. | 20 ft. |
| R-2 | 250 ft. | 125 ft. | 50 ft. |

- Maximum dead-end corridor length cannot exceed the value above or 2.5 times the least width of space (780 CMR 1020.4).

The building does not contain any dead-end corridors longer than the maximum lengths allowed. Also, the reconfigurations are not likely to create or lengthen any dead-end conditions.

- All dwelling units that contain over 2000 square feet or have a travel distance over 125 feet must be provided with two means of egress (780 CMR Table 1006.2.1).

It is not anticipated that any dwelling units will be over 2,000 square feet. Therefore, a single means of egress is permitted from the units.

- All rooms or spaces other than dwelling units with an occupant load greater than 49 people or a travel distance greater than the value in the table above must be provided with two egress doors swinging in the direction of egress and illuminated exit signs at each exit (780 CMR Table 1006.2.1 & Sections 1010.1.2.1 & 1013.1).

Doors serving any assembly rooms with more than 49 people and doors along the path of egress travel from such rooms must be provided with panic hardware (780 CMR 1010.1.10).

The multipurpose room with more than 49 occupants has two means of egress swinging in the direction of egress travel as required.

- Boiler rooms require two means of egress if the room is greater than 500 sqft. and includes individual fuel-fired equipment greater than 400,000 Btuh input capacity. Also one of the two required exit access doorways is permitted to be a fixed ladder or alternating tread device (780 CMR Section 1006.2.2.1).
- Main electrical rooms must be provided with 2 means of egress via doors that swing in the direction of egress with panic hardware when containing large equipment (rated 1200 amperes or more and over 6' wide) (NFPA 70 Section 110.26(C)(2 & 3)).

- All means of egress lighting and exit signs throughout the building must be provided with an emergency power supply to assure continued illumination for not less than 1.5 hours in case of primary power loss (780 CMR 1008.2, 1008.3.4, & 1013.1). Exit signs leading to accessible exits must include the international symbol of accessibility (521 CMR 41.1.3).

The majority of the existing egress lighting and exit signs are not functional and will require updating as part of the project.

- Remote means of egress must be separated by $\frac{1}{3}$ of the diagonal dimension of the room or space they serve (780 CMR 1007.1.1). The distance between exits must be measured in a straight line between exit doors.

Remote means of egress, where required, are provided.

10. Required Fire Protection Systems:

The building must be provided with the following fire protection systems that must be updated to accommodate the new floor layout as well as the new use in the building (IEBC 703.1 & 1012.2):

- NFPA 13 sprinkler system
- Fire alarm system
- Single- and multiple-station smoke alarms
- Carbon monoxide alarms
- Fire extinguishers

11. Energy Code Provisions for Existing Buildings

The building is subject to the 2018 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) or ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA 90.1 with Massachusetts Amendments (Massachusetts Energy Code). Level 3 alterations to existing buildings are permitted without requiring the entire building to comply with the energy requirements of the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). The alterations (new elements) shall conform to the energy requirements of the IECC as they relate to new construction only (IECC C503.1).

Assuming the change of use will not increase the demand for fossil fuel or electrical energy, the building is not required to comply in full with the IECC (IECC C505.1).

The Massachusetts Stretch Code as adopted by the Town of Abington does not apply to existing buildings (780 CMR Appendix AA 104).

12. Ventilation Requirements

All reconfigured spaces must be provided with new ventilation that complies with the IMC or existing mechanical ventilation that provides at least 5cfm of outdoor air per person and not less than 15 cfm of ventilation air per person (IEBC Section 809).

13. Structural Provisions for Existing Buildings

Structural alterations to building, if any, must be evaluated by a registered structural engineer to determine compliance with the IEBC. Since the change of use is not to a use that requires higher uniform or concentrated loads contained in 780 CMR Table 1607.1 and the new use is not a higher risk category per 780 CMR Table 1604.5, no structural upgrades are required due to the change in use (IEBC 1007.1, 1007.2, & 1007.3).

14. Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

Massachusetts Architectural Access Board Regulations

Alterations to the building must comply with the requirements of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board Regulations (521 CMR). For existing building alterations the requirements of 521 CMR are based on the cost of the proposed work:

- A. If the cost of the proposed work is **less than \$100,000**, only the new work must comply.
- B. If the cost of the proposed work is **greater than \$100,000** then all new work must comply and the existing building must include an accessible public entrance, toilet room, telephone and drinking fountain (if public phones and drinking fountains are provided) (521 CMR Section 3.3.1(b)). Exempt work when calculating the cost of work includes roof repair or replacement, window repair or replacement, and repointing and masonry repair work unless the exempt work exceeds \$500,000.
- C. If the cost of the proposed work is **greater than 30% of the full and fair cash value** of the existing building, the entire building is required to comply with 521 CMR (521 CMR Section 3.3.2). There is no exempt work, i.e. the entire project costs apply to determining the 30% criteria.

The cost of all work performed on a building in any 36 month period must be added together in determining the applicability of 521 CMR (521 CMR Section 3.5). The full and fair cash value of the existing building is determined by using the 100% equalized assessed value of the building on record with the city assessor's office. The assessed value of the building is \$ \$2,605,200.

Since the renovation costs will likely exceed \$781,560 (30% of the building assessed value), the building must comply in full with the requirements of 521

CMR. Therefore, the building must be brought into compliance with the following major requirements:

- All public entrances must be accessible (521 CMR 25.1).

Currently none of the entrances to the building are accessible.



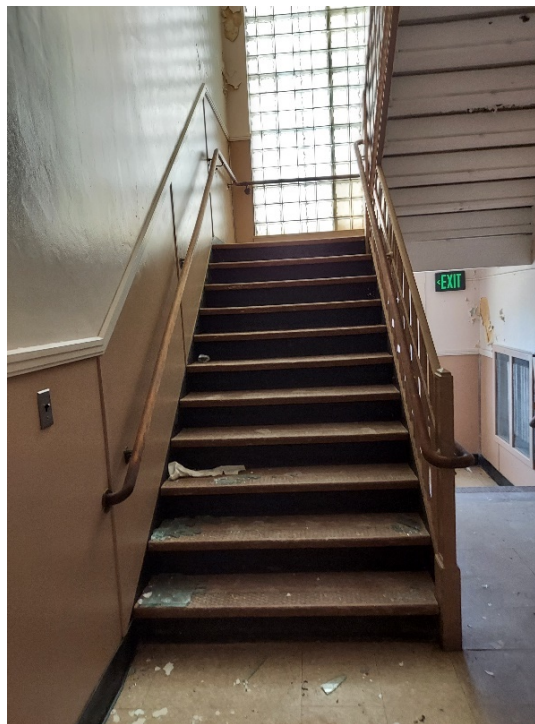
Existing Main Entry w/ Stairs

- Any common use areas such as the multipurpose room, laundry, resident storage, toilet rooms, parking, etc. must be accessible if the building will contain 12 or more units (521 CMR Section 10.1).
- Assuming all of the common use areas will be located on 1st Floor, an elevator is not required to be installed within the building per 521 CMR 28.1 Exc. f.
- The stairs must comply with 521 CMR 27.00. The underside of the nosings cannot be abrupt per 521 CMR 27.3. The handrails must extend 12" horizontally at the top and slope for 1 tread and extend 12" horizontally at the bottom (521 CMR 27.4).

The underside of the nosings are abrupt and the handrails do not have proper extensions.

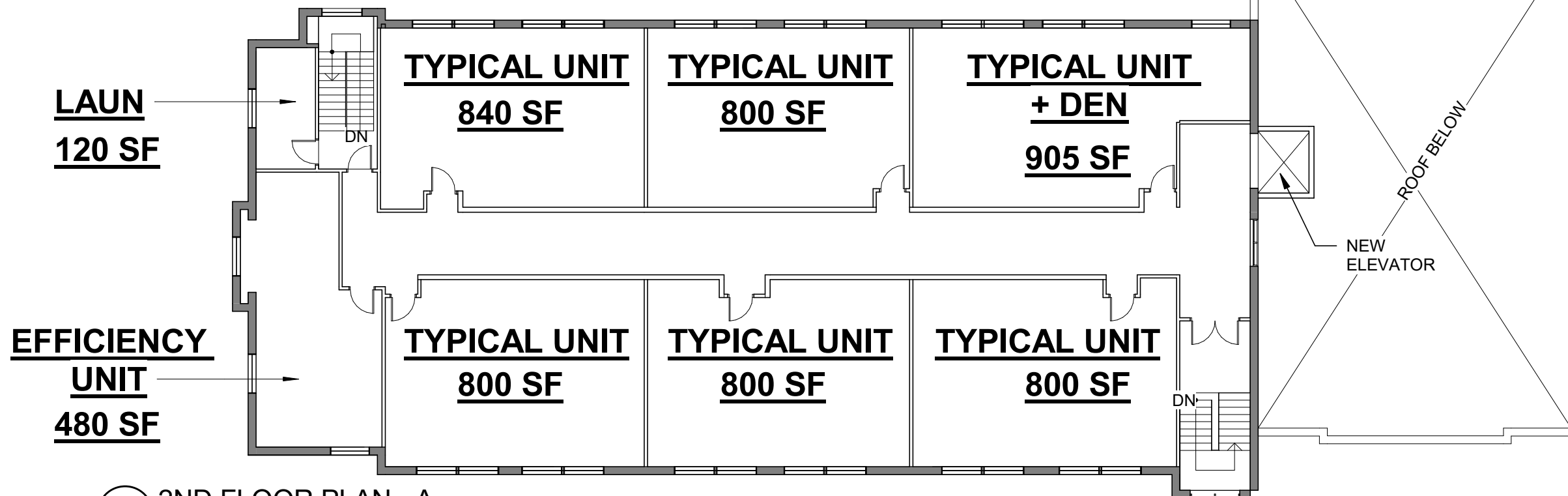


Abrupt Nosing

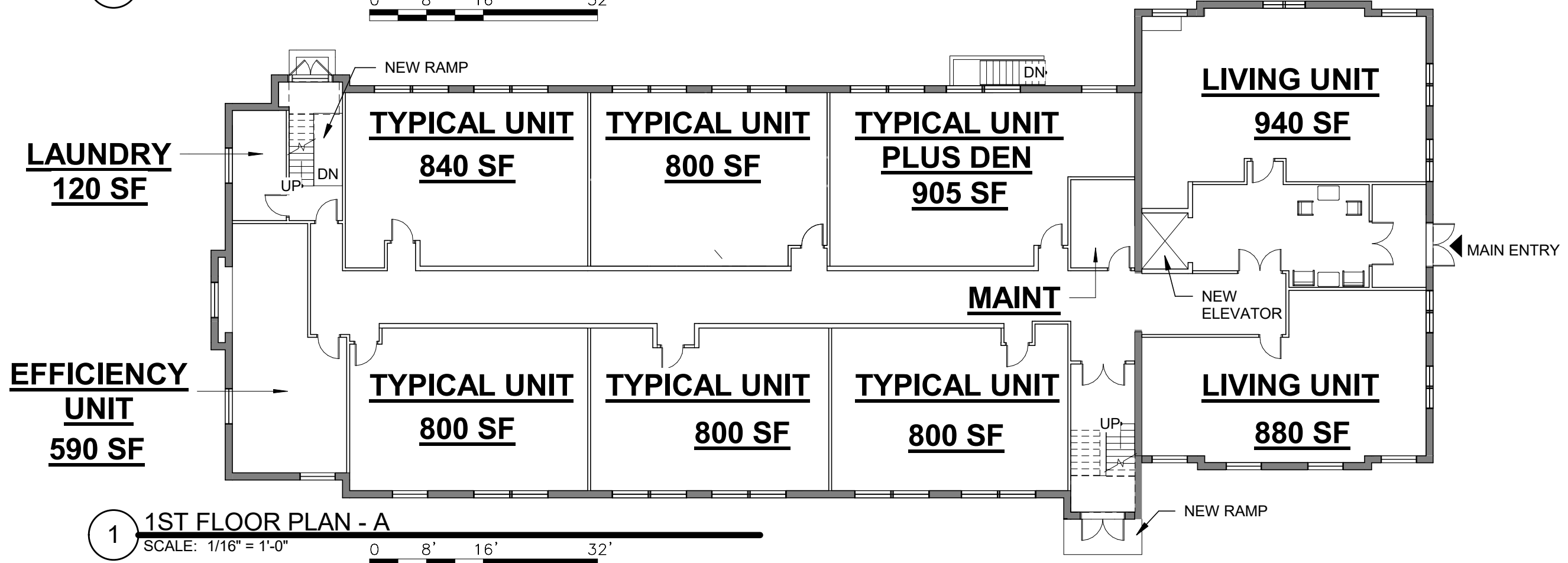


Handrails without Bottom Extensions

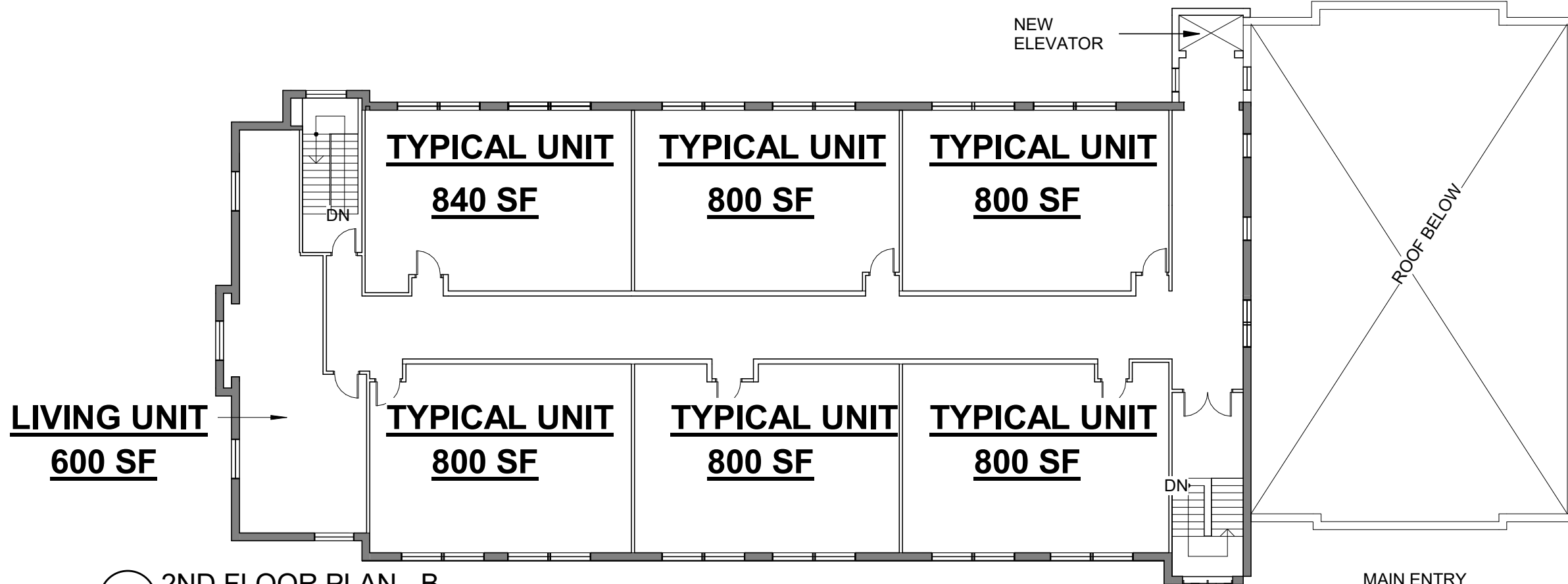
- The interior of the dwelling unit interiors are not required to comply with the requirements of 521 CMR as follows:
 - Since the project includes the renovation and reuse of an existing building for residential purposes, the dwelling units are not required to meet Group 1 requirements (521 CMR 9.2.1).
 - Since the building will contain fewer than 20 units, the dwelling units are not required to meet Group 2A requirements (521 CMR 9.4).



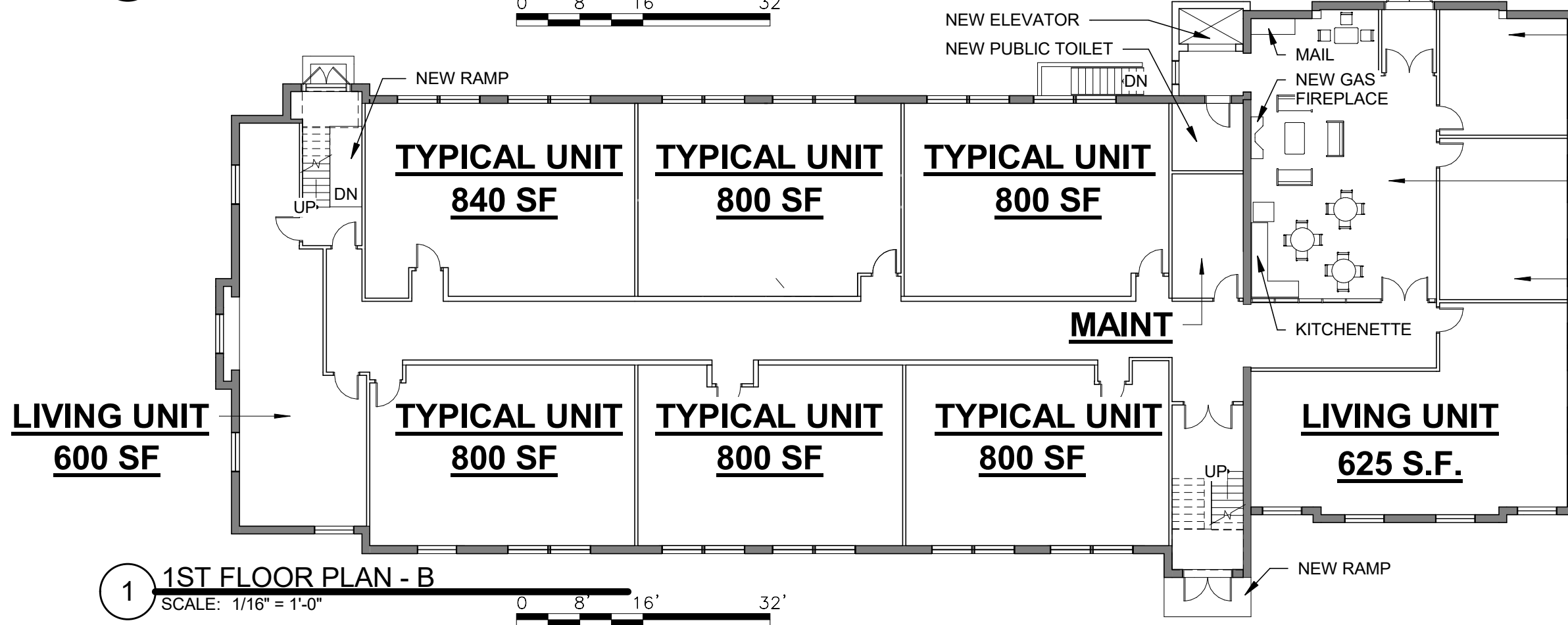
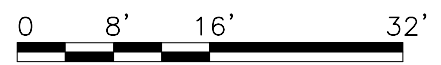
2 2ND FLOOR PLAN - A
 SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"
 0 8' 16' 32'



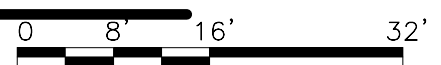
1 1ST FLOOR PLAN - A
 SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"
 0 8' 16' 32'



2 2ND FLOOR PLAN - B
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



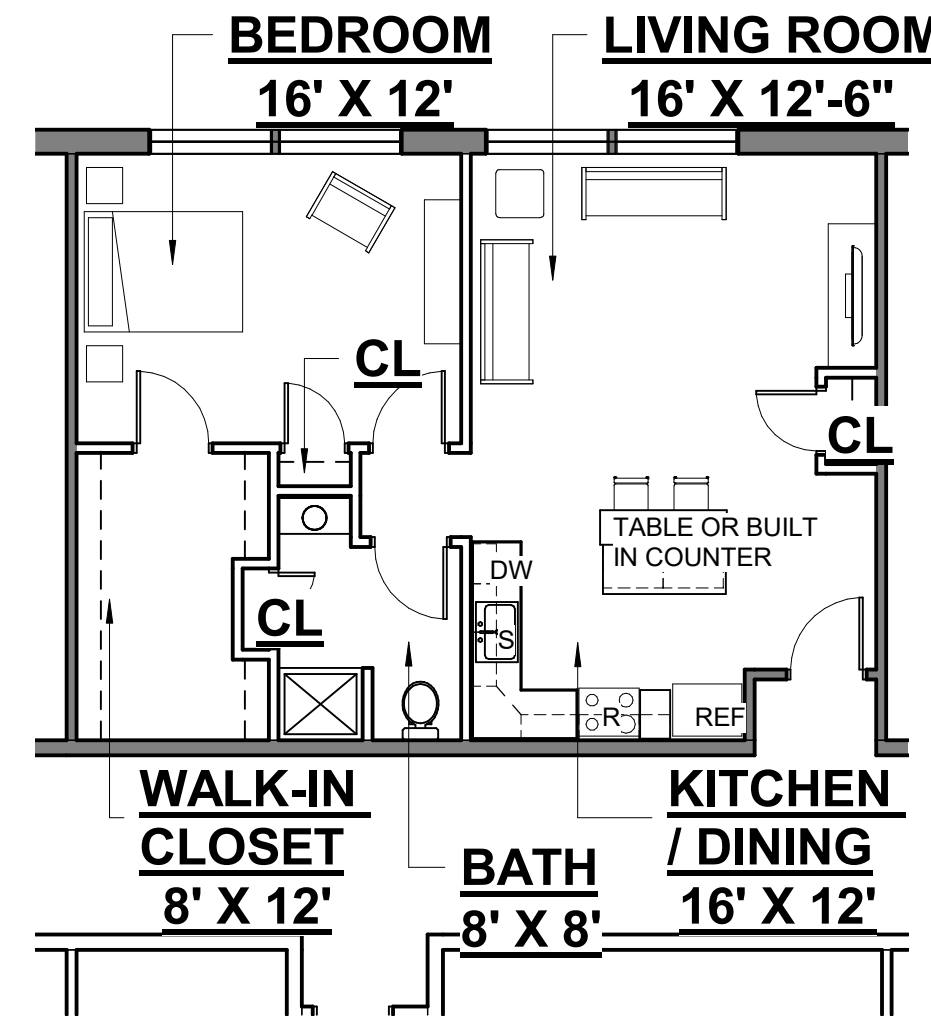
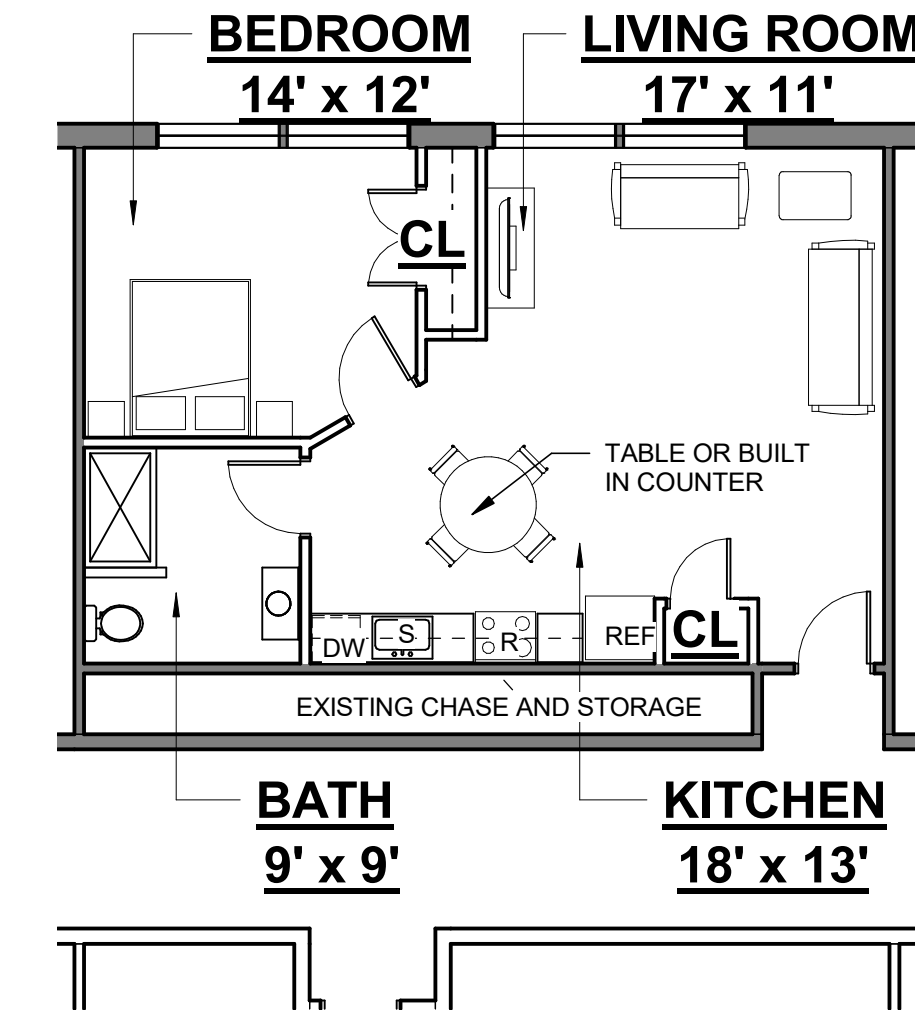
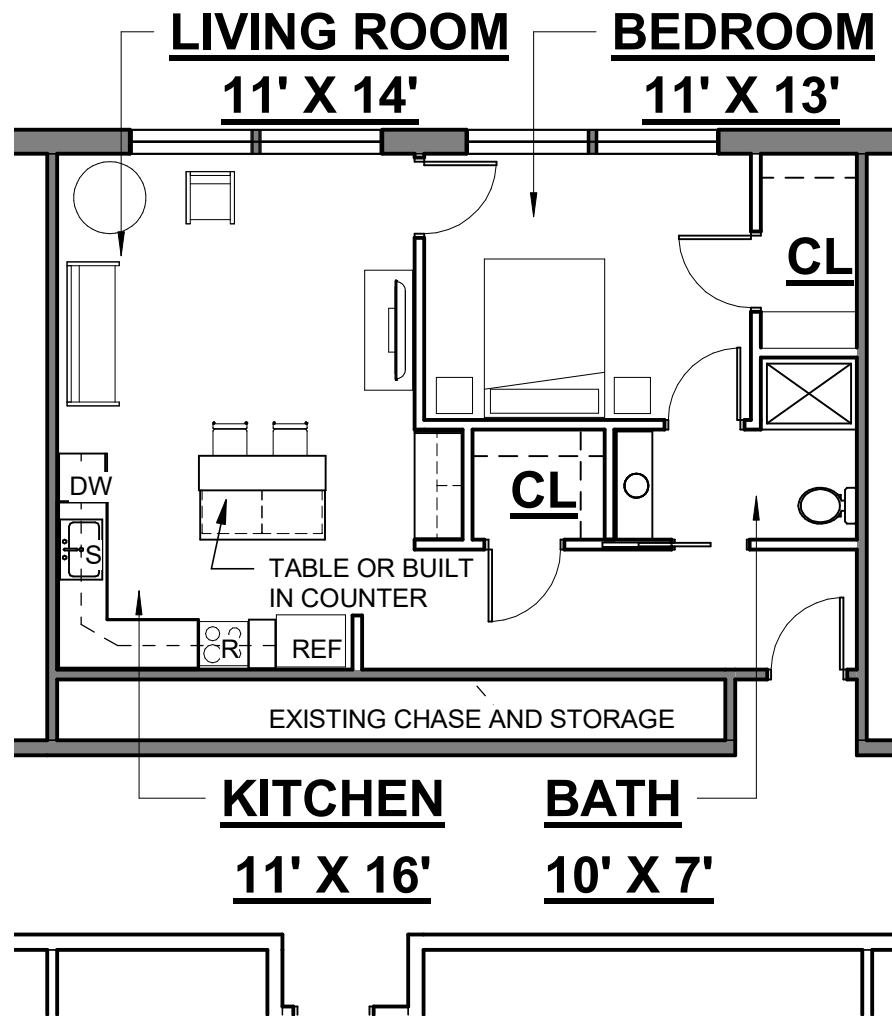
1 1ST FLOOR PLAN - B
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



DATE: 5/18/22
JOB NO: 2117.03

FLOOR PLANS - SCHEME B

A-120



3 TYPICAL UNIT OPTION 3 - 715 SF
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
 0 2' 4' 8'

2 TYPICAL UNIT OPTION 2 - 715 SF
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
 0 2' 4' 8'

1 TYPICAL UNIT OPTION 1 - 800 SF
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
 0 2' 4' 8'

PLAN ASSUMES NO USE OF EXISTING CHASE / STORAGE SPACE ALONG CORRIDOR

PLAN ASSUMES NO USE OF EXISTING CHASE / STORAGE SPACE ALONG CORRIDOR

PLAN ASSUMES FULL USE OF EXISTING CHASE / STORAGE SPACE ALONG CORRIDOR

BUILDING EVALUATION
CENTER SCHOOL
 65 THAXTER STREET
 ABINGTON, MA 02351

DATE: 5/18/22
 JOB NO: 2117.03

TYPICAL UNIT OPTIONS
A-111