

AB School Building Project Community Input Survey Results – December 2018

The Acton-Boxborough School Building Committee distributed a survey to the community for input on the School Building Project, with a particular focus on site preferences. The survey opened on December 4, 2018 and closed on December 10, 2018. In total, 967 community members responded to the survey, with very few missing responses and detailed comments in the open-ended questions, suggesting a strong engagement among respondents.

The 967 respondents were:

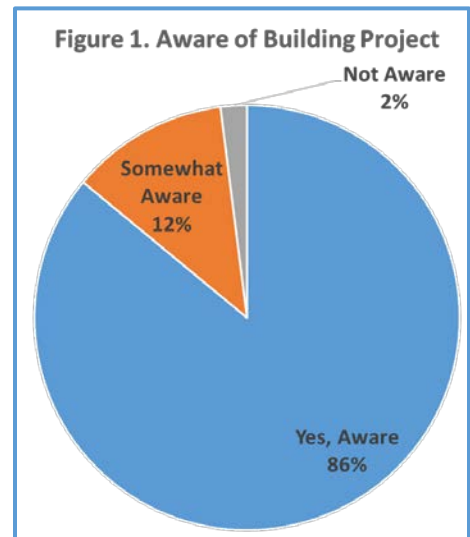
- 83% Acton residents, 9% Boxborough residents, and 9% residents of other communities;
- 19% employees of the district and 81% not employed by the district; and
- Mostly parents, with 5% parents of pre-school age children, 75% parents of school-age children, 14% parents of children out of secondary school, and 6% not parenting. Note, this survey underrepresents the views of taxpayers who do not have children in the schools.

Respondents had children at the following schools (note parents of Gates and Conant are under-represented even though they may be impacted by the project):

- CT Douglas Elementary School – 21%
- AB Regional High School – 21%
- RJ Grey Junior High School – 17%
- Merriam Elementary School – 7%
- McCarthy-Towne Elementary School – 6%
- Blanchard Memorial Elementary School – 6%
- Luther Conant Elementary School – 5%
- Gates Elementary School – 5%
- Pre-school (some in AB schools some not) – 3%

Respondents indicated that the School Building Committee is doing a good job of communicating information about the project.

- 27% of respondents had attended one of the School Building Committee’s forums and 23% had viewed the recording of the 11/29 forum.
- 86% of respondents were aware of plans to build a new consolidated elementary school building, and another 12% were somewhat aware (see Figure 1).

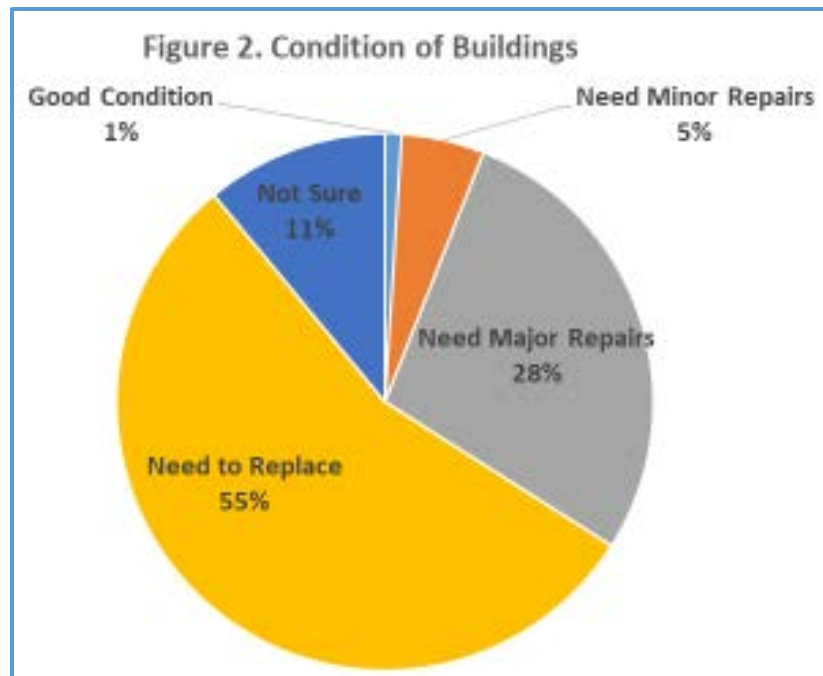


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- 74% indicated that they receive enough information about the plans for the school building project, and 80% felt they had opportunities for input into the project.
- Comments on improving communication and opportunities for input included:
 - Provide information through the Beacon, emails, PTO's, and Principal and Superintendent updates.
 - Continue to have forums and surveys.
 - Provide brief summaries pro's and con's and updates after each School Building Committee meeting.
 - Get information out to residents who do not have children in the schools.
 - Hold staff forums/keep staff updated.
 - Allow more time for the community to process information and share feedback before decisions are made.

Respondents were also aware of the need for the project and many supported the plan to build a new consolidated elementary school building.

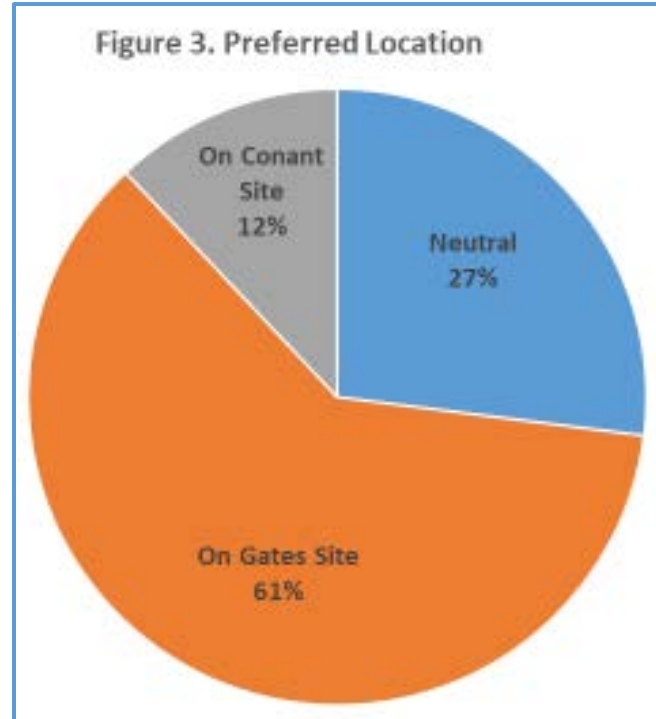
- 55% of respondents indicated that the Douglas, Gates and/or Conant schools needed to be replaced and 28% indicated a need for major repairs in this schools. Only 1% thought the schools were in good condition (see Figure 2).
- 57% of respondents fully support the plan to build a new consolidated elementary school building, with another 28% somewhat supporting this. Only 15% were indifferent or disapproved of the project.



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Three out of five respondents indicated a preference for locating the new consolidated school on the Gates property (versus the Conant property).

- 61% felt it was very important (45%) or somewhat important (16%) to keep the CT Douglas School near its current location. Another 21% were neutral about the location and 18% did not feel it was important to keep Douglas near its current location.
- 61% preferred that the new school be located on the Gates property, 12% preferred the Conant property and 27% were neutral when asked specifically about locating the new school on the Gates or Conant properties (see Figure 3).
- Parents of students at Douglas and Gates had a stronger preference for the Gates property compared to all others (81% for Douglas/Gates parents versus 53% for all others).



Three out of five respondents (60%) indicated that they have concerns about parking and traffic.

The survey asked about some particular design features (see Figure 4). Among those features included, respondents felt the following were the most important:

- Designed to maximize energy efficiency – 91% very or somewhat important
- Design of the outdoor space – 91% very or somewhat important
- Designed to reduce long-term life cycle costs – 90% very or somewhat important

Seven out of ten respondents also felt the design being visually pleasing (73%), using the building as a community resource (72%), and the cost impact of the project to property taxes (72%) were also very or somewhat important. About half felt designing the building to reflect Acton's history/community (54%) was very or somewhat important. About seven out of ten (68%) also reported that they were very or somewhat concerned with the cost of the project.

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Figure 4. Importance of Specific Features		
	Very/Somewhat Important	Neutral/Not Important
For the design of the building to be visually pleasing?	73%	27%
For the building design to reflect Acton's history/community?	54%	46%
For the building design to maximize energy efficiency?	91%	9%
For the building design to reduce long-term life cycle costs?	90%	10%
The use of the building as a community resource?	72%	28%
How important is the design of the outdoor space for the new schools?	91%	9%
How important is the cost impact of the project to your Property Taxes?	72%	28%

In open-ended comments many respondents noted the following issues/concerns:

- The new consolidated school should be located in West Acton; we should support our neighborhood schools.
- We should design a building that is energy efficient and sustainable.
- We should build a building that will last at least 50 years.
- The new school building should be designed to meet our current and future educational needs.
- We should build a school that is low cost and maximizes value.
- The new building should exceed ADA requirements as they provide minimal standards.
- The new building should be a community resource that provides community space after school.
- We should make the best decisions for the long-term.