

# Capital Plan Memo 3



May 1, 2018

**To:** Burlington School District Community  
**From:** Superintendent Obeng  
**Subject:** An Update on the District's Capital Plan

A Note from the Superintendent:

Hello BSD community, I hope this finds you well. This is our third update and it is our plan to continue to release these notes on a weekly basis as a way to keep everyone informed and up to speed. By now you probably know that last week we began our community engagement tour, meeting with NPAs, PTOs, and school staff. We will continue with these meetings over the next few weeks and look forward to hearing your feedback. Last week we also published a "Frequently Asked Question" document. Because we do not have enough staff to answer every individual question or comment that comes in (via our online form or other places), we plan to take the feedback and questions and use them to update this FAQ document weekly. Please visit our webpage to find the latest iteration.

Included in the next FAQ will be an answer to a few questions we've heard from community members and reporters: ***Why does Burlington need two new buildings, can existing space at grade spans with declining enrollment be used instead? Is this what we voted on in 2017?***

As you are probably aware, even though enrollment in our higher grades has been declining for quite some time, enrollment in our pre-k program has been increasing for years (in part due to the Universal Preschool law). Right now, our early education program is spread throughout four different buildings, none of which are ideal for preschool programming, and even so we still have 22 students on our waitlist. Even if the spaces at elementary schools were perfect for preschool students, elementary enrollment wouldn't decrease fast enough to provide enough space to meet our current or future needs.

The original plan to support our early education needs was to totally overhaul Ira Allen, but after diligent research we determined that this was not the best investment of our limited funds because upon renovations, the preschool space would immediately be full/at capacity, with no way to expand the program without going back into the elementary schools. Additionally, the high cost of renovating that building, combined with the need to lease space for administrative staff who would be displaced, was a further deterrent from this plan. An added benefit to the new plan is that once the two new buildings are complete, Ira Allen will then be available to be used as temporary swing space for students displaced during renovations at other schools during our ten year plan, thus saving us money that would have been spent on modular classrooms and/or leased space. And when all is said and done with the capital plan, we will potentially have the option to sell Ira Allen or use it for alternative education spaces, such as a permanent home for Horizons. Finally, by moving preschool students out of elementary schools, it addresses existing space constraints ([see slide 9 in this presentation](#)) and provides the flexibility to accommodate enrollment fluctuations and programmatic changes.

In 2017, Burlington residents voted to allow the Burlington School District to bond \$19 million over ten years to support additional bonding capabilities the district always has of \$2 million per year. These funds, a combined \$39 million, were to support the District's Capital Plan of addressing deferred maintenance and investing in our spaces. We have been advised by BSD's attorney that it is legal to use the voter-approved capital bond and bonding authorized by charter to fund these projects. When you factor all of these things in, you can see that building two centers is more strategic, forward-thinking, cost-effective, and sustainable, not to mention a better use of taxpayer dollars, than the original plan to build out and renovate Ira Allen.

I hope that this helps address some concerns around the first phase of the Capital Plan. As always, please visit <http://www.bsdt.org/district/budget/capital-planning/> to find the most up-to-date information regarding the Capital Plan, including presentations, slideshows, our continually updated FAQ document, and an online question/feedback form.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Obeng

—————**YAW OBENG - SUPERINTENDENT**—————

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