

MEMORANDUM

To: Burlington Board of School Commissioners
From: Tom Flanagan, Superintendent
CC: Nathan Lavery, Marty Spaulding, Lauren McBride, Jason Gingold, Bobby Riley
Date: November 2, 2021
Subject: Burlington High School and Burlington Technical Center Site Recommendation

Purpose:

The purpose of this memo is to recommend 52 Institute Road as the location of a newly constructed Burlington High School and Burlington Technical Center.

Statement:

The *BHS/BTC Preliminary Site Feasibility Assessment* (hereafter the "Feasibility Assessment") by White + Burke examined three potential sites for a new High School and Technical Center: Institute Road - North; Institute Road - South; and the Gateway Block; and culminated a six-month process in which we carefully reviewed sixteen possible sites across the city.

Institute Road - North emerged as the clear option among our final candidates for a number of reasons:

- It remains the most commonly preferred site based on public feedback from a diverse group of interested stakeholders.
- Its proximity to the city, the lake, and the woods makes it an ideal learning environment to promote deeper learning.
- It has a campus, with fields and outdoor space, allowing for community-building and outdoor learning.
- Our entire program - both BTC and BHS - fit in the space.
- It is highly accessible for multiple modes of transit, including easy access to the bike path and bus routes.
- It allows for a construction timeline most likely to meet our ambitious 2025 opening target.
- It is the most fiscally responsible option.

As an educator, my most important consideration is the degree to which each potential site can meet our programmatic needs as a learning community. After much consideration, I firmly believe that Institute Road - North is the best option. The site can successfully house a high school and technical center, provides adequate space for both indoor and outdoor learning, has ready access to our athletic fields, and is proximate to other experiential learning environments (such as North Beach, Lake Champlain, the Intervale, and the Arms Forest). Additionally, I have heard from stakeholders across the city that their preference is North Ave. I recently spoke with a Nepali family advisory group and a Somali/May May speaking family advisory who both, separately, told me that they wanted us to choose North Ave. This is in addition to the feedback we received from the many community members who responded to our request for comment, where the feedback overwhelmingly requested Institute Road.

I do know there is still some interest in a downtown site. I was interested in a downtown site as well. The Gateway Block presented itself as an interesting option and we made significant effort to assess the viability of this site, as well as other downtown sites. While I understand that redevelopment of the Gateway Block remains a priority for the City of Burlington, our research has shown that though the



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Gateway Block may provide easier access to some community partners located in the downtown core, the location as a whole lacks many of the valuable characteristics listed above and poses a number of challenges:

- It is unable to accommodate both BHS *and* BTC programming.
- There are unknown development challenges that would create a protracted timeline.
- There are also unknown costs associated with those development challenges.

As a result of these obstacles, I recommend that the School Board direct all future design efforts to focus on the Institute Road - North property. I believe it is critically important for the health of our city and our schools that this decision be made without delay. We have a 3.5-year lease at our current site and I believe we are obligated to make a responsible decision to choose the site that clearly meets the needs of our school program. I also believe strongly that the Institute Road site allows us to build an innovative and exciting school that can be a symbol of our community's commitment to education for the next several generations.

I wish to thank our consultants at White + Burke for their tireless work, the numerous community members who have provided feedback during this time, and Mayor Miro Weinberger for the support he and his staff provided throughout this process.

Recommended Motion: *I move to select 52 Institute Road - North as the location of a newly designed Burlington High School and Burlington Technical Center and to direct the Superintendent to focus all design efforts on this location.*