

# Fact Sheet

# **Julian Curtiss School**

March 2021

The renovation of Julian Curtiss Elementary School (JC) is an important capital project priority of the Board of Education (BOE) in FY2022 and 2023. We strongly urge the BET and RTM to fully fund this phase of the BOE-approved project. A vote to cut, reduce, or delay the project will negatively impact downtown residents and the JC community, and will delay needed and major renovations to seven of our other schools, several of which are also crumbling. It is time for the town to invest in our public school buildings, starting with JC this year.

# Highlights

- 1 JC was built in 1946 and 75 years later is the only Greenwich school that has not had any significant renovations.
- 2 This year, the BOE is asking for \$1.7 million to form a Building Committee, select an architect, refine overall costs, and complete construction documents based on the BOE-approved Educational Specifications (Ed Specs).
- 3 The JC project brings the school to par with today's elementary schools, prioritizing ADA compliance, security improvements, air quality, and appropriate building infrastructure for a Title 1 school and a magnet school. The project addresses under-sized common spaces, adds a science room (7 out of 11 elementary schools have one), and two pre-K classrooms without increasing school capacity beyond the current 306 seats in Grades K-5.
- 4 As a renovation, the JC project is expected to qualify for significant state reimbursement, ranging from 10-20% of overall costs based on recent similar projects at Hamilton Avenue, Glenville, and New Lebanon.
- 5 The JC project is fiscally responsible, saving the town at least \$15 million (36%) from the master plan estimate.
- 6 After construction documents are completed this year, BOE will ask the BET for funding to commence work (likely next year). The BOE expects costs to come in below the \$25 million placeholder, which includes all contingencies. The project is expected to cost less than the \$30 million average spent to renovate/build schools like Hamilton Avenue, Glenville, and New Lebanon.
- 7 JC will be the first school to be renovated under the BOE's master plan. Schools that will follow over the next 15 years include Old Greenwich, Riverside, ISD, North Street, North Mianus, Central, and GHS. Delaying the JC project will increase costs and delay other schools that also face significant building challenges today.

# Timeline

2016-2017	BET funds \$400,000 facilities master plan for schools
2017-2018	In-depth facilities master plan analysis underway
2018-2019	Facilities master plan completed, recommends \$42 million renovation of JC
2019-2020	JC project added to town's 15-year capital plan along with major projects at 7 other schools BET budgets \$212,000 to create Ed Specs for JC, actual cost is \$163,000
2020-2021	BOE and First Selectman ask for \$2.6 million to complete design work on JC project, BET cuts entire request BOE approves Ed Specs, cuts \$15 million from master plan estimate after prioritizing needs
2021-2022	BOE and First Selectman ask for \$1.7 million to complete design work on JC project BOE plans to request \$25 million renovation funding next year once design work completed

## Myths

There has been misinformation spread to mislead residents and elected officials, aiming to block funding for the JC project. Here are the facts:

Myths	Facts
<p>Significant enrollment decline at JC today and into the future</p> <p>JC project adds unneeded capacity</p>	<p><u>PAST</u>: JC enrollment distorted from 1995-2018, school at 113% capacity because of housing bubble, problems at Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon that required extensive renovations and construction: JC served influx of students in this period.</p> <p><u>CURRENT</u>: With Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon projects complete, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, <b>JC is 90% full</b> and in line with the rest of the school district.</p> <p><u>FUTURE</u>: This Myth incorrectly assumes enrollment projections a decade into the future are facts. History has proven these projections are always inaccurate. <b>JC's capacity will not change</b> after the renovation, remaining at 306 seats in Grades K-5, as per the BOE master plan and the BOE-approved Ed Specs for JC.</p>
<p>K-12 enrollment is in a decade-long decline</p>	<p>This Myth incorrectly assumes enrollment projections a decade into the future are facts. History has proven these projections are <b>always inaccurate beyond 1-2 years</b> since they rely on projected births in Greenwich in various school zones and fail to account for standard family migration into Greenwich or moves within town.</p> <p>Recent projections specifically highlight this inaccuracy and that key emerging factors like COVID migration to Greenwich and new/planned developments in downtown Greenwich (with several underway) would dramatically change enrollment projections. <b>JC enrollment is likely to remain stable or even grow in years ahead.</b></p>
<p>An abundance of excess elementary capacity exists</p>	<p><b>Elementary schools in Greenwich are 92% full.</b> This gives the district some swing capacity for emergencies like the Cos Cob flood or North Mianus ceiling collapse.</p> <p>This Myth incorrectly assumes not only that enrollment projections a decade into the future are facts but also that schools should be packed to the fire code. To pack the elementary schools to the fire code, class sizes would need to increase by 15-20% per classroom, which would not be compliant with BOE policy on class size and would be detrimental to both personalized learning and student achievement.</p>
<p>The JC project focuses on “wants” not “needs”</p>	<p>The JC project focuses entirely on needs and <b>BOE has already cut out the “wants”</b>, having cut \$15 million (36%) from the master plan estimate for the JC project.</p> <p>The BOE has identified the following <b>needs</b> for JC: ADA compliance, security improvements, air quality improvements, and addressing needed building infrastructure like under-sized common spaces, a science room, and two pre-K classrooms. <b>This requires a thorough renovation.</b></p>
<p>The JC project doesn't prioritize ADA</p>	<p><b>The BOE's detailed Ed Specs for JC prioritizes ADA compliance throughout the school.</b> ADA is about more than ramps and elevators; it requires widening doorways throughout the school, renovating all bathrooms, improving access to playgrounds, new door hardware, signage, parking, etc. <b>This requires a thorough renovation.</b></p>

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## Appendix:

### Julian Curtiss Enrollment & Capacity, 1992-2020

Year	Enrollment	JC K-5 Capacity	% Full	Notes
1992	266	306	87%	
1993	283	306	92%	
1994	294	306	96%	
1995	326	306	107%	Beginning of housing bubble in back-country/mid-country Greenwich, downtown relatively more affordable
1996	348	306	114%	
1997	356	306	116%	
1998	365	306	119%	
1999	381	306	125%	
2000	367	306	120%	
2001	360	306	118%	
2002	332	306	108%	
2003	347	306	113%	JC becomes magnet school
2004	351	306	115%	Mold issues at Ham Ave.
2005	357	306	117%	Hamilton Avenue School Mold Remediation & Construction
2006	356	306	116%	
2007	326	306	107%	
2008	337	306	110%	
2009	343	306	112%	
2010	353	306	115%	Some sustained Ham Ave population at JC  +  Overcrowding at old New Lebanon causes many to go to JC
2011	343	306	112%	
2012	344	306	112%	
2013	344	306	112%	
2014	344	306	112%	
2015	361	306	118%	
2016	330	306	108%	
2017	338	306	110%	New Lebanon School Construction
2018	320	306	105%	
2019	284	306	93%	
2020	275	306	90%	Pandemic impacts enrollment
AVERAGE	336	306	110%	

See last page for Sources

## List of Sources: Myths

[BOE's Facilities Master Plan](#): master plan detail, school capacity, expected costs of JC renovation.

[BOE-approved Ed-Specs for Julian Curtiss](#): project objectives, capacity, expected enrollment, refined costs.

BOE budget requests for [FY2021](#) and [FY2022](#): budget request to fund this phase of JC renovation.

BET capital budget for [FY2017](#), [FY2020](#) and [FY2021](#): master plan funding, Ed Specs funding, cut to JC funding.

[Fire Selectman capital plan for FY2022](#): budget request to fund this phase of JC renovation.

Greenwich schools historical enrollment: enrollment over time at JC (see appendix).

## List of Sources: Appendix

Hard copies of Greenwich Public School actual enrollment reports for JC (1992-2020)

[BOE's Facilities Master Plan](#): capacity for JC

Numerous news articles on housing bubble in Greenwich, problems at Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon

Board of Education timeline for construction of Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon