



August 29, 2025

Ms. Lindsey Cohen
Associate Planner
City of Stamford
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901

RE: Stamford Westhill High School, State Project No. 135-0280 N

Subject: Planning Board Submission

Dear Ms. Cohen:

On behalf of the entire project team, I am pleased to submit to the City of Stamford Planning Board the attached Project Scope Narrative for consideration and action at the Planning Board's September 2025 meeting.

The attached document provides a summary of the project and how the design supports the City of Stamford Master Plan 2015-2025. It includes discussion on the following points:

- Alignment with the City of Stamford Mast Plan 2015-2025
- General project description including building siting, site improvements and project phasing.
- Collaborative Design Process
- Connecticut School Safety Infrastructure Criteria (SSIC) compliance
- On-site design features
- Off-Site design features
- Architectural design
- Sustainable design and conservation
- Energy performance

Our team is thankful for the opportunity to work with the City of Stamford and Stamford Public Schools on this important project. Please contact me at kmorhardt@slamcoll.com, or via phone 860-368-4221 (office) and 860-712-9233 (cell), if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

The S/L/A/M Collaborative, Inc.


Kemp A. Morhardt, AIA, NCARB
Principal

CT Registered Architect: 14580

Enclosure: New Westhill High School, Planning Board – Project Scope Narrative (5 pages).

Copy: Katherine LoBalbo – City of Stamford; Adam Levitus – CPL; Craig DeJong – SLAM; File: 21280.00

Planning Board – Project Scope Narrative

City of Stamford Master Plan 2015 - 2025: The Project aligns with the City of Stamford Master Plan from the perspective of providing a new replacement high school facility on the existing Westhill HS campus, which is consistent with supporting a strong living/ working community.

General Project Description:

The New Westhill High School (WHS) will be a full replacement of the existing aged Westhill High School at 125 Roxbury Road, which is in an RA-1 zone. Per the Board of Education's Educational Specifications requirement, the students will remain in-place in the existing high school during construction of the new building in a phased-occupied project. With the new building and site design, the property will change in appearance, with improved function and buffering to neighbors, but will remain unchanged in use as a comprehensive high school. The new WHS will serve grades 9-12 for a design enrollment of 2,458 students, which represents a minor increase from the current enrollment of approximately 2,300. The programs offered at the school and on school athletic fields and courts will be largely the same as the existing school. Improvements will be made to vehicular, pedestrian site circulation and parking to better support these programs.

Building Siting:

The new WHS building has been sited to the north of the existing building where the existing ball fields reside today and into the toe of the slope at the northwest corner of the property. Due to rising grade elevations as one traverses around the new building from east to west, the building will present as a 5-story façade on the extreme east side and a 3-story façade on the extreme west side. There are at-grade entry points at the lower level on the east side (el. 125'), at the first-floor on the south and north sides (el. 139.67') and at the second-floor level on the west side (154.33').

Site Improvements:

Improvements to the site include separate bus and parent/staff/visitor vehicular flow, improved pedestrian flow and parking. A two-way drive circumnavigates the rear and sides of the new building which serves as the bus loop, service drive, fire lane and limited individual vehicle access to the northeast parking lot planned for staff. A new main parking lot with parent drop-off loop, transit bus stop and the main parking lot will be constructed south of the new building in the area of the site where the existing building resides today.

A pedestrian sidewalk network tied to the improved municipal sidewalk on Roxbury Road will be provided. A future city project for municipal sidewalks on Roxbury Road will further enhance the school site connectivity to the pedestrian network. The site will be bicycle friendly and include bicycle racks. Other improvements include irrigated grass athletic fields to the north; outdoor classroom environments south and north of the new building, new tennis courts to the south and a new synthetic-turf four-sport competition field with six-lane track in the same location as today with home and visitor spectator seating (existing to remain).

Project Phasing

Phase-1 of the project will build the entire new school building, minus the natatorium, immediately to the north of the existing school. The existing freshman gymnasium will be

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demolished in phase-1 to facilitate erecting the new building. At the conclusion of phase-1, students and staff will occupy the new building while the existing building is abated & demolished. The new natatorium, main parking lot, and tennis courts will be constructed in the location vacated by the existing structure, south of the new school building.

Collaborative Design Process: The building will be designed with safety, flexibility, and sustainability in mind. Project goals were generated in visioning sessions at the outset of the design process with civic leaders, community members, and school faculty, in conjunction with the Educational Specification set forth by the Board of Education. Through a series of workshops and review meetings conducted with school staff, the project Working Group members and City staff, the project team has encouraged an open, productive dialogue for as much input as possible throughout the design process. Community presentations were conducted during the design process to inform neighbors of plans and gain feedback.

Connecticut School Safety Infrastructure Criteria (SSIC):

The Project by state statute must integrate building and site and building design features consistent with SSIC guidelines for school campus design and construction. The design team worked with a safety and security working group including Stamford Public Schools (SPS) administrators, SPS safety director, and City first responders (Police, Fire, EMS). The resulting design incorporates several of the SSIC best practices yielding a proposed design with significant improvements to traffic flows both on and off campus, pedestrian safety, and general campus surveillance while striking a balance with City zoning regulations for landscape buffering. SSIC criteria consider the following primary areas of infrastructure design:

- School Site Perimeter
- Parking Areas and Vehicular and Pedestrian Routes
- Recreational Areas
- Communication Systems
- School Building Exterior
- School Building Interior
- Roofs
- Critical Assets/Utilities
- Other Areas

The proposed design has vastly improved the school safety and security infrastructure for the Westhill High School campus.

On-Site Design Features: The site design is rooted in improving public safety while addressing the various "pain points" associated with the current school operations, including severe traffic congestion at drop-off and pick-up times on Roxbury Road and "controlled chaos" of on-site circulation during drop-off and dismissal. The site program includes sufficient parking to support the school occupancy, improved and increased capacity for off-street queueing lanes for parent drop-off and pick-up, separate bus lane with gated access, pedestrian walks and athletic facilities for baseball, softball and a four-sport competition field with six-lane track, practice soccer field and six tennis courts.

The new site design will be 100-percent ADA accessible. New vehicular circulation will provide safe and separate drive-aisles for buses and cars. The main entry drive will utilize the existing

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eastern curb-cut on Roxbury Road and split into a separate parent drop-off and bus lane once on-property. The main drive culminates in a drop-off circle where parents can safely drop-off and pick up their children in an orderly manner. The driveway provides queueing for approximately 20 cars excluding the portion of the drive aisle prior to the drop-off circle, which will alleviate the vehicular congestion currently experienced on Roxbury Road. ADA accessible pedestrian paths will support student walkers and pedestrian passage from parking spaces to the building entry. Bicycles can access the site via the vehicular drive aisles. ADA accessible pedestrian walkways will also provide access to the athletic fields. A total of 513 parking spaces are provided in the design for faculty, staff, students and visitors, which is an increase of 38 spaces over the current count. The parking count includes code required ADA spaces and infrastructure to support the city zoning regulation of 10% electric vehicle charging stations. In addition to the parking count noted above, the bus parking spaces will be available to accommodate additional car parking for special events.

The site design supports the school's large bus demand with a total of 55 bus spaces (independent of the parking count noted above) in a separate loop that branches off the main entry drive/parent drop-off/pick-up lane and circumnavigates the school building in a counterclockwise manner. Additionally, access to the bus loop will be controlled by access control gates at the entry and exit points to restrict public access. The bus lane shares a common pedestrian walk between the bus lane and parent-drop-off/pick-up lane, that directs pedestrians to the main entrance of the building.

The two-way drive around the new building also serves as a fire lane to satisfy the building code and fire marshal requirements.

Outdoor teaching spaces are planned for the north side of the building at the North Terrace, the Special Education West Terrace and the main-entry courtyard.

Athletic fields will be natural turf (grass) Baseball and softball fields, synthetic turn main four-sport competition field with six-lane track, synthetic turf practice soccer field (existing to remain) and six new tennis courts. There are no athletic field lights planned at this time.

Off-Site Design Features: To facilitate construction and improve public safety and first responder access to the site long-term, a new "haul road" will be built through the Stamford EMS site to the east of the Westhill parcel. The road will provide construction access separated from school activities during construction and serve as an additional emergency site access point for the new facility.

Architectural Design: Refer to the "Building Siting" discussion above for information on how the building integrates with the site topography.

The first floor will provide a secure main entrance at the south side of the building, meeting the latest SSIC guidelines, and will be the main entrance during normal school hours. The first-floor south entry will be an main entrance for community use events in the media center and cafeteria. The main entry will also serve as one of two entrances for community events in the auditorium, the other being the lower-level east side entrance since the auditorium space spans two floor levels. The lower-level east entrance will serve as a significant entry point for students during morning ingress and afternoon dismissal given that 31 of the 57 bus spaces reside on the

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east side. There are separate entrances into the Gymnasium on the first-floor level to the west of the main entrance. The building has been designed with security partitions that enable the gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria and media center to be used separately from the balance of the building for schedule after-hours activities.

The Main Office and Counseling suite is located immediately east of the main entry and school-based health and dental clinic immediately west of the main entry.

The second floor will house Special Education, Health & JROTC classrooms, and visual arts spaces. The third and fourth floors contain most of the academic spaces, including classrooms, science rooms, a variety of special education classrooms and several administrative spaces to support modern active learning environments. In comfortable climate-controlled areas with abundant natural daylight, students will have the opportunity to participate in large groups, small groups, and individualized learning – flexible environments designed within the classrooms, extended learning commons within each small learning community.

The new Westhill High School will be a dynamic learning environment with inspirational and natural light filled architecture for future generations of students.

Sustainable Design and Conservation: The entire design team has worked diligently to develop a project that is sustainable and addresses the City's desire to provide a high performing school building that integrates into the neighborhood setting. The driving force behind the proposed siting of the building and site design is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the existing setting, while addressing the requirements of the construction program set forth in the Educational Specifications, school security/safety guidelines, recommended pedestrian and traffic safety improvements and the site logistical considerations of constructing a new building on an operational school site. The design team has conducted several coordination sessions with City staff to discuss building siting, site design, public safety, drainage, sanitary, site utilities to develop a design that will be an asset to the community and neighborhood in which it resides for the next 50-75 years.

The project will meet or exceed the State of Connecticut's High Performance Building Standards (CT HPBS) and be registered with the USGBC and designed to meet a minimum of LEED Silver per city ordinance. Compliance with CT HPBS includes 18 mandatory requirements and a minimum of 27 Building Standard Option credits. At the conclusion of the construction documents phase of design, the team has identified 36 CT HPBS credits to be included, with another 10 pending that will be explored further during the balance of the design and construction phases. The team has identified 60 LEED credits to be included, with another 20 pending that will be explored further during the balance of the design and construction phases. 60 credits is more than needed for LEED Silver certification (50-59 credits) and given 20 pending credits, the team is hopeful to deliver the City a LEED Gold certified (60-79 credits) project.

Energy Performance: The project's Energy Performance is planned to meet or exceed the 2022 Connecticut State Building Code and LEED Baseline requirements regarding energy performance. The City chose an HVAC system that utilizes both electrical and fossil fuel energy sources. A hybrid heating/cooling plant includes a ground-coupled water-to-water heat pump plant to provide the majority of the buildings heating and cooling needs, supplemented by gas-fired boilers and electric air-cooled chillers for peak loads. The project also includes (as a

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bidding alternate) rooftop photovoltaic (PV) arrays to provide on-site energy generation and help offset the building's energy demand.

The project has been designed to meet or exceed the Connecticut High Performance Building Systems (CT HPBS) and minimum LEED Silver requirements. The project is planned for an Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of 32.9, which anticipates the following results for the city of Stamford, compared with LEED Baseline.

- 43.2% savings in energy use.
- 8.9% savings in energy cost.
- 21.0% savings in source energy.
- 38.1% savings in greenhouse gas emissions.