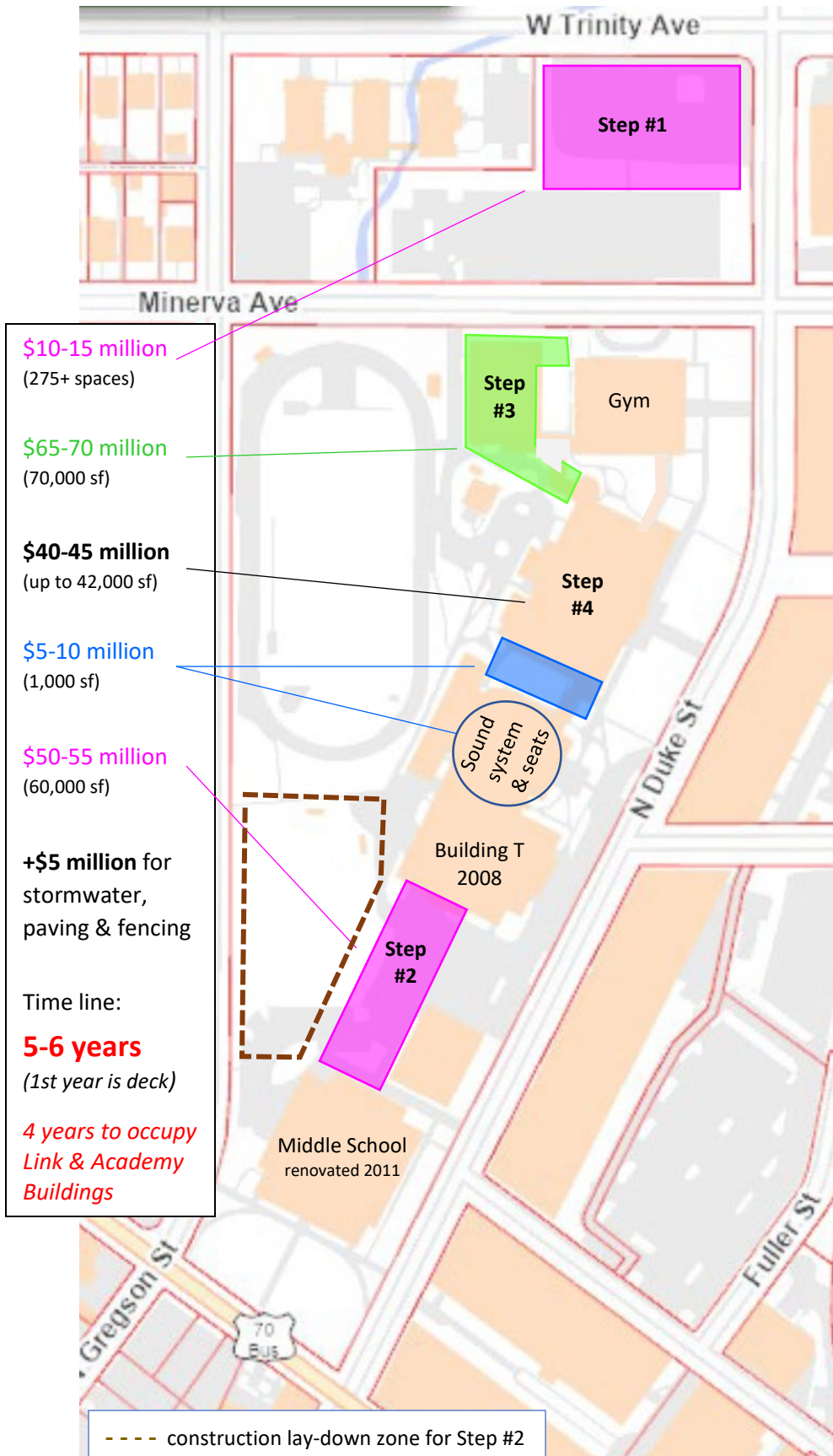


How a Minimally-Disruptive Improvement to DSA Can Happen (cost for concept shown = ~\$180 million)



Step 1 – Build parking deck (~275 spaces)

- On student lot during school year; move parking off Main Campus

Step 2 – Build **New** “Link” Building connecting Middle School to Building T

- **3-story** building matching Middle School. 1st floor: Exceptional Children’s classrooms from lower level of Main. 2nd & 3rd floors: all Math & Science from Academy.
- Equipment on vacated parking area near softball field. No connections to Middle School and Building T during construction. Students walk between Middle School and High School in front of Black Box theater.

Step 3 – Build **New** 3-story Academy Building Replacement/Expansion

- Match floor level of Main. Build while in session since no effect on buildings.
- When built, move dance, piano, guitar and Chorus to 1st floor. Move all classrooms from Main 2nd floor to 2nd and 3rd floors of new building.

Step 4 – **Renovate** Main 2nd Floor

- **2nd floor** renovate for 13 classrooms to expand enrollment by 250. Can expand counseling & admin space on 1st floor (option, but included in cost)
- **Options:** renovate while using 1st floor – 2nd floor access temporarily sealed. Or use temporary cafeteria & admin space on softball field. Or use old Northern for 1 year swing space.

Other (part of any steps) – Build **New** Welcome Pavilion & Weaver upgrade

- Enclose yard between Main & Weaver
- Single entrance to DSA from Duke and rear promenade to parking deck
- **New** Weaver sound system & seating (do over summer; cost part of Main)
- Minimally disruptive; can be done with any Phase to shorten schedule

Note: during parking deck construction, students might use the county-funded lot at Chapel Hill Street and Duke Street, a 7-minute walk away.

Move DSA cost = \$254 million. ~\$12 million spent. Cost to continue move: \$240+ million.

Equity Impact

- The school will be closer to Riverside HS and new Northern HS than it is to the current DSA site, and farther away from historically marginalized neighborhoods.
- There is no transit service to the site, and none is planned in the next 20 years, meaning students, staff and families who depend on transit can't access the site or use transit to get home from after-school activities.
- Students won't be able to walk to downtown arts and cultural venues or after-school job opportunities as they can at the current campus.
- **To fund moving DSA, DPS will need to defer at least 4 elementary schools in the 2022 School Bond (Club, Morehead, Mangum & Bethesda), which all qualify as schoolwide Title I schools; DSA does not qualify as schoolwide Title I. Upgrading elementary schools can help families and students get rooted in DPS.**

Fiscal Impact

- Funding the deferred schools will require another bond issue where voters will be asked to fund schools they were told the recent bond issue would pay for.
- Moving DSA has increased in cost from \$120 million as the bond issue was being discussed (and COVID and supply issues were known) to \$256 million in just 2 years, consuming 60% of the 2022 School Bond financing.
- If DSA moves, the school system will still need to find money to renovate DSA for other uses, along with money to reuse the old Northern HS site – money it doesn't have and that will compete with other building needs. It will also need to maintain both the current DSA site and the old Northern site until it figures out and funds other uses – heating, air-conditioning, security, grounds maintenance, etc.
- **An option to improve DSA by building new classrooms and art spaces and moving instruction out of the lower level of the historic main building can save the school system between \$50 and \$85 million, depending on whether enrollment is expanded, and allow bond-supported elementary schools to proceed.**

Community & Environmental Health Impact

- The 57-acre site on which a new DSA is to be built will involve extensive clear-cutting and mass grading.
- Over \$3 million is planned for building turn lanes and traffic signals to access the new site.
- No transit routes serve the new site, none are planned for the next 20 years, and the roads leading to the nearest bus stops, which are well over a half mile away, have no sidewalks.
- Total bus and auto travel will increase to get to the new site, which is in the northwest section of the county, unlike the centrally-located current DSA.
- In comparison, the current DSA site is on 20 acres in an already-developed urban location, with transit running past the school and the city's central bus terminal a 10-minute walk away.
- Staying in place will reuse buildings meant for this purpose versus new construction with energy-intensive building materials. The new DSA is touted as being "solar-ready", but no solar panels are planned.

Key Concerns

1. Students, teachers, parents and neighbors have not been engaged by DPS, except in the most cursory ways – no one has been asked what they prefer given vastly changed circumstances and practical alternatives.
2. Information from DPS has lacked transparency, been consistently inaccurate over the years, and often misleading, including impacts on 2022 bond-funded elementary schools.
3. Despite adopted principles and statements to the contrary, the clear superiority of the Improve DSA/Renovate Elementary Schools option on equity and sustainability grounds is being downplayed or misrepresented.
4. The longer term fiscal consequences of moving DSA on the ability to finance and fund not only other capital needs, but also to adequately pay teachers and staff and pay rising operating costs has been ignored.
5. A viable, fundable reuse for the current DSA site if the school is moved has not been factored into any public discussions, nor has the potential for the 57-acre site if the current DSA is improved instead.

THE COST OF AN IMPROVE DSA OPTION VS THE MOVE DSA OPTION

The cost to move DSA is estimated at \$256 million including bid alternates and soft costs, although it is unclear if this includes cost items such as new classroom furnishings, moving expenses, etc.¹

DPS staff first claimed renovating DSA would cost \$372 million,² but now admits it would cost less than moving, although documentation for estimates have not been shared. A group of architects, engineers and developers with well over 100 years of combined experience feel the Improve DSA concepts can save enough money to fund either 2 or 3 elementary schools that will otherwise have their funds diverted.

The “Improve DSA” option outlined in this document can be achieved for at least \$50 million less than the “Move DSA” option, even including money already spent on design (i.e., “Improve DSA” can be done for ~\$180 million total cost), based on documented sources and conservative assumptions:

1. The parking deck needed to make the rest of the Improve DSA option feasible can be built for less than \$15 million based on WGI’s 2024 *Parking Structure Cost Outlook*.
2. The costs for the three new buildings in the Improve DSA option are summarized below, using inflated per-square-foot costs being used for the Move DSA campus. The Move DSA campus is priced at \$643 per square foot (including soft costs and contingency, but excluding “bid alternate” costs that are needed for moving DSA but not at the current campus).³ Costs for the “Link” Building, Welcome Pavilion and Academy Building are:

Building	Square Feet	Cost	Cost per Square Foot
3-story Middle School – Media Center “Link”	60,000	\$50 million	\$850
1-story Welcome Pavilion (including site work)	10,000	\$10 million	\$1,000
3-story Academy Building Replacement	70,000	\$65 million	\$930

The total for the deck and three new buildings is ~\$140 million; another \$40 million will renovate the 2nd floor and part of the first floor of the Main Building while saving \$50 million over moving DSA. “Soft” costs (design, etc.) are included in the estimates. Soft costs for the three new school buildings, which could be bid separately over a couple of years, typically are based on the expected construction cost. Since the per-square-foot costs in the above estimates are based on inflating the “Move DSA” total costs (which include soft costs), these estimates include soft costs as well.

A critical, but often overlooked point in comparing “Move DSA” vs. “Improve DSA” costs -- and that is not calculated here -- is that if the school is moved, many costs associated with the current campus will still fall to DPS. In the short term, those include the costs for heating, cooling and securing the current campus to prevent damage and deterioration. But longer term, any costs for remediation or renovation for alternative uses would still need to be paid for but are not accounted for in recent DPS capital improvement budgeting or DSA documents.

Once the parking deck, new classroom building connecting the Middle School to the Media Center, and replacement Academy Building are completed, the details and amount of funding devoted to both the Welcome Pavilion and renovations to the Main Historic Building can be fine-tuned to address any budget concerns. Unlike the requirement to build 100% of a new DSA, the focused and phased improvements of improving DSA will provide cost flexibility.

Finally, although it would not result in net public savings, significant DPS savings could be achieved through two actions:

1. Transfer the parking deck site to the County and have the County build and operate the deck, with at least 275 spaces reserved for DSA use during school sessions, accomplished through a MOA.
2. Have the City and/or County acquire the 57-acre “Move DSA” Duke Homestead Road site from the school system for a model affordable homeownership project; acquisition funds could be used for DPS capital renewal projects or to build a permanent School of Technology building at Hillside, as there is plenty of space to do so, allowing current efficiencies (busing, cafeteria) and student opportunities (athletics, arts, clubs) that relocation can’t.

¹ DPS board meeting presentation, 12-14-23

² DPS board meeting presentation, 12-14-23

³ DPS board meeting presentation, 12-14-23

