

Bel Air Replacement High School FAQ's

1. Why a Bel Air Replacement High School?

The original building, completed in 1950, is the oldest of Harford County's high schools. During 2003, a feasibility study was completed by Frederick Ward Associates to determine the costs and feasibility of renovating or replacing the aging school. In 2005 the Board of Education chose the replacement option, to limit cost, risk and disruption to the student's educational program.

2. Where will the new Bel Air high School be located?

The new Bel Air High School will sit on the school campus currently serving the dual elementary Homestead/Wakefield, Bel Air Middle School and Bel Air High School. The campus is located on 31 acres in the town of Bel Air. The new High School will be constructed in the North-West area of the campus closest to Route 1 and Kenmore Ave where athletic fields are currently located.

3. What is a prototype, and why use one at Bel Air?

The Aberdeen High School was used as a prototype for the new Bel Air High School. A prototype is "an original type, form, or instance serving as a basis or standard for later stages; or an original, full-scale, and usually working model of a new product or new version of an existing product."

Due to time constraints, the Board of Education approved using a modified form of the Aberdeen High School plan. The Aberdeen High School plan was taken, adapted using lessons learned and research, and was molded into a facility to fit the unique program and capacity required of the Bel Air High School.

4. How is this building different from Aberdeen High School?

While this building is a prototype of the Aberdeen High School, some things have changed to fit the requirements of the Bel Air High School Student population.

A major change is the addition of classrooms on the third floor of the instructional wings to increase capacity. Aberdeen only has a partial third floor. Another difference is the reversal of the Gymnasium and Auditorium from the Aberdeen layout. The exterior of the building is planned to be constructed with more conventional materials reflecting the traditional setting of the Bel Air campus environment. Other differences will include material selections, parking layouts, and site field arrangement considerations.

5. What will happen to the old Bel Air High School?

During the construction process, education will continue as always in the existing building. Upon completion and occupancy of the new school, the old school will be demolished to make room for the new athletic complex.

6. What is the capacity of the new school?

The State Rated Capacity of the current plan is 1668 Students including Special Education.

7. When will construction begin?

New construction could start as soon as the fall/winter 2006 with some utility re-location. Actual new construction may begin as early as spring of 2007 with site work for the building foundation.

8. When will construction be complete?

Construction for the new High School is anticipated to be complete in August of 2009, and demolition of the existing High school and athletic field development is to extend into 2010.

9. What will the building look like when completed?

The new High School will look very similar in size and shape as the Aberdeen High School. Different exterior materials, and the addition of the third floor will be the major differences.

10. How many square feet is the new school?

The total area for this project is approximately 248,000 square feet.

11. How large is the new auditorium?

The approved auditorium will be the same size as the Aberdeen High School auditorium, at 536 +/- seats. However, pending approval by the Bel Air Town Board and the Board of Education (July 26) the auditorium could be 800 seats. Funding for the additional seats would be provided by the Town and the County governments.

12. How large is the new gymnasium?

The new Bel Air high School will have a triple Gym; the same size as Aberdeen high School. Instead of building a traditional gym and a separate auxiliary gym, a triple gym combines all the space, and can be utilized for more events. A triple gym is the equivalent to three regulation basketball courts or three regulation volleyball courts.

13. What is a magnet?

The Board of Education defines an educational magnet as a programmatic structure that attracts students with similar interests to a common location; consolidating instructional resources for the delivery of a unique program of studies. Magnet programs can range from broad and comprehensive in nature, like the Harford Technical High School, to narrow and accelerated like the Science and Mathematics Academy at Aberdeen High School.

14. Is there a magnet at the new Bel Air High School, if so, what kind of magnet will it be?

The Board of Education has been approached by the biomedical and health communities to locate a medical sciences program at the new Bel Air High School. This recommendation includes both an accelerated magnet program for advanced studies in biomedical research and medical physicianship and a non-magnet local career cluster in biomedical and health sciences. It is in direct response to the rapidly increasing national and local workforce demands at all levels of the health industry as well as the national initiative to advance the study of science and mathematics. The proximity and expansion of Upper Chesapeake Hospital, along with its related support industries, make this an ideal relationship for a purposeful partnership. The potential for this showcase program being housed at Bel Air High School is presently being deliberated by the Board of Education.