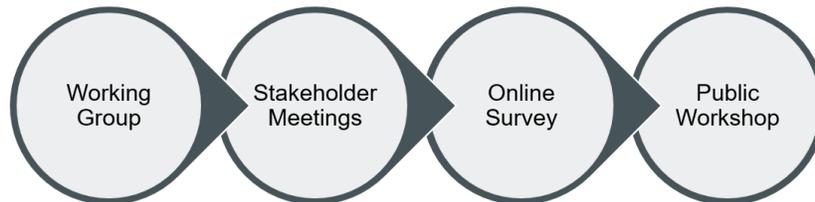


Madison Academy School Visioning Public Involvement Process & Summary

The Town of Madison engaged Fitzgerald & Halliday Inc. (FHI) of Hartford to conduct a public involvement process for the Academy School building and property. The goal of this process was to survey key stakeholders and residents regarding their thoughts and concerns about the future of the Academy School building and property.



The public involvement process used a number of methods for engaging key stakeholders and the public. The elements of this process included:



Working Group: A working group was organized by the Town Planner that included representatives from the Planning & Zoning Department, Board of Selectmen and Economic Development Commission. The working group was assembled to identify a strategy for exploring reuse or redevelopment of Academy School. The working group also assisted in developing and facilitating the public involvement process.

Stakeholder Meetings: Stakeholder meetings were conducted with the Historic District Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission to inform them of the visioning process and gather their feedback on topics involving the school building and property, related to their specific commissions.

Online Survey: An online survey was composed as a means of soliciting feedback regarding how people feel about the Academy School building and property, what their preferences and concerns are, and thoughts they have about potential futures uses for the building and property. The survey, which was released prior to the public workshop, was also used as a mechanism to promote the workshop.

Public Workshop: A public workshop was conducted at the Polson Middle School on 3/28/17. Approximately 85 people were in attendance. The goal of the workshop was to gather input and ideas from the community regarding the future uses and ownership of the Academy School building and property. The workshop also included an interactive survey and breakout session with conversations focused on different questions related to the Town Center, the school property, and future uses of the site.

Selectmen's Meeting Presentation: FHI gave a presentation of the survey and workshop findings to the Board of Selectmen on 4/10/17.

Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder meetings were conducted with the Historic District Commission on 2/27/2017 and the Planning and Zoning Commission on 3/3/2017. Results from those meetings are presented below.

Historic District Commission

The original front façade of the Academy School Building was constructed in 1921 and the property falls within the Town's historic district, as such, the Historic District Commission was identified as an important stakeholder to consult during this process. Overall, members of the Commission felt that the building and property should be used for the common good of the community and that the historic character of the property/building should be maintained. The Commission does not want to start a trend of demolishing old buildings, but there is a consensus that an appropriate solution would be to preserve the original front façade and ensure that future development be in character with the surrounding area. Something with a mix of uses; restaurants, shops, and housing was favorable to the Commission, provided that at least part of the site remains accessible to the public. There is a strong preference that the property become something beneficial to the town, such as a community center, cultural/arts space, etc.

Planning and Zoning Commission

Although the Academy School property falls within the R2 Residential zoning designation, the surrounding area has very few residential properties and the Planning and Zoning Commission believe that the property would be better suited to the Transitional zoning category. Any zoning changes to the area would be aligned with proposal facilitation for future development. Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission feel that nostalgia for what the school once was, will continue to be a hurdle for any redevelopment of the site, but that preserving some of the history of the site and/or school building may be a method to combat some of the push back related to redevelopment. They acknowledge that the property has a lot of potential, and that a mixed-use plan with something for everyone could be a considerable asset to the town. They also feel that it is important to convey that development will have to preserve the character of the town and that the chosen developer must work within design parameters established by the town.

Online Survey

The online survey was conducted in February and March of 2017 and was promoted via the Town's website, social media, and in the local newspaper. A total of 1,010 survey responses were received. The key findings are summarized below.

About the respondents

- 72% of survey respondents live in Madison, but beyond a ten minute walk of Academy School; 20% of respondents live in, or within, a ten minute walk of the school; 8% live outside of Madison
- 95% of survey respondents do not own a business or commercial property in the Town Green or Madison Center area
- 75% of respondents have lived, worked, or owned property in Madison for more than 10 years
- Age of respondents was fairly spread out; with 16% between the ages of 31-40; 25% between the ages of 41-50; 25% between the ages of 51-60; and 28% who were 61 and over
- 65% of respondents did not attend or do not have a family member who attended Academy School; 35% did attend or have a family member who attended

How respondents use the Property

- When asked how often they visit the Town Green area, 61% said once a week or less; 27% answered a few times per week; and 12% said almost daily
- 49% of respondents do not use or have a family member who uses the open space, ball court, playground, or ball fields at Academy School; 39% answered yes, once a week or less; 13% answered yes, a couple of times per week or more

What respondents think about the Academy School Building and Property

- The top responses for what concerns respondents have about the Town Green and Academy School area were as follows: 40% don't have any concerns about the area; 33% lack of activity; 25% maintenance; 20% insufficient parking
- When asked to rate the significance of the Academy School Building, 44% answered that it is very significant to Madison's history and/or identity; 34% answered that it is somewhat significant; 15% did not think it is significant

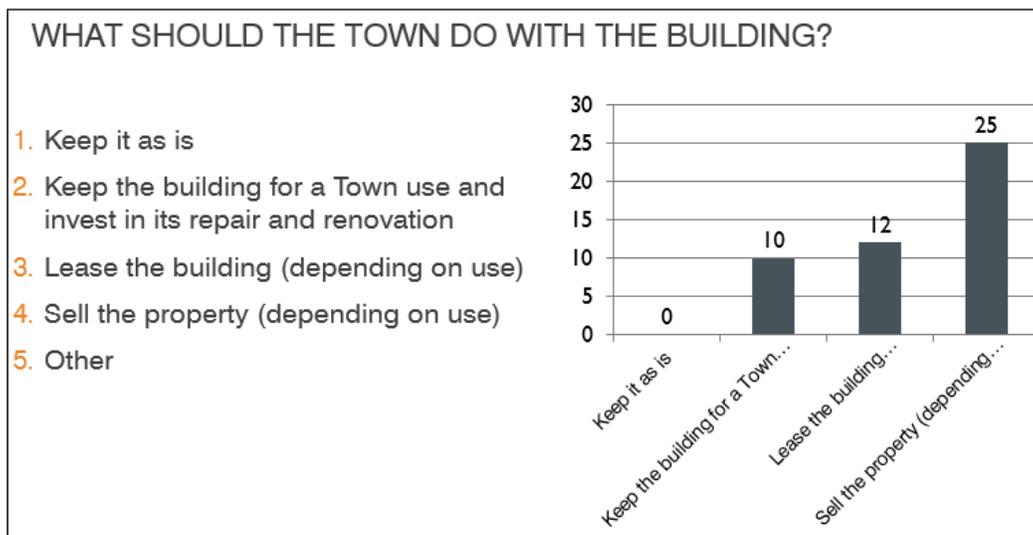
What respondents think should happen to the Academy School Building and Property

- The top responses to how the Academy School building should be reused or repurposed are as follows: 48% redeveloped with a mixture of uses; 36% reused for another town use; 29% redeveloped for retail and services; 27% redeveloped for housing
- When asked to if they would be in favor of the reuse of redevelopment of Academy School if it required removal of the ball fields, 31% no, I would not be in favor of reuse of redevelopment if it required removal of the ball fields; 26% said yes, if the playground and a small amount of open space was preserved; 24% said yes; 11% said yes, if new ball fields were provided somewhere else near the center of town

- When asked if they would be in favor of redevelopment at the Academy School site if it required demolition of the school building, 41% said no, the school building must be preserved; 37% said yes, but it depends on the type of redevelopment, 12% said yes, regardless of the type of development; and 10% answered “Other”
- The top responses for what should the Town do with the Academy School building are as follows: 51% make necessary investments for its preservation and/or reuse; 46% lease the building, contingent upon type of reuse; 43% sell the property, contingent upon type of reuse

Public Workshop

A public workshop was conducted at the Polson Middle School 3/28/17. An evening session was conducted with approximately 85 attendees. The workshop began with a presentation that included a brief overview of the study process and a brief history of Academy School. An interactive survey was conducted with the audience using virtual polling software. When participants were asked “What should the Town do with the building?”, a majority of respondents responded that the Town should “sell the property, depending on use” (see survey excerpt below).



The workshop also included a breakout session with conversations focused on different questions related to the future of the Academy School building and property. Participants worked together to answer each question. Following the session, a representative from each group provided an overview of the key points their group focused on. A summary of the breakout session follows below.

What does Madison Center Need?

Most people felt that Madison center needs more restaurants and retail as well as improved septic or sewer facilities. Other popular uses included housing for seniors, an arts or cultural center to draw people to Madison, and a community center that could be used by residents of the whole town. The most popular things that attendees identified are presented below:

- More restaurants
- Retail
- Senior Housing
- Arts and/or Cultural Center
- Community Center
- Improved septic or sewer

What do you like about the Academy School building and property?

Participants like the original front façade of Academy School (part that faces Route 1) as well as its central location in the center, near the town green and train station. People also like the ballfields and the open space that the property provides. The most popular responses identified by attendees are presented below:

- Front Façade of building
- Good location
- Ballfields and open space

What do you NOT want to happen to Academy School?

When asked about what they did not want to see happen to Academy School, many groups said that they did not want to see the building be demolished, and they did not want a large chain store moving into the space. Participants also said they did not want to see it be turned into apartments or condominiums. The most popular responses identified by attendees are presented below:

- Building should not be demolished
- Developed into apartment buildings or condos
- Do not want a chain store to come in

How would you like to see Academy School reused?

When asked how they would like to see Academy School be reused, many responded that a mixed used development including retail, restaurants, housing, and office uses would be appropriate. Other popular ideas were to move the Town Campus to Academy School so that Town Hall departments are easily accessible within the center. People would like to see Academy School be converted into something useful for everyone in town. The most popular responses identified by attendees are presented below:

- Mixed use development including housing, retail, and offices
- Town Campus could move into the school
- Something useful for everyone in town

As a whole, participants favored, and advocated for, reuse of the school. When presented with the potential strategy of the Town issuing an RFP for development, participants were amenable to this approach.

Presentation to the Board of Selectman

FHI gave a presentation of the survey and workshop findings to the Town Selectmen on 4/10/17. This provided an opportunity to share the findings gathered during the outreach process and establish a clear path forward. Residents and stakeholders are supportive of reuse, so therefore the Town will issue a request for proposals for reuse of the property. The Board was generally supportive of moving the process forward so as to issue requests for proposals for the Academy School property.

Next Steps

The Town is in the process of drafting a request for proposals, that will be used to solicit proposals from potential developers who may be interested in the property. Based upon the proposals received, the Town will assess how to proceed. This may include lease or sale of the property pending approval via Town Meeting or Referendum.