

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
KATJANA BALLANTYNE, MAYOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Roberta Cameron

FROM: Arn Franzen, Project Manager, Public Space and Urban Forestry

DATE: 7/26/23

SUBJECT: PSUF off-cycle priority funding request for Brown Schoolyard renovation construction funds (\$96,754).

This memorandum, submitted by the City of Somerville Department of Public Space and Urban Forestry (PSUF) is to accompany our off-cycle request for \$96,754 in CPA funds to aid PSUF and the School Department with the renovation of the Benjamin Brown Schoolyard, currently underway. This is an important request for our department and the City, and we appreciate your consideration.

As our application explains, our project bids came in higher than anticipated, but we were still able to proceed with the renovation, albeit with a smaller than anticipated project contingency. Unfortunately, shortly after the work started on June 20th, we encountered several unanticipated and unknown subsurface issues which have pushed our construction costs beyond our budget capacity. Therefore, this Off-Cycle request is a priority for the success of our project.

Please see our full application and budget estimate. Should any of our construction costs come in under this projection, we will return those funds to the CPC. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Franzen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Arn Franzen
Senior Project Manager
Public Space and Urban Forestry
Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning
& Community Development
afranzen@somervillema.gov

Submission 2

Benjamin G. Brown Schoolyard Renovation

Submitter

ARN FRANZEN

Submission Date

Jul 17, 2023 1:01 PM

Project Name:

Benjamin G. Brown Schoolyard Renovation

Project Location:

201 Willow Avenue

Please indicate all categories
that apply to this project:

Open Space/Recreation

CPA Funding Request

97000

Print and fill out the Budget
Summary Form.

FY24 CPA Budget Summary Form Fillable.pdf

afranzen@somervillema.gov

Submitter

ARN FRANZEN

Submission Date

Jul 18, 2023 1:21 PM

Applicant(s) Name /
Organization:

Arn Franzen - PSUF Public Space Urban Forestry

Co-Applicant(s) Name /
Organization

NA However the project is being conducted with the Somerville School Department

Contact Person:

Arn Franzen

Email

afranzen@somervillema.gov

Phone Number

(617) 625-6600

Description:

3. NARRATIVE – Project Description

CPC Request: Benjamin Brown Schoolyard Renovation Construction Funds
The Department of Public Space and Urban Forestry is requesting CPA funds to help with a construction budget funding shortage at the Brown Schoolyard renovation, which started on June 20, 2023. While the construction cost estimates were carefully prepared by the team of landscape Architects and city staff; and they included a 15% contingency, the project bids received were much higher than anticipated, leaving a much smaller contingency than is typical for a project of this scope. Then, shortly after excavation started, a series of unknown and unforeseen subsurface construction issues were identified. Therefore, the department of Public space and Urban Forestry (PSUF) is requesting the CPC's assistance with this budget shortfall.

Built in 1900, the Benjamin Brown School is the oldest elementary school in Somerville and does not include a cafeteria, gym, or indoor recreation space. Therefore, the schoolyard space is critical for recess, physical education and after school activities. For many years, the schoolyard has been an uneven cracked asphalt space with poor drainage, and the greater Brown School Community has strongly advocated for its renovation. The CPC awarded OSPCD/PSUF design funds for the Brown Schoolyard renovation in 2018. The new design was developed through a series of community meetings held before and after a one-year project suspension during the Covid Pandemic. The final design was developed in conjunction with the Administration, the School Department, school faculty, and the community. It incorporates new ADA compliant play areas, basketball, various court games, surface and wall graphics, a seating-retaining wall, a small turf field, new fencing, a new stormwater collection system and a new separated stormwater sewer to be installed on Josephine Avenue adjacent to the school.

The project was put out to bid in March 2023 so that the renovation could be completed between June 20, 2023, and August 25, 2023, prior to the

start of school. Bids for the project came in higher than anticipated, leaving very little in the budget for a construction contingency. Within the first days of the demolition, a series of subsurface and unforeseen construction issues became evident. These included: deep layers of macadam tar-based asphalt; large tree roots from the abutters property which required design changes and new walls; chain link fence posts installed without adequate footings; abandoned unmarked electric conduits; and other problems that reflect construction methods and materials used in the past.

The buildings downspouts, stormwater drains and the combined sewer in the street are also not up to code and will require a new sustainable water collection system incorporating subsurface drain lines, connections to new schoolyard drainage structures, new connections in the street, and a new separated storm sewer to be installed on Josephine Avenue adjacent to the school. Because the condition of the street utilities is unknown and detailed construction records are not available, including the specific location of a gas main, there may also be potential complications which arise when the new sewer system is constructed.

Purpose:

A renovated schoolyard will improve opportunities for School Department wellness goals of increased engagement by providing a welcoming venue and sense of community ownership. The schoolyard will also enhance City of Somerville Open Space and Recreation opportunities as identified in Somervision, The City's Comprehensive Plan, the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Fields Master Plan.

CPA Objectives:

Increased access to safe and accessible open spaces for the Brown School and the Community. Improved educational and recreational environments and opportunities for all residents. Support of diversity and immigrant communities through the schools. Improved ADA access.

Project Scope:

The Brown Schoolyard Construction Funds were awarded in the Spring of 2023 using a portion of the City of Somerville's Federal American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) allotment. Because all the City's ARPA funds are now fully committed to other projects, the Department of Public Space and Urban Forestry is requesting additional construction funds from the CPC, which has supported the project previously.

Please see the budget spreadsheet included here including the funding and the list of additional needs.

Cost Estimate:

Please see the attached budget spreadsheet which includes the funding and the list of additional needs.

Funding Sources:

The construction Costs are being provided by a portion of the City of Somerville's Federal American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) Funds. However, as all ARPA funds are now committed to other initiatives, additional funds are not for the Brown Schoolyard Renovation.

Anticipated Future Funding:

No additional future funding is anticipated.

Applicant Description:

The Brown Schoolyard renovation started on June 20th. Project Management is a team effort led by Arn Franzen, Senior Project Manager with the Department of Public Space and Urban Forestry. Additional project design and construction administration services are being provided by CBA Landscape Architects, with assistance from the school principal Shawn Maguire and the City of Somerville Engineering Department.

Project Coordination:

The Brown Schoolyard renovation started on June 20th. Project Management is a team effort led by Arn Franzen, Senior Project Manager with the Department of Public Space and Urban Forestry. Additional project design and construction administration services are

being provided by CBA Landscape Architects, with assistance from the school principal Shawn Maguire and the City of Somerville Engineering Department.

Timeline:

The goal is to have the construction completed by August 25, 2023 before the start of school. However, some aspects of the project like the sealcoat graphics, and some of the paving details on Josephine Avenue may not be 100% until September or October. The final contract invoices will not be processed until all work is complete.

Project Feasibility:

While some unanticipated and unknown items have been discovered through the course of construction, the project is completely feasible and has been an objective of the City for many years. In anticipation of the summer construction schedule all plans were prepared well in advance and the bid was issued in the spring so that a contractor could be selected and underway the first day after school got out and have all work completed before school starts in the fall.

Compliance with Standards:

All ADA requirements of the new schoolyard are being addressed in the new design. The previous schoolyard surface was pitched cracked asphalt with poor drainage and the new surface is being graded so that the vast majority of the space is ADA accessible.

Required Restrictions/Public Access:

NA. The schoolyard will be available to Brown School students during school hours and it will be available to the public after hours and on weekends.

General

* Budget Summary Form

* Itemized budget of all project costs, including the proposed funding source for each cost (Use CPA Itemized Budget Template or your own budget format)

* Three written quotes for project costs. If Quotes cannot be secured, detailed cost estimates may be used with a thorough explanation of how the estimates were derived.

Print and fill out the Budget Summary Form.

FY24 CPA Budget Summary Form Fillable.pdf

Please submit General attachments here.



3. NARRATIVE (2b) Financial - Benjaminpdf
133.77 KB
own Schoolyard Statement and Request

Visual

Map of the property location showing all features pertinent to the project, including current or future rapid transit stations

* Photos of the project site (not more than 4 views per site)

Please submit Visual attachments here.



2022-11-09_Brown School Schoolyard Ill... .pdf
933.97 KB
trative



Brown Schoolyard Construction Images.pdf
974.91 KB

PDF

Please submit
Ownership/Operation files here.



Brown School Ownership.pdf
95.19 KB

Please submit community
support documents here.



Brown Schoolyard Community Outreach.pdf
98.66 KB



Letter from Brown School parents.pdf
118.75 KB

Plans and Reports (if available)

Renderings, site plans, engineering plans, design and bidding plans, specifications, and any MAAB variance requests

Please submit plans and reports
here.



Brown Schoolyard Plans.pdf
232.12 KB

Benjamin Brown Schoolyard: Finance Review and CPA Request

DESIGN

2018: CPC Award \$ 160,000.00
(Joint Award with the West Somerville Neighborhood School)

CONSTRUCTION FUNDING

Funds Available:

Spring 2023: Funding provided by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) \$ 824,418.00
(Cost estimate assumed a 15% Contingency: \$123,500)

Expenses:

Construction Contract Award (JJ Phelan) \$ (772,616.00)
(Contingency available post contract award) **\$51,802**

Unforeseen Costs - Subsurface and Structural problems recently identified

1 School wall pointing	\$	(1,600.00)	
2 Test Pits for Tree and wall	\$	(2,600.00)	
3 Remove and dispose 80 yards asphalt (Subsurface deep layers of Coal Oil Macadam)	\$	(34,300.00)	
4 Remove and dispose crumbling concrete and install new fence/gates	\$	(8,500.00)	
5 Trench, pipeconnection for downspout	\$	(8,900.00)	
6 Cast in Place wall & platform including turf * (around tree roots)	\$	(12,930.00)	
7 Willow Ave back of sidewalk - Crumbling Wall and footing	\$	(23,726.00)	
	Total	\$	(92,556.00)

Other:

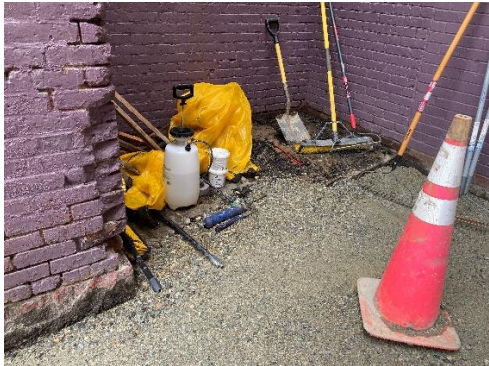
8 Police details (Josephine Ave)		\$	(6,000.00)
9 Estimated Contingency unknowns needed for Balance of Project (Stormwater Chamber Excavations, new sewer and possible utility conflicts on Josephine Ave)	\$	(50,000.00)	\$ (50,000.00)
	Final Total	\$	(148,556.00)

Additional CPC Request: (Negative project balance) \$96,754

*** Please note that CPC Funds will not be used for turf related items; whether they be for the installation of artificial turf, or the site preparation related specifically to artificial turf. Those costs will be addressed with existing ARPA funds.**

(Note: Estimates above are provided by JJ Phelan, CBA Landscape Architects, and Arn Franzen)

Benjamin Brown Schoolyard Construction - Conditions



Attention CPC Members,

The Benjamin G. Brown School and Schoolyard are owned by the City of Somerville.

The Benjamin G. Brown School is a small school, with a family atmosphere with a strong emphasis on preparing students to excel academically and personally, providing them with the tools to become productive and positive members of society.

Located in Ward 5 at 201 Willow Avenue, the Brown serves students kindergarten through fifth grade. Built in 1900, the School is also the oldest elementary school in Somerville.

In addition, because the school does not have an interior recreation space the schoolyard is often the only option for Physical Education classes, recess, and other recreation programming.

Thank you for your consideration.

Arn

Arn Franzen
Senior Project Manager
Public Space and Urban Forestry
Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning
& Community Development
afranzen@somervillema.gov

Brown School Community Outreach:

Community Meetings:

- January 16, 2018
- December 11, 2018
- March 11, 2020 (Cancelled by Covid Pandemic)
- March 22, 2022
- September 7, 2022

School staff Meetings

- November 6, 2018
- December 5, 2019
- Numerous other meetings with the Principal Shawn Maguire, Physical Education Instructor Sharyn Von Trapp, School Superintendent Jeff Curley and Assistant Superintendent Chad Mazza

January 14, 2021

Honorable Mayor Curtatone,

We are parents of Brown School students who have been eagerly awaiting the school's reopening. We were disappointed and disheartened to learn from the school committee meeting on Monday that the Brown school is (again) not on the list of schools being upgraded to open with COVID-19 precautions this spring.

We understand that a building audit deemed the Brown School unsafe under COVID protocol due to its lacking HVAC systems, and wholeheartedly support long-term investment into building improvements, including ADA compliance, re-roofing, and HVAC installations.

However, we are also surprised by the lack of serious consideration given to repeated suggestions for sound and viable, cost-effective temporary alternatives to costly remodeling, especially for warm-weather months. We have heard a number of stakeholders inquire about strategies such as plug-in portable air-cleaners (filtration) and open windows, possibly with the addition of fans, which can achieve sufficient air circulation--on par with mechanical ventilation systems, as attested to by building climate and air quality experts from Harvard, MIT, and elsewhere. While we know that wind is variable, we also know that one can plan for adverse wind conditions, and that buildings can meet or exceed mechanical air exchange rates with windows. ASHRAE 62.1, the national standard for ventilation design, recognizes windows as an acceptable means of providing outdoor air exchange rates, and its calculations (simply comparing window and room sizes) are not difficult to conduct. The Harvard School of Public Health also offers a step-by-step method for testing air exchange rates in buildings and recommendations for how to augment natural air exchange rates with portable air cleaners. We understand that these methods have been used by numerous school districts nationally. Through the outdoor Community Schools programs, we have also seen that Somerville-area children and teachers are resilient when it comes to thermal comfort. Therefore, while providing increased outdoor air flows, even if standard comfort ranges for temperatures are not met, our children would be much warmer than the conditions they are currently enduring outdoors.

A number of Boston-area schools such as the French Lycee in Cambridge and Boston Public Schools have faced similar, amortized building issues during the pandemic, yet have successfully remained open through the fall semester thanks to DIY air filtration solutions and reductions in synchronous class sizes. We urge the city and the school to consider these solutions at the Brown school for its reopening along with other schools this spring. Our Brown School community happens to include a number of domain experts, and we believe that a combination of regular bi-weekly COVID testing (as you had planned for December), self-attestation (as already successfully performed by the wonderful mid-day program), and low-cost yet effective air-filtration installations would bring the Brown School to sufficient conditions for reopening--along with the other schools this spring. We would be happy to convene a meeting with colleagues and other industry professionals to inform the application of these solutions at the Brown School.

As with other beloved Somerville schools, Brown School families are closely acquainted and committed to community values. Many of us moved to the neighborhood specifically for the school--the highest ranking in the city, outshining Cambridge elementary schools. [Sociological research](#) suggests that small-scale schools, like Brown, are ideal for not only learning, but also function as invaluable social infrastructure, whose human scale enables students and parents alike to feel collective belonging, fostering community resilience and cohesion. For the Brown School to be left behind would be a tremendous loss for the city, for the community, and most of all the children. It would likewise be a negative sign for the growing number of young families considering Somerville for a potential home.

Reopening Brown, even on a part-time basis, along with the other schools in the city-- should be an immediate priority for Somerville. Please accept our offer to work with you to mitigate the disruptive and detrimental effects of COVID-19--the lack of in-person education, peer education, and support services for the entire school year-- by exploring options for short-to-medium term building interventions that would restore its vital functionality.

We thank you for your consideration and response.

Parents of the Brown School.

Signed by:

1. Andres Sevtsuk (asevtsuk@mit.edu)
2. Chris Desjardins (cdesjar@gmail.com)
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75. Michele Guillemette (michelenuzzi@yahoo.com)
76. Nicholas Guillemette (nguillettemette@gmail.com)
77. Branwen Hall (branwenhall@gmail.com)
78. Melisa Lai-Becker MD (melisa.lai@alumni.brown.edu)

Attention CPC Members,

The Brown School Plans are available upon request. I have provided a screen shot of the cover page below. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Arn Franzen
Senior Project Manager
Public Space and Urban Forestry
Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning
& Community Development
afranzen@somervillema.gov

City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Plans for the Construction of:

IMPROVEMENTS TO BENJAMIN G. BROWN SCHOOL

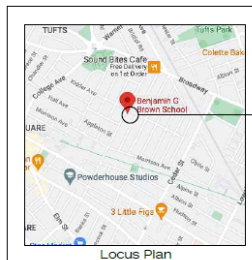
201 Willow Avenue, Somerville MA 02144

City of Somerville, Massachusetts
Katjana Ballantyne, Mayor

Public Space & Urban Forestry Division (OSPCD)
Arn Franzen, Director of Parks & Open Space

Plans Prepared By:

CBA Landscape Architects LLC
12 Middlesex Street | Somerville, MA 02144
www.cba-land.com | cba-land.com
landscape architecture
urban design
master planning



Project
Location

DRAWING LIST - Project No. 1932

L-0.0 Existing Conditions Plan
L-1.0 Demolition & Removals Plan
L-2.0 Materials Plan
L-3.0 Layout Plan
L-3.1 Paint Color Key
L-4.0 Grading Plan
L-5.0 Landscape Details
L-5.1 Landscape Details
L-5.2 Landscape Details
L-5.3 Landscape Details
T-1 Synthetic Turf Plan and Details
C-1 Drainage Plan and Profile
C-2 Drainage Details

February 2023

100% Construction Documents

