

School Buildings Survey - Proposal

SomerStat



Why a survey and why now?

- Currently at scoping stage; focused on gathering big picture information about people's opinions, preferences, and priorities. This data will help inform recommendations on the location of the next school(s) and which school(s) will be involved.
 - Input at later phases of the process will be more specific.
- Checking what opinions, preferences, and priorities vary across people in non-random ways
- A survey allows us to ask for information in a uniform way, and compare results across demographic and geographical groups, identifying areas where people broadly agree and disagree
- Allows us to make sure that we know whose voices are being heard (and that they are representative or can be reported separately)
- General audiences/research questions:
 - **Broad Community (all residents):** How should the City consider distribution of access to schools and facilities and tradeoffs in other areas of investment and focus? How do these opinions vary by geography or demographics?
 - **Current or prospective parents (of children under 18, in and outside of SPS):** What are the factors that parents consider (or will/wish to consider) when making decisions about elementary schools for their child(ren)? How do these choices vary by geography or demographics?
 - Current students and teachers at WH & Brown – already provided initial input (feedback and student survey)

Survey Timeline

Survey Design

November-December
2024

Design:

- Identify research questions
- Identify audiences
- Construct and test questionnaire
- Translate; input and test translations

Survey Distribution

January-February 2025

Distribution:

- Broad outreach in January
- Consistent review & flagging for targeted outreach
- Supplemental / targeted outreach to underrepresented groups

Preliminary analysis

presented to CAG
March 2025

Preliminary Analysis:

- Clean / process data for categorization
- Determine areas of agreement and disagreement in main priorities
- Present high-level write up with charts, explanatory text, illustrative quotes

Open Data

available to public May
2025

Open Data:

- Clean / process data for public release
- Build interactive visualization tool for data exploration
- Provide data dictionary
- Make available on data.somervillema.gov

Review: What is missing?

Topic areas for current & prospective parents

Topics (*What factors did/will parents consider in choosing an elementary school?*):

- Proximity
- Overall school size
- Number of classes per grade
- Safety
- Curriculum focus or unique academic programs
- Special education programming
- Extracurricular options
- Student body characteristics
- Specific school community
- Indoor facilities (e.g. gym, library)
- Outdoor facilities (playground, fields)
- School building features (age, environmental sustainability)
- Non-school elements / features
- Number of students in class
- Academic performance of students

Characteristics of participants (*target of 30+ respondents in each group of interest*):

- Range of geographic locations
- Range of household incomes
- Range of ethnic backgrounds
- Zero-car households
- Renters & owners
- Tenure in Somerville
- Children in SPS (and not in SPS)
- Range of child ages
- Speakers of non-English languages

Review: What is missing?

Topic areas for broader community

Topics (*How should the City consider distribution of access to schools and facilities, and tradeoffs in other areas of investment and focus?*):

- Tradeoffs in areas of investment and focus, for example:
 - New school(s) for those that are (or at risk of becoming) unusable
 - Other improvements in school and municipal buildings
 - Other infrastructure improvements
 - Investments and improvements in parks & open space
- Within distribution of access to schools and facilities, priorities for the City could include:
 - Overall walkability to elementary schools
 - Historical school locations, cultures, identities, features
 - Capital and operational costs
 - Construction time and disruption
 - Long-term stability

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