

Study On The Relocation Of Washington County Public School's Central Office Operations To Downtown Hagerstown



**Prepared By:
The Greater Hagerstown Committee
February 12, 2013**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the City of Hagerstown (City) and with permission from the Washington County Board of Education (BOE), the Greater Hagerstown Committee (GHC) established a task force to explore the possibility of relocating the existing Board of Education Central Office (Central Office) building to the downtown core. The task force, which was established in April 2011, included members with diverse skill sets representing both the government and private sectors.

The task force did not see their work as replacing or superseding a future, more in depth consultant's study, however, it was hoped that this volunteer effort may reduce the eventual cost of that effort and determine the feasibility of such a project.

The task force understood that during the course of the study other short- and/or long-term decisions by the Board of Education may adversely impact the applicability of the study and viability of this option.

The task force recognizes that there are many options available to the BOE with respect to renovating or relocating the Central Office. This Study puts real numbers to an idea that has been discussed over a long period of time. This study is presented as a first step in larger initiatives for both the Board of Education as it reviews options for its central office, and the city as it seeks to attract larger corporate clients to the downtown core.

The task force established a study area in the downtown core the boundaries of which roughly align with the City's PEP (Partners in Economic Progress) Zone and mixed use zoning area.

The task force gathered data on needs from the BOE and evaluated 12 potential sites in the study area against criteria established by the committee with input from BOE staff. Four sites were determined to have the best potential. These locations include:

- **Site L:** A combination of the property at 103 South Potomac Street plus the property at 105-109 S. Potomac Street and also 25-37 W. Antietam Street.
 - Proximity to location designated for new parking deck by recent Parking study (approximately 325 feet), new regional library parking area (approximately 400 feet), and the A&E parking deck (approximately 350 feet).
 - Large lot size could support adjacent surface parking for visitors and VIP's.
 - Dramatic improvement to block by removing blighted buildings.
 - Would allow for widening of Antietam Street improving aesthetics and traffic flow.
- **Sites F/G:** A combination of the properties at 59 W. Washington Street and 43-53 W. Washington Street.
 - Adjacent to location designated for new parking deck by recent Parking study.
 - Proximity to Barbara Ingram School for the Arts (approximately 100 feet).
 - Across the street from University System of Maryland at Hagerstown.
 - Potential favorable availability of property acquisition although a recent change in ownership may impact the availability of 59 W. Washington Street Property.

- Depending on design, space could be allocated for a pedestrian friendly walkway from West Washington Street south to Antietam Street.
- The proposed new parking deck could be directly connected to the facility.
- **Site A:** The lots at 32 to 44 E. Washington Street.
 - Limited to three owners: two private LLC's and the City.
 - Adjacent to Central Lot surface parking.
 - Proximity to North Potomac Street Parking Deck (Approximately 400 feet).
- **Site J:** The South side of East Washington Street including 25-45 E. Washington Street.
 - Proximity to existing A&E Parking Deck (Approximately 250 feet).
 - Proximity to Central City Surface parking Lot (Approximately 250 feet).
 - Proximity to North Potomac Street Parking Deck (Approximately 600 feet).
 - Potentially challenging property acquisition for eastern portion of site due to prices paid for property at height of market.

A more thorough review of these locations including a cost and feasibility study was completed for each of these four sites. From a cost perspective, all four sites were comparable ranging in price from \$16.8 to \$18.25 million dollars. It should be noted that the construction cost methodology employed by the task force varied slightly from that used in the recent BOE sponsored study. The task force followed the Professional Procedures Manual as required by the state of Maryland Department of General Services in developing the cost estimates. These figures include the total cost of construction as well as estimates for land acquisition and demolition. The main difference in the four sites was due to property acquisition and demolition costs on the downtown properties. If you remove the costs for land acquisition and demolition, the prices range from \$15.1 to \$15.7 million.

These numbers compare favorably to the recently completed Harry Reynolds study commissioned by the Board of Education. That study estimated construction costs at \$15.75 million for new construction on the existing site (Alternate 3 in the summary report).

Of the four sites reviewed, site L and sites F/G were viewed by the committee as having the most to offer as potential locations for a new Central Office.

The study shows that developing a facility to house the administrative offices for Washington County Public Schools in downtown Hagerstown is both physically and economically feasible. It also shows that both the City and County taxpayer benefits when the right facility is put in the right location to leverage taxpayer dollars to everyone's maximum benefit.

HISTORY

Revitalization of the downtown has been a long-term goal of City of Hagerstown Officials. Key elements around that goal include an interest in attracting larger corporate clients into the city center and continued expansion of the existing educational footprint in the city.

Additionally, intermittent discussions have occurred with regard to the need and utility to renovate or replace the existing Board of Education Central Office (Central Office) currently located on Commonwealth Avenue.

Acknowledging these community conversations, the City with the support of the Greater Hagerstown Committee (GHC), sought approval from the Board of Education to explore the relocation of the current Central Offices to a site in the downtown core.

In April 2011 the Mayor of Hagerstown approached the Board of Education requesting their support for the study. The proposal included the creation of a volunteer task force led by the Greater Hagerstown Committee and a request for Washington County Public School (WCPS) staff to assist in gathering data and completing the study. The Board of Education was not asked to take a position on moving the central office at this time, simply to support a study aimed at researching this issue. Permission was granted and a task force was established in April 2011 prior to hiring a new superintendent of schools. The committee met over the next twenty months and the results of their efforts are included in this report.

It should be noted that in August 2012 the Board of Education directed their superintendent to complete an internal study around options for renovating or relocating the Central Offices independent of the work of the City/Greater Hagerstown Task Force. This study, led by Harry Reynolds, culminated in a formal report showing cost estimates to: renovate; partially demolish and renovate; or construct a new central office facility.

It is the hope of the Task Force that the combined results of these two independent efforts will provide a solid foundation for informed decisions by the Board of Education about the future site of the Central Offices.

SCOPE AND APPROACH

The task force recognized that the study was a first step in a larger evaluation process. The goals of the study were to provide:

- An in-depth review of the feasibility of relocating the Central Office to the downtown core.
- The Board of Education with current needs assessment data for use in evaluating this and other options.
- The City with a framework for future conversations with larger corporate client prospects.
- A better understanding of available sites for large-scale development efforts in the core.
- Identification of additional incentives that may be needed to make the city more competitive in attracting new businesses to the downtown core.

A critical element for the success of the study was the availability of a diverse skill set among the members of the Task Force. Included in the group were individuals representing both public and private entities with expertise in: finance, land use, construction, permits and inspections, administration, operations, I/T, development, knowledge of downtown, architecture, green technologies, and engineering. A list of the task force members can be found in **EXHIBIT A**

The first step of the Task Force was to identify physical boundaries of the study. This boundary roughly aligns the target area with the City's PEP (Partners in Economic Progress) Zone and mixed use zoning area. The target area is bounded by Locust Street to the east, Franklin Street to the north, Summit Avenue to the west, and Baltimore Street to the south. This area offers the highest concentration of incentives for developers. The former hospital site was considered but not formally reviewed because it was deemed too far from the downtown core to have significant impact on revitalization efforts. A map of the study area can be found in **EXHIBIT B**.

Subcommittees were established to look at specific areas of the process including:

- Site Selection and Review
- BOE Needs Assessment
- Finance and Funding

Site Selection and Review

The Site Selection and Review subcommittee was established to determine the list of potential sites within the boundary area and then review those sites based on specific criteria. Evaluation for the target sites included: cost, size, parking, historic considerations, removal of blight, traffic impacts, availability of utilities, and other criteria as appropriate.

The initial review by the Full Task Force revealed twelve potential sites. A map showing the sites can be found in **EXHIBIT C**. Basic data was gathered on each site. The subcommittee reviewed the merits of each site and determined the top four subject to further consideration. Each of these four sites received a more thorough review including the development of a cost and feasibility analysis. A ranking scale was also developed (1-worst to 5 best) and applied to each criterion as appropriate. The total score for each site was used in the evaluation process.

BOE Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment subcommittee assisted BOE Staff in developing and completing needs assessments for departments within the Central Office. These assessments included:

- An examination of current space issues.
- A detailed review of space and infrastructure needs by department.
- Determination of employees likely to move to the new facility from both the current central office and other sites.
- Determination of parking needs including primetime, overnight, and transient.
- A review of current maintenance, operational, and utility costs.
- A comparison of current vs. projected utility costs for class A office space.

This committee also reviewed comparable projects including the recently constructed Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) Administrative Offices.

Finance and Funding

The Finance and Funding subcommittee examined financing, grants, and funding options and reviewed current vs. potential long-term cost of ownership.

BOE STATUS

The Current Central Office is situated on approximately 11.2 acres with 86,000 Square feet under roof. This includes 16,000 square feet of garage space a 1,600 square foot Planetarium and 68,000 square feet of general office space. At the time of data collection, there were approximately 200 employees on site.

The oldest section of the building was built in 1938 and additions were added in 1966 and 1969. There is a significant ongoing maintenance effort required in the current building. At the time of data collection for this study, the Board of Education estimated nearly \$5 Million in deferred maintenance projects (**EXHIBIT D**). The recent report by Harry Reynolds estimated the cost for total renovation at \$11.6 Million (**EXHIBIT E**). Subsequent to that report, the BOE voted not to consider renovation of the current site as a viable option.

The state of the current building results in grossly inefficient energy usage estimated at the current site to be \$3.76 per square foot vs. an estimated \$1.80 per square foot in the new FCPS Administrative Offices in Frederick, Maryland (**EXHIBIT F**). The annual savings in energy costs alone would be in excess of \$130,000 based on 68,000 square feet. There are also many issues contributing to inefficiency in space and utilization. These include:

- Excess of hallway space due to design
- Inefficient clustering of departments
- Lack of flexible space
- Lack of expansion room
- Lack of adequate large- and small-group meeting spaces
- Lack of adequate storage space

Finally, the building, as it exists, does not fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) legislation.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In order to develop an appropriate needs assessment the task force first determined a set of assumptions. For the purposes of defining needs, it is assumed that:

- A portion of Commonwealth Avenue property will be retained. Specifically the maintenance garage and the bus parking facility.
- The Facilities Department will not move to the downtown location.
- A location for the mail distribution function will need to be identified. This function will require a loading dock and room for tractor trailer.
- A right-of-way will need to be available or to be obtained to bring fiber optic lines to any new location.
- The current on-site Teachers Credit Union was not considered in the move.
- Administrative personnel at other locations (i.e. Marshall Street) may be relocated to new Central Offices.
- Planetarium would not be included in the downtown building though a downtown location in partnership with another entity (Discovery Station, etc.) should be considered.

It is anticipated that a new Central Office would require approximately 75,000 square feet of space. This estimate is based on data collected on office space requirements by BOE staff **EXHIBIT G**, and factors in industry standard efficiency rates (70%) and adds 10% for future growth. Readers are cautioned that this estimate is based on the data gathered at the time this study was completed. Post-collection staff changes will need to be considered when developing a final set of requirements. General needs for the new facility include:

- Adequate administrative and support personnel office space, including office space for the elected board.
- Flexible/convertible space should use change over time.
- Adequate office space for an auditorium and other public meeting space on the first floor.
- Adequate utility services including fiber optic connectivity.
- Growth for various departments as student population grows.
- Public spaces with controlled access for evening meetings.
- Full ADA accessibility.
- Copious storage.
- Up-to-date life safety systems.

A total of 300 parking spaces are needed to support the new facility. Sufficient parking for approximately 275 vehicles must be conveniently located during the 7 am to 5 pm prime time. This estimate includes parking for:

- 200 Staff vehicles
- 50 Visitor and conference attendees
- 25 spaces for future growth

In addition, approximately 25 parking spaces are needed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for WCPS fleet vehicles. These could be located in less convenient areas.

If feasible, limited surface parking spaces should be included adjacent to the building.

Regarding technology, several specific needs exist. A new data center will be included in the facility which will be outfitted with special environmental controls. Other requirements for the technology department include:

- Set-up space for technology infrastructure.
- Sufficient storage.
- An emergency generator of sufficient size and capacity.

A critical element of the technology infrastructure is the connectivity between the Central Office and all of the other school system owned facilities. The new office must be connected to the current county-wide BOE fiber network. Sufficient fiber resources currently exist in the downtown core to support the needs of the new facility. This includes publicly owned fiber that would be available to WCPS with no recurring usage fees. The city will need to obtain additional right of way for this to occur.

SITE REVIEWS

The taskforce initially identified 12 sites for review. It is important to note that the task force has not approached the owners of these sites in this preliminary process. Sites were included based on several criteria including:

- Location of site within established study boundaries.
- Infrastructure
- Adequate lot size.
- Existing building utilization.
- Historic resource classification.
- Potential for acquisition.
- Parking

Removal of blight was also strongly considered in the site selection process.

While the renovation of an existing building was not immediately discounted, it was assumed that the facility would be new construction. It is believed that new construction would be most efficient both in terms of use of space and also with respect to ongoing costs. Further, it was determined that rehabilitation of an existing building would likely be cost prohibitive. For these reasons, the committee determined that renovation of an existing facility was not feasible.

All twelve of the initial sites were evaluated based on the criteria listed above. This process provided four sites worthy of additional study. These sites included:

Site	Location	Perceived Specific Benefits
A	32 to 44 E. Washington Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely the least expensive overall option. • City owns portion of the property, limited land acquisition and demolition concerns. • Connection to Central Lot surface parking and in close proximity to N. Potomac Street Parking Deck.
F/G	43-53 W. Washington Street and 59 West Washington Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of several blighted buildings. • Possible connections with USMH (shared space). • Adjacent to the site identified for a new parking deck based on a recent City parking study. The new parking deck could serve multiple entities in this area including the MD Theater, BISFA, properties on the 1st block of W. Washington Street, District Court, and others. Possible to design deck to directly connect to building. • The ability to use this site to create a new large pedestrian friendly walkway connecting W. Washington Street to Antietam Street and future development in the Marsh Run area. This could ultimately be the start of connecting City Park to University Plaza/USMH in a grand redevelopment plan.
J	25-45 E. Washington Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Central Lot and A&E Parking Deck. • Large lot would also allow room for some adjacent surface parking spaces. • Removal of several blighted buildings.
L	103 South Potomac Street plus the property at 105-109 S. Potomac Street and also 25-37 W. Antietam Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant revitalization benefit both in terms of the removal of blighted buildings and the widening of W. Antietam Street. • Proximity to the new library currently under construction. • Scored the highest points on the rankings (L-39, F/G-37, J-36, A-33). • Highest impact on economic development in this area with the vacant and underutilized properties in the surrounding area. • More scaled and situated for pedestrian traffic vs. the other sites on Washington Street that front a busy MD Route 40. • Adjacent to the site identified for a new parking deck based on a recent City parking study. The new parking deck could serve multiple entities in this area. • Large lot could allow for some surface parking adjacent to the building.

A more comprehensive set of criteria was then established for the evaluation of the four finalist sites. Data was gathered on each of these sites and members scored each property on a scale of 1 (worst) to 5 (best) against the appropriate criteria. A spreadsheet showing this evaluation can be found in **EXHIBIT H**. The table below details the specific data elements captured and considered:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Owner(s)</i> • <i>Address</i> • <i>Vacant/Occupied</i> • <i>Maximum size of Building Footprint (Assuming building dimension of 120'x190', where 120 is max. building width & 190 is existing lot depth)</i> • <i>Maximum # of Floors</i> • <i>Maximum Sq Ft of Building (assumed need is 75,000 sq.ft.)</i> • <i>Area for Future Growth</i> • <i>Existing Building/Structures:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Details of Building/Structures</i> • <i>Existing Physical Condition of Buildings</i> • <i>Highest/Best Use</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Historic Status</i> ○ <i>Historic Implications</i> ○ <i>Condemnation Options</i> ○ <i>Need Demolition Costs</i> • <i>Utilities:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Water (edu's assigned)</i> ○ <i>Water Hook Up Costs</i> ○ <i>Sewer (edu's assigned)</i> ○ <i>Sewer Hook Up Costs</i> ○ <i>Electric</i> ○ <i>Electric Hook Up Costs</i> ○ <i>Gas</i> ○ <i>Gas Hook Up Costs</i> ○ <i>Fiber</i> ○ <i>Fiber Hook Up Costs</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Storm Drainage</i> • <i>Road Improvements:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Road Improvements Needed</i> ○ <i>Road Improvement Costs</i> ○ <i>Traffic Impacts</i> ○ <i>Public Entrances</i> • <i>Parking:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i># Spaces on Site</i> ○ <i># public Spaces Within 500 feet</i> ○ <i># public Spaces Within 1,000 feet</i> ○ <i># spaces needed for 75,000 sq.ft. office building (Z.O. - 1 per 200 sq.ft. net; used 80% to get net).</i> ○ <i># New Spaces to be Constructed</i> ○ <i>Cost to Construct Parking Spaces</i> • <i>Site Development Costs:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Perceived Difficulties</i> ○ <i>Rock/Underground Water</i> ○ <i>Grading Costs</i> ○ <i>Environmental Hazards or Impairments</i> • <i>Funding Options:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Sale Status/Availability</i> ○ <i>Assessment Value</i> ○ <i>Appraised Value</i> ○ <i>Owner Lease/Purchase Options</i> ○ <i>Rental Options for Additional Tenants</i> ○ <i>Financing Options</i> ○ <i>Financial Restrictions on Site</i>
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A formal cost analysis was also completed on the four finalist sites. This analysis included costs associated with acquisition, demolition, engineering & design, asbestos removal, site work, contingency fees, and others.

The task force followed the Professional Procedures Manual as required by the state of Maryland Department of General Services in developing the cost estimates included in this study. The total cost from the four sites ranged in price from \$16.8 to \$18.25 million dollars, which includes property acquisition, and demolition costs. If you remove these costs, the prices range from \$15.1 to \$15.7 million.

The study performed by Harry Reynolds commissioned by the Board of Education estimated construction costs at \$15.75 million for new construction on the existing site (Alternate 3 in the summary report). **EXHIBIT E**

A summary of the cost analysis can be found in the table below:

Location	STRUCTURE			SITE			Utilities	Miscellaneous Soft Costs (1)	Total
	New Construction	Asbestos Removal / Demolition	Total Structure	Other	Procurement (Land Acquisition)	Total Site			
A	12,456,823	385,380	12,842,203	187,606	1,360,100	1,547,706	318,000	2,113,230	16,821,139
F/G	12,578,077	385,380	12,963,457	208,504	1,708,400	1,916,904	318,000	2,198,365	17,396,726
J	12,450,498	278,300	12,728,798	212,224	1,770,400	1,982,624	318,000	2,174,207	17,203,629
L	12,846,563	385,380	13,231,943	235,852	2,164,200	2,400,052	318,000	2,305,850	18,255,845

(1) Contingency, A&E, Soil Borings, etc.

Data for this chart was taken from detailed cost analysis sheets on each site prepared by Bushey Feight Morin Architects Inc. Land acquisition costs were derived from base values on State assessment data. All of this information as well as maps on each site can be found in **EXHIBIT I**.

FINANCING OPTIONS

The task force recognized that there are numerous potential financing alternatives and that a more detailed review would be needed to determine the best funding source based on the goals of the government entities that will be involved in the project. Therefore, the exploratory committee completed only a limited review of funding options.

The committee further recognized that there are several tangential decisions that would need to be considered that would potentially impact the capital requirements of this project. For example, the task force recognizes that the BOE owns certain real estate that may no longer be needed should a new central office building be constructed. Some or all of these properties could be sold and funds applied to this project. The task force takes no position on the benefit of consolidation or disposal of these individual properties. However the following were identified as having potential for consideration:

- 701 Frederick Street property now used for facilities maintenance operations.
- Excess land on Mt Aetna Road at Ruth Anne Monroe Elementary School.
- Smithsburg property currently used for storage (9.85 acres with 15k sq foot building).
- The portion of the Commonwealth Avenue property located near City-owned Potterfield Pool.

The task force identified several financing options available for consideration. Of those identified, two were viewed as being most viable for this project.

Option 1 - Traditional Capital Improvement Program – This option would include a combination of cash and the issuance of County and/or City bonds. The merits to this approach would be that the current low interest rate environment and financial strength of City and County

would likely make this the lowest total cost option over the long term. However, using this approach may negatively impact debt levels, available pay-go funding, and cash reserves; as well as delay other school projects planned for the future. Additional evaluation is needed on the impact to:

- Cash reserves for the Board of Education.
- The debt levels for the City and/or County.
- Current education projects in County's CIP program (6-year plan and 10-year plan).

It should also be noted that it is the understanding of the task force that state education capital funding is not an option since the state will not use those funds to finance administrative offices.

Option 2 – Public Private Partnerships or P3's—The task force views this as the most promising model based on the limited information we have at this time. The P3 model is similar to methodology that was used for the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts. Public Private Partnerships are unique contracts and can be constructed in various configurations including but not limited to straight lease, lease to own, shared building, and others.

It is recommended that the P3 option be explored in more depth pending a decision to proceed with the project. One of the many benefits of P3's is the potentially reduced impact to cash reserves and pay-go funding of WCPS and/or the County. In addition, limiting the amount of up-front capital required as well as the need to allocate bond funds to this project, would limit or eliminate any impact on current school projects in existing Capital Improvement Plans.

Informal discussions with several local developers revealed interest in supporting P3's as a means to locate the central offices into the downtown core. While there are a variety of scenarios for this type of project, one scenario that came to the forefront would be using a P3 to build an office complex to house more than just the Central Offices. In this scenario, the Central Offices would serve as the anchor tenant and the remainder of the building could be leased to other compatible tenants at higher lease rates. A long-term lease or lease-to-own agreement for the Central Offices would allow for very attractive lease terms for WCPS. In addition, as the school system grows, the excess space in the building could be converted from private leased space to Central Office space, eliminating the need for WCPS to build in room for growth should they own their own building.

While the lease cost per square foot would vary depending on the size and scope of the project, informal discussions with several developers estimate these costs to be in the \$12 to \$16 per square foot range for a straight, long-term lease. Assuming a 75,000 square foot building, this would equate to an annual lease rate of \$900,000 to \$1.2M per year. Lease-to-own rates tend to run \$2-\$3 more per square foot.

P3 Leases offer the following benefits over traditional funding methods:

- Require little to no up front cash. However, lease terms could be developed to allow for cash in exchange for lower lease rates per square foot.
- Opportunities for outside grants or tax credits not available to public bodies using traditional funding methods. For example, Historic Tax Credits were used for the construction of Barbara Ingram School for the Arts. While Historic Tax Credits would not be applicable with new construction, other programs such as Federal EB5 Grants (money targeted for revitalization of downtowns) or New Market Tax Credits are paths worthy of investigation.
- While overall long-term costs using P3's tend to be slightly higher than traditional financing, if outside revenue sources are found (grants, tax credits, etc.) and local interest in revitalization efforts creates aggressive lease terms, there is the possibility that this method could be equal to or even cheaper than traditional funding methods.

Other options were also reviewed, however, they may not fit well for this project. These include:

- Special Assessment District – Special Assessment Districts provide the opportunity for government to add an additional tax to a designated area impacted by new infrastructure. Based on the struggling economy and the current political environment, this option did not seem viable to the task force.
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF's) – TIF's require the designation of an area impacted by new infrastructure and allow all (or a portion) of the revenue generated by increases in assessments to the debt service to pay off a bond. The City and County already have authority and policies in place to allow the creation of a TIF. The task force is concerned, however, by the potentially significant time it would take to create this type of model and the ability to raise sufficient revenue from the TIF based solely on the construction of one office building for the WCPS.

CONCLUSIONS

The task force believes that all four of the sites identified would be viable locations for a new Central Office complex. Sites L (South Potomac and West Antietam St.) and F/G (South Side of West Washington St.) were both considered to be optimum sites. Sites A (North Side of E. Washington St.) and J (South Side of E. Washington St.) were considered suitable locations but not as preferable as the other two mainly due to a combination of location, land acquisition, and level of blight removal.

Looking at the ranking scores and other aspects of the final four sites evaluated by the task force, Site L surfaced as the favorite scoring 39 points, with Site F/G coming in as a close second with 37 points. The other two locations on E. Washington Street (Sites A & J) scored 33 and 36 points respectively. While these sites would also be viable alternatives, the task force members felt that both would have less of an impact to the overall revitalization effort. We also note, that while

specific sites are mentioned in this study, the City of Hagerstown noted their openness to consider other sites in the downtown core should the BOE choose to pursue another location.

Perceived benefits to Washington County Public Schools moving their Central Offices to the downtown core include:

- New facility with the latest technology (with no renovation related compromises).
- Parking in adjacent or nearby parking decks, owned by the City provides protected parking from inclement weather and heat. In addition, it saves WCPS the cost of ongoing maintenance of parking lots (snow removal, striping, etc.) as occurs at the current location.
- Close Proximity to the City and County administrative offices that improves collaboration between staff and elected officials that work together on a regular basis.
- Expansion of the educational footprint of our downtown. New educational space could also be used to support BISFA or USMH if needed.
- Proximity to the new Regional Library.
- New building will provide increased energy efficiency resulting in over \$100,000 in annual cost savings.
- This area is optimal for the development of a Public Private Partnership which could have significant benefits for WCPS.
- Proximity to City amenities such as restaurants, shops, post office, bus transfer station, University Plaza, Maryland Theater, etc.
- Reputational benefits as a leader in downtown revitalization efforts. A vibrant thriving downtown plays a critical role in attracting high tech companies to our area providing high paying jobs for our graduates. If we are spending millions of dollars to provide a quality education to our children, we should compliment those efforts by working together to create a living environment attractive to a young progressive workforce in order to prevent “brain drain” in our community.
- A new location in a vibrant downtown will assist in attracting new teachers, administrators and other educational professionals.

Benefits to the Community include:

- Removal of Blight with construction of a state-of-the-art facility.
- Brings more people with disposable incomes to downtown (employees, visitors, etc.).
- Helps build investor confidence spurring revitalization in the area of the City with the highest concentration of incentives.
- Revitalization in a depressed area will promote a stronger tax base
- Location in downtown aligns with recommendations in the recently completed Economic Development Strategic Plan For Washington County, MD (*Section 4- Page 18*):
 - Guiding Principles: Create “an attractive, exciting, and vibrant Hagerstown City Center”.
 - “Secure commitments to locate administrative offices downtown”.

After completing the study, which included the input from a wide variety of skilled and trained professionals, the committee believes that the City has several locations that can be developed to meet the needs of the BOE. Initial reviews suggest that through the development of a Public Private Partnership and the financial support of the City, taxpayer dollars can be leveraged to build the facility the school system needs in a location that brings the highest benefit to both City and County residents. It is the responsibility of all parties – public and private, City and County, to take strategic measures to revitalize our downtown core. The benefits to all parties are significant and this is an opportunity that should be seriously considered.



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