



CHESTER UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

MAPLE AVENUE BUILDING FACT SHEET



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The Chester Union Free School District and the Chester community need to make a decision regarding the future of the Maple Avenue school building. To find the best solution, the District is fully committed to a process that:

- Explores all available options
- Provides transparency, and
- Involves the community

The District will utilize resources such as its administrative team, its Parent Advisory Panel, independent consultants and a newly created Maple Avenue Task Force that includes representatives from various entities in the town and village. In addition, the community will have the opportunity to give their thoughts in a community survey and open community forums.

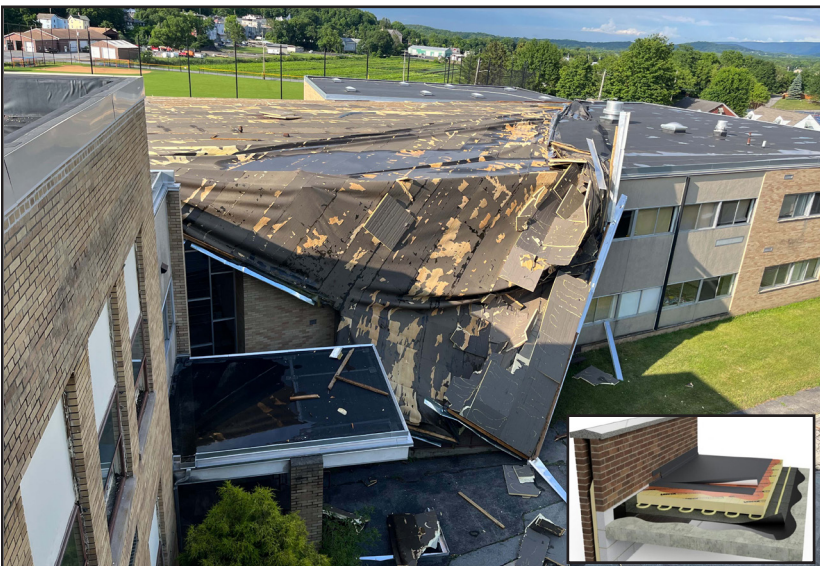


BUILDING STATUS

In 2020, after the stadium referendum failed, the building was “mothballed.” Gas, water and HVAC have all been decommissioned, leaving only electricity for lighting and an active fire alarm system. Roof leaks and broken windows have been repaired. However, buildings that are mothballed cannot remain in that state indefinitely, because deterioration will continue.

JULY 3 STORM DAMAGE

The damage to the roof from the July 3 storm was a result of high wind causing a failure of the materials and roofing system, not maintenance. The failure allowed large amounts of rain to enter the building, which is not climate controlled. Mold is now growing on the walls, ceilings, and other structural materials. The building also contains materials, such as layers of flooring and insulation, which include asbestos that have now become “friable,” meaning they can be easily crumbled or airborne. Both the mold and asbestos pose an immediate health risk and need to be abated.



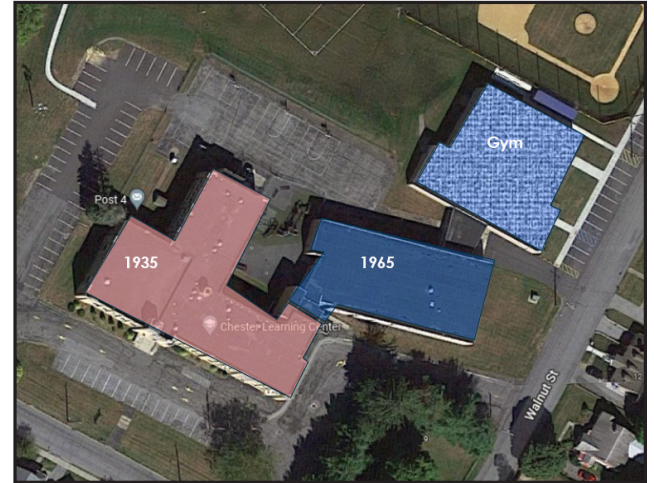
The District’s insurer, New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR), has approved and will pay for all immediate work (restoration of damage, replacing floors, walls and ceilings, etc...) and the cost of damaged furniture and materials stored in the building. NYSIR is waiting on a third-party review of the abatement estimates before proceeding with any work. Preliminary estimates of the damage are estimated to cost \$2.5 million to \$3 million.

BUILDING HISTORY

Built beginning in 1935 and opened in 1937, the Maple Avenue School building was a Works Progress Administration project with an art deco design. The yellow brick building has sculptural elements and a clock tower with a copper cupola bell tower and finial. In 1965, a wing and outbuilding gymnasium were constructed behind and connected to the original building.

In 2003, Maple Avenue graduated its last class. The building was then occupied by Orange-Ulster BOCES for 15 years. After the 2018-19 school year, BOCES left the building, citing the building's deteriorating conditions.

In 2020, a District proposal to borrow \$7.9 million to level the building and construct a field house and multi-sport athletic field on the site was soundly defeated by voters. The building was then closed for general use and the gym was only opened for occasional use by sports teams up through the 2022-23 school year.



FAQ

When will the District make a decision on the building?

The District wants to engage and gather input from the community in a thorough review of the Maple Avenue building before making a decision, so this process is estimated to take approximately four or five months to complete.

Why doesn't the District make a decision now on Maple Avenue?

The District respects the voices of the Chester community and honors the history and tradition of the Maple Avenue building, so we are creating this process for a decision. Although we will not be able to make a decision that will please everyone, we are hoping this process will include all voices for the best decision for our community and our students.

Has the District already predetermined what it would like to do with the building?

No. The District has made no decision, either officially or unofficially, on the building. This process will be truly open and many facts need to be gathered and require the District's voters to authorize any plan.

Will the District make its decision based on what the majority of the community would like?

The District and its Board of Education will make a decision that is in the best interests of its students, the District and the community after performing a thorough review, which will include community input. Gaining a full understanding from the community will be a consideration.

How can I be involved in the decision-making process?

The District has its existing Parent Advisory Panel, which is made up of approximately 35 parents in all grades in the District, and has begun the process of inviting people to join its Maple Avenue Task Force. The task force will be composed of approximately 15-20 members of our community with various voices and opinions. In addition, community members will have the opportunity to contribute through a community survey and open community forum. The District welcomes differing opinions in the hopes of coming together to decide what is best for the community, the school district, and its students.

Will costs be weighed when making a decision?

Part of that process will involve considering the costs to the taxpayers and the historical significance of the building for the residents of Chester. There are obviously costs involved that need to be explored during this process and the District is planning to gather information regarding those costs so the community can be better informed.

How can I learn more?

The District will continue to update the community on this process through various updates on its website and a dedicated website page, www.chesterufsd.org/mapleavenue. The District will also provide various updates during school board meetings.

Was the roof's failure a result of a lack of maintenance to the building?

No. The roof damage was determined to be from high winds causing a failure of the roofing system. The wind caused the polystyrene insulation to pull away from the tectum decking. The failure of the roof also allowed large amounts of rain from the storm to enter the building.

When was the building last occupied?

The building was last occupied by Orange-Ulster BOCES during the 2018-19 school year.

Has the District tried to find a buyer so the building may be repurposed?

The District has had a few parties interested in buying the building. The most recent was the Chester Public Library, which performed a Building Conditions Survey and ultimately decided it was too costly to refurbish.

Was the library's Building Conditions Survey specific to building a school?

No, the Building Conditions Survey performed for the library was drafted for repurposing the building into a library.

Will I have the opportunity to vote on the plan the District decides on?

Yes, the District will be putting a plan before voters to ultimately approve or deny.