

GROTON HEIGHTS SCHOOL RE-USE SURVEY RESULTS.

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A survey of Groton, Connecticut, residents was administered between in January and February, 2011, to determine public opinion about the re-use of the Groton Heights School building and property. The survey was available on-line using SurveyMonkey.com® and on paper. About 24% of respondents completed the paper survey, the rest on computer.

Respondents were asked to complete the survey only one time. Multiple entries from a single ISP address were permitted, to accommodate more than one member of the same household, or to permit entry from a central computer facility (e.g., public library). Of surveys entered on-line, there were seven instances of more than one entry per web address (2-3 entries, and two sites with 6-7 entries). There was no evidence of consistency of multiple entries to suggest that the survey was “hacked” or results compromised.

Tables 1-5 give results of Questions 1-5 of the survey, both numbers of respondents and overall percents. The paper survey was mailed to households in the immediate vicinity of Groton Heights School. Fewer than 10% of respondents had their primary residence outside the Town of Groton, and several of those indicated in Comments that they own property and pay taxes in the Town. A large majority of respondents felt the building should be retained, not demolished.

Questions 4 and 5 asked respondents to score the possible choices, from First to Last, as to who should own and maintain the property, and what use would be best suited to it. Complete results are shown in Tables 4 and 5. In Tables 6 and 7, numbers of respondents selecting the indicated choice first or second on each of the questions are given. The percentages sum to 100% for each column. For example, 37.7% of respondents who live in the Groton Heights School neighborhood chose Education as their first or second choice for use of the property, an opinion that was similar (35.0%) for all Groton resident respondents (Table 6). The order of choices of usage are Education > Recreation > Residential Condominiums > Professional Offices > Residential Lots > Religious or Church Use. Similar information on choices on ownership are given in Table 7.

Of the 143 respondents, 57 offered written comments to questions of ownership, usage, or in general. Full text of comments are presented (Table 9), sorted according to the first choices of respondents, as coded in Table 8. Comments from each respondent are presented within the same row of the table, for the sake of interpretability.

Table 1.

Q1. Was a copy of this survey mailed to your home?	Number	Prevalence
	count	%
No	92	65.2
Yes	49	34.8
	answered question	141
	skipped question	2

Table 2.

Q2. Where is your primary residence?	Number	Prevalence
	count	%
Groton Heights School neighborhood (within a few blocks)	65	46.1
Elsewhere in City of Groton	39	27.7
Elsewhere in Town of Groton	25	17.7
NOT in the Town of Groton	12	8.5
	answered question	141
	skipped question	2

Table 3.

Q3. Do you want the existing building to stay?	Number	Prevalence
	count	%
Yes	115	81.6
No	10	7.1
No Opinion	16	11.3
	answered question	141
	skipped question	2

Table 4-1.

Q4. Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	Choice Number (counts)						Total Responses
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Skipped	
	count	count	count	count	count	count	count
Private Owner	40	8	10	3	16	17	94
State of Connecticut	9	15	21	17	15	13	90
City or Town of Groton	67	25	9	8	2	6	117
Non-Profit Organization	20	35	22	11	5	6	99
Church or Religious Organization	2	8	17	20	8	20	75
No Opinion	2	6	2	4	9	22	45
Comments							18
Total Responses	140	97	81	63	55	84	
					answered question		135
					skipped question		8

Table 4-2.

Q4. Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	Choice Number (percent of column)					
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Skipped
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Private Owner	28.6	8.2	12.3	4.8	29.1	20.2
State of Connecticut	6.4	15.5	25.9	27.0	27.3	15.5
City or Town of Groton	47.9	25.8	11.1	12.7	3.6	7.1
Non-Profit Organization	14.3	36.1	27.2	17.5	9.1	7.1
Church or Religious Organization	1.4	8.2	21.0	31.7	14.5	23.8
No Opinion	1.4	6.2	2.5	6.3	16.4	26.2

Table 5-1.

Q5. What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	Choice Number (counts)							Total Responses
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Last	
	counts	counts	counts	counts	counts	counts	counts	counts
Government Use	1	5	21	21	11	11	8	78
Educational Use	47	39	6	6	5	4	2	109
Recreational Use	38	34	19	9	6	4	4	114
Church/Religious Use	0	4	15	14	14	13	10	70
Professional Offices	12	13	19	14	13	7	5	83
Residential Condominiums	24	7	7	6	6	11	14	75
Residential Single Family Lots	5	9	5	3	6	11	28	67
Comments								25
Total Responses	127	111	92	73	61	61	71	
						answered question		132
						skipped question		11

Table 5-2.

Q5. What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	Choice Number (percent of column)						
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Last
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Government Use	0.8	4.5	22.8	28.8	18.0	18.0	11.3
Educational Use	37.0	35.1	6.5	8.2	8.2	6.6	2.8
Recreational Use	29.9	30.6	20.7	12.3	9.8	6.6	5.6
Church/Religious Use	0.0	3.6	16.3	19.2	23.0	21.3	14.1
Professional Offices	9.4	11.7	20.7	19.2	21.3	11.5	7.0
Residential Condominiums	18.9	6.3	7.6	8.2	9.8	18.0	19.7
Residential Single Family Lots	3.9	8.1	5.4	4.1	9.8	18.0	39.4

Table 6. First or Second Choice of Use

Use	Primary Residence of Respondent				
	School N'hood	City of Groton	Town of Groton	All of Groton	Outside Groton
Education	40 37.7%	21 30.9%	14 35.0%	75 35.0%	9 81.8%
Recreation	32 30.2%	22 32.4%	11 27.5%	65 30.4%	5 45.5%
Residential Condos	13 12.3%	13 19.1%	4 10.0%	30 14.0%	1 9.1%
Prof. Offices	10 9.4%	7 10.3%	5 12.5%	22 10.3%	3 27.3%
Residential Lots	7 6.6%	3 4.4%	4 10.0%	14 6.5%	0 0.0%
Government	4 3.8%	0 0.0%	2 5.0%	6 2.8%	0 0.0%
Religious	0 0.0%	2 2.9%	0 0.0%	2 0.9%	2 18.2%

Table 7. First or Second Choice of Ownership

Preferred Owner	Primary Residence of Respondent				
	School N'hood	City of Groton	Town of Groton	All of Groton	Outside Groton
City or Town of Groton	44 39.3%	30 41.7%	9 24.3%	83 37.6%	8 40.0%
Non-Profit Organization	21 18.8%	19 26.4%	10 27.0%	50 22.6%	4 20.0%
Private Owner	21 18.8%	15 20.8%	9 24.3%	45 20.4%	2 10.0%
State of Connecticut	16 14.3%	1 1.4%	4 10.8%	21 9.5%	3 15.0%
Church or Religious Org.	10 8.9%	7 9.7%	5 13.5%	22 10.0%	3 15.0%

Table 8. Codes for Sorting Comments

Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	Code for Table 9
Private Owner	1
State of Connecticut	2
City or Town of Groton	3
Non-Profit Organization	4
Church or Religious Organization	5
What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	
Government Use	1
Educational Use	2
Recreational Use	3
Church/Religious Use	4
Professional Offices	5
Residential Condominiums	6
Residential Single Family Lots	7
Other	8

Table 9. Comments

First Choices		Comments on Ownership	Comments on Uses	Other Comments
Owner	Uses	Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	
1	2	I know that Project Learn is interested and that would be a good solution.		I attended Groton Heights and love the historic building, but it will take a lot to maintain/upkeep and I think that Project Learn would be the most likely fit.
1	2			Florida resident with residences on Smith St. and Park Ave since 1952. 3 generations of Rabataille's attended GHS, hate to see demolished. Part-time resident, taxpayer.
1	6	mixed use, e.g. Subvets and offices		First priority should be to increase tax revenue
1	6	sell to private owner. residential property only.	1 or 2 could be swapped. looking for best plan. Residential only. NO LOW INCOME HOUSING	Quiet historic residential neighborhood and we want to keep it that way. Resident taxpayers deserve this.
1	6	revenue generating owner is first choice- City or Town don't need to be landlords.		Town should transfer ownership and limit impact to nearby residents and education budget
1	6	Whoever owns it must maintain it. Neither town or city should be a landlord.	small hotel/ B&B, any thing that will put it on the tax roll.	
1	6	Make it a tax paying property.	Government use by state as a park.	
1	8	sell it	anything except the Government!!!	Stop closing schools so you can build new ones! Stop spending! Lower taxes!! NO gov run preschools
1	6		I would rather see the building demolished before it is used by town, city or state govt.	Sell it or give it away, if necessary, to any developer that will use it to increase tax base
1	6		Only owner-occupied upscale condos or building lots. No low-income housing or public buildings. Increase tax base, vested interest in property. No B&GC.	
1	6			Does not want "disturbed" children in neighborhood.
1	6			it should be used in some manner that will generate tax income
2	1		Support for Fort Griswold or Groton history.	
2	2	State could take ownership, extend Ft. Griswold, historic/educational facility.	A welcome area to local historic features; museum for artifacts & text; coordinate local historical societies; advanced research; gymnasium	Auditorium for performances, expositions, lectures, workshops; Lawn area for picnics, art sales; add elevator for handicap access. School & grounds irreplaceable.
2	2			Complete control & maintained other town & city.
2	2			Would make a good visitors center for Fort Griswold

Table 9. Comments, continued

First Choices		Comments on Ownership	Comments on Uses	Other Comments
Owner	Uses	Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	
2	3	BULIDING SHOULD BE USED FOR THE CHILDREN IN THS COMMUNITY!		
2	3			Parking and picnic area for Fort Griswold.
2	3			The GH school should absolutely NOT be used for private or religious purposes. That space is a prime location for a much needed social/educational space (in Groton City. It is very important that it not be restricted by religion, or private ownership. We have a vibrant neighborhood in this area and the Groton Heights school should be used for the greater good.
2	8		Complete removal and restore landscape.	
3	2	Town Probate Court / Children's Rec Center / Town Social Center / Rent Rooms to Non-Profits		Building should be utilized by the City or Town of Groton only.
3	2		Support Bill family request to use property only for educational purposes.	1. place for youth (e.g. YMCA), 2. training place for police, firefighters, EMTs, 3. museum, extend Bill Lib. or Ft. Griswold.
3	2		Dedicate it to the arts/music	It would be a shame to tear down the original structure
3	2		Local history visitor center, research facility; accommodate local organizations.	Maintain historic building, ensure maintenance. Best use community-oriented, next best condos, successful elsewhere. Demolishing or ignoring historic and communal significance = tragic loss, waste.
3	2			Building stays. NOT used as any sort of residential property. Children's museum would be nice--.
3	2			Center for teens. City needs a place for them to enjoy.
3	2			Do not favor use by non-profits unless there is a lot of money to restore and maintain the building. Use by Project LEARN would be ideal.
3	2			I used to work in the building when it was Groton Heights School. It is a beautiful building and it would be a shame to see it get sold to a private buyer who would have the rights to do what they wish with it. It is a historical building, a part of the neighborhood, and a part of the town of Groton. I would love to see it be put to good use - in a way that would allow the townspeople to enjoy it.
3	2			repeat entry of Florida, Rabataille

Table 9. Comments, continued

First Choices		Comments on Ownership	Comments on Uses	Other Comments
Owner	Uses	Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	
3	2			The building appears to be sound, and should be reused!
3	2			The Groton Heights School and the existing building have been an important part of the Groton community for over a century. It holds a special place in the hearts of many residents. To demolish the building and to sell the property for profit would demonstrate that our history and our roots are unimportant. A building of that era is irreplaceable and should be restored and maintained properly. It should be used in a way that benefits the greater good of the Groton community as the building was intended when it was initially constructed.
3	2			This is a beautiful, well-built building. Anything built now would not be as good. We should do everything we can to preserve it.
3	2			This is a vital piece of property sandwiched between two historical landmarks. Groton should make all efforts to keep this property and blend its use with the two neighboring properties.
3	3	Community Center / Boys & Girls Club	Community Center / Boys & Girls Club	Community Center / Boys & Girls Club
3	3	Youth or Health Community Center	Youth or Health Community Health Center	
3	3		why can't we develop it into a building for community lessons & fitness?	no way we need more condominiums
3	3		Tear down and extend park.	
3	3		I would want school to used for community purposes only	
3	3			Consider community rec dept. with community activities like Friday night dances, events for all ages.
3	3			Fenced dog park nice to install in the playground area.
3	3			The city of Groton needs some type of place where children can go and do things. Sacred Heart School needs gym time for basketball and if there was a recreational place that offered to rent the basketball court this would be very helpful. Also my kids need a place to go to have fun as we are not military and don't have a place that the kids can go like a recreational center
3	3			The worst use would be condominiums, residential single family homes, or any option that would require demolishing the building and building something else. Groton Heights is quickly losing its identity/charm of old houses with character.

Table 9. Comments, continued

First Choices		Comments on Ownership	Comments on Uses	Other Comments
Owner	Uses	Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	
3	3			Would be nice to use it for Groton City Parks& Rec. for use as an all day recreation center for adults as well as children.
3	5	Conference Rooms for public use		
3	7		A homeless shelter for families would be a good item to have in the city.	
3	8		Board of Education Offices	move Board of Ed and sell Flanders Rd property
3	8		Any use that retains the look and feel of the building and historic value to the City of Groton	
4	2		Non Profit offices? But mostly school or city recreation.	This building should be saved as it would be a waste to raze it. DO NOT WANT residential lots.
4	2		community arts/after school program; music, fine art, theatre, etc.	
4	2			As a proud graduate of Groton Heights, class of 1964, I would like to see it used again as an after school place or even as a senior center. I did not agree with the closing of the school as Groton effectively destroyed an icon. If the school is kept for educational use, please consider naming the rooms after former GH teachers such as Mr. John "Jack" Thompson and Mrs. Mary Wilson. Connecting the use of the building to the Bill library would be great, too. Please keep the neighbors and former grads informed. Have you thought about forming an alumni association that could help fundraise for the building? Are any of you GH grads? Only a grad could know how much that school meant to those of us who attended the school.
4	3			Boys and Girls club or YMCA type of center
4	6	LEARN being the non-profit or sell it and turn it into beautiful apartments or condos and make some money off of it and tax dollars as well.		Beautiful building, historic, save it and use it for the uses previously stated. We have too many unused schools in town. Those used by Park and Rec are dirty and unsightly and I do not think we need more of that. .Land around these unused buildings could be turned into garden plots like over by human services and either raised for private use or non-profit groups could raise and donate/use the produce.
4	8	Boys and Girls Club	Youth activities	
7	2	Magnet or private school		Find use for land in front of building. Provide land to Bill Memorial Library

Table 9. Comments, continued

First Choices		Comments on Ownership	Comments on Uses	Other Comments
Owner	Uses	Who do you think should own and maintain the property?	What uses do you think would be best suited to the property?	
7	2			I have always believed that Mr. Bill wanted to leave the property for EDUCATION!! I hope lawyers won't be deceitful and work it so that it is used for something else. Shame on the board for closing it in the first place.
7	8	How about an adult education center	an adult education center	How about "The City of Groton, Adult Education Center"
7	8	1. Friends of Fort Griswold	1. Museum for excess artifacts of Fort Griswold and other Groton related historical items	I thought the Bill family stipulated the building couldn't be torn down or used for commercial purposes!!!!