



## Business, Finance and Planning

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TO: School Committee

FROM: Liam Hurley, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Financial & Administrative Officer  
Ayesha Farag, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education  
Katy Hogue, Director of Data Analysis and Enrollment Planning

DATE: February 6, 2023

RE: Buffer Zone Update

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### Overview

Every year, the district reviews current and projected enrollment as documented in the Enrollment Analysis Report and determines if any adjustments should be made to buffer zones for the upcoming school year. This determination is made based on an analysis of projected enrollment combined with an analysis of space needs within schools for Student Services and other programming needs. Newton has successfully utilized buffer zones in the past to help balance enrollment across the district and between specific schools when there have been concerns with building capacity and class sizes. For buffer zones, key points include the following:

- Residents residing within a buffer zone are districted to more than one school
- New buffer zones only apply to students who are new to the Newton Public Schools
- New students with siblings already in the Newton Public Schools follow their siblings
- Once enrolled in a school, students follow their school of enrollment's feeder patterns for secondary school(s)

### Current considerations

For FY24 and the remaining years of the enrollment projection, Cabot has projected enrollment and space pressures that can be addressed by buffer zones. Cabot's projected enrollment next year results in average class sizes that range from 19.7 in kindergarten to 24 in grade five, with a total of 21 sections across all six grade levels. There is limited flexibility to increase the number of sections in any given grade level at Cabot, because two of the twenty-four classrooms at Cabot are utilized for a districtwide program. In addition, given the positive five-year average cohort survival ratios for all grade levels at Cabot (average of 1.07 across all grade levels) and the particularly high cohort survival ratios from kindergarten to grade 1 and grade 1 to grade 2 (average of 1.12), it is important to manage the size of the incoming kindergarten class to ensure that the number of sections for this cohort does not exceed four over the six years that this cohort is in elementary school. Cabot's existing buffer zones include a zone with Peirce, a small zone with Underwood, and a small zone with Horace Mann (see Map 1 for the current Cabot school district with buffer zones).

### Buffer zone recommendations

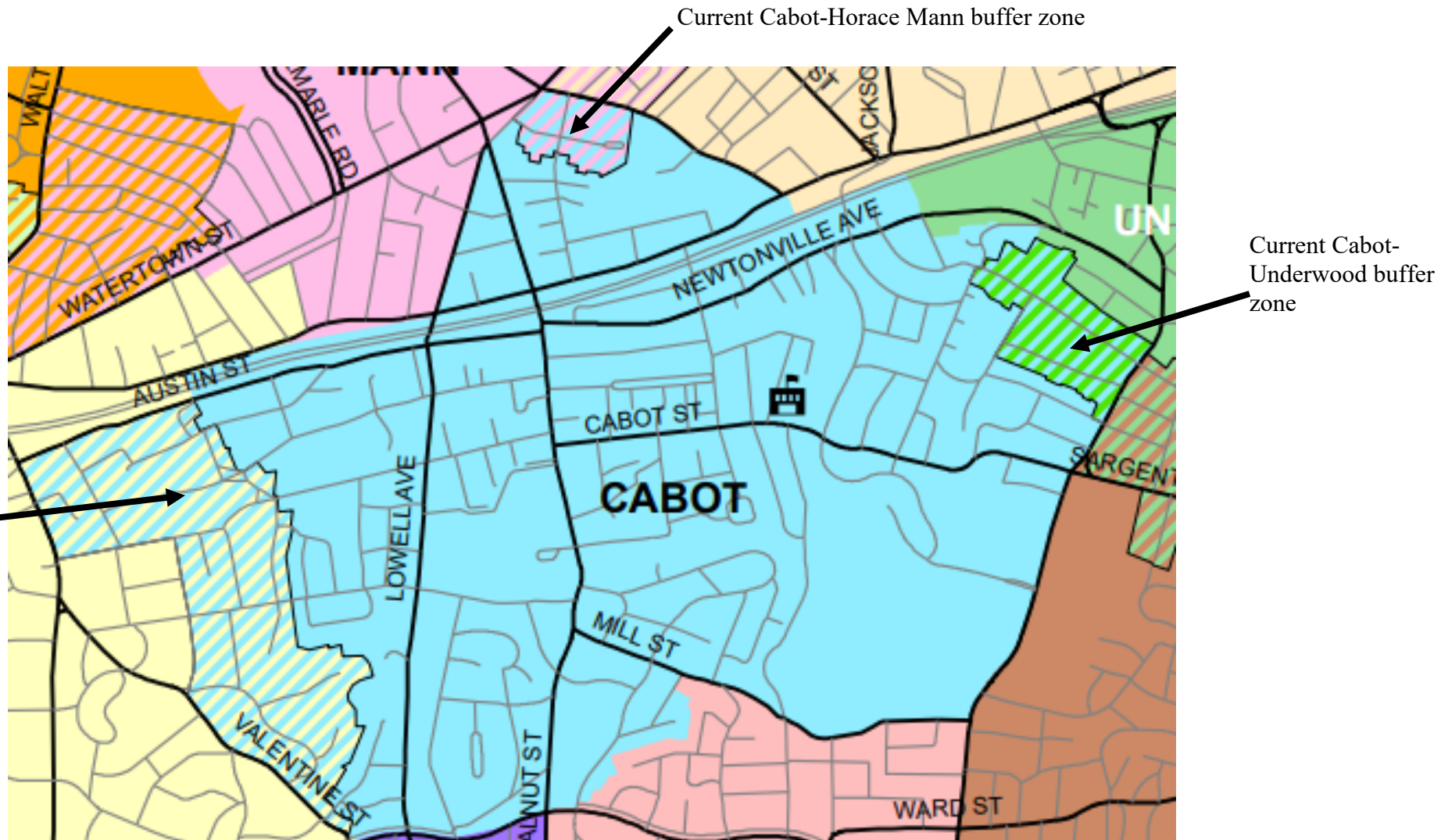
To provide flexibility for Cabot, we recommend expanding the current buffer zone with Horace Mann to include all of the Cabot district above the Mass Pike (see Map 2 for the recommended buffer zone). The current Cabot-Horace Mann buffer zone is a small area bounded by Lowell Avenue (numbers 2-26), Crafts Street, and Prescott Street (it also includes some homes on Central Avenue; please see Map 1). The expanded buffer zone would include the current buffer zone and extend it to include Crafts Street (southern side of the street only) to the Mass Pike, to Lowell Avenue (please see Map 2). The existing Cabot-Horace Mann buffer zone has had an

average of 7 elementary school students over the past 5 years; 8 elementary school students reside in the existing buffer zone this school year. The new portion of the expanded buffer zone has a total of 49 elementary school students this school year; 37 of these students attend Cabot (some students attend elementary schools outside of their district because of districtwide programming, out-of-assigned district requests, or continuation in placement requests; in addition, this area was districted to Horace Mann prior to fall 2019). This results in an average of 6 students per year in the new portion of the expanded buffer zone, which would provide flexibility to shift approximately 6 incoming students from Cabot to Horace Mann next school year if necessary. Horace Mann has the capacity to enroll these students in all grade levels, except for grade 4. Typically, the majority of incoming students are in kindergarten and grade 1. Horace Mann's projected kindergarten has an average class size of 17.7 (projected maximum of 18) and the projected first grade has an average class size of 16.7 students (projected maximum of 17). This expansion would not result in any changes to transportation; students residing in the new portion of the expanded buffer zone assigned to Horace Mann could walk to Horace Mann or utilize the existing Horace Mann bus stop at Turner Street and Central Avenue.

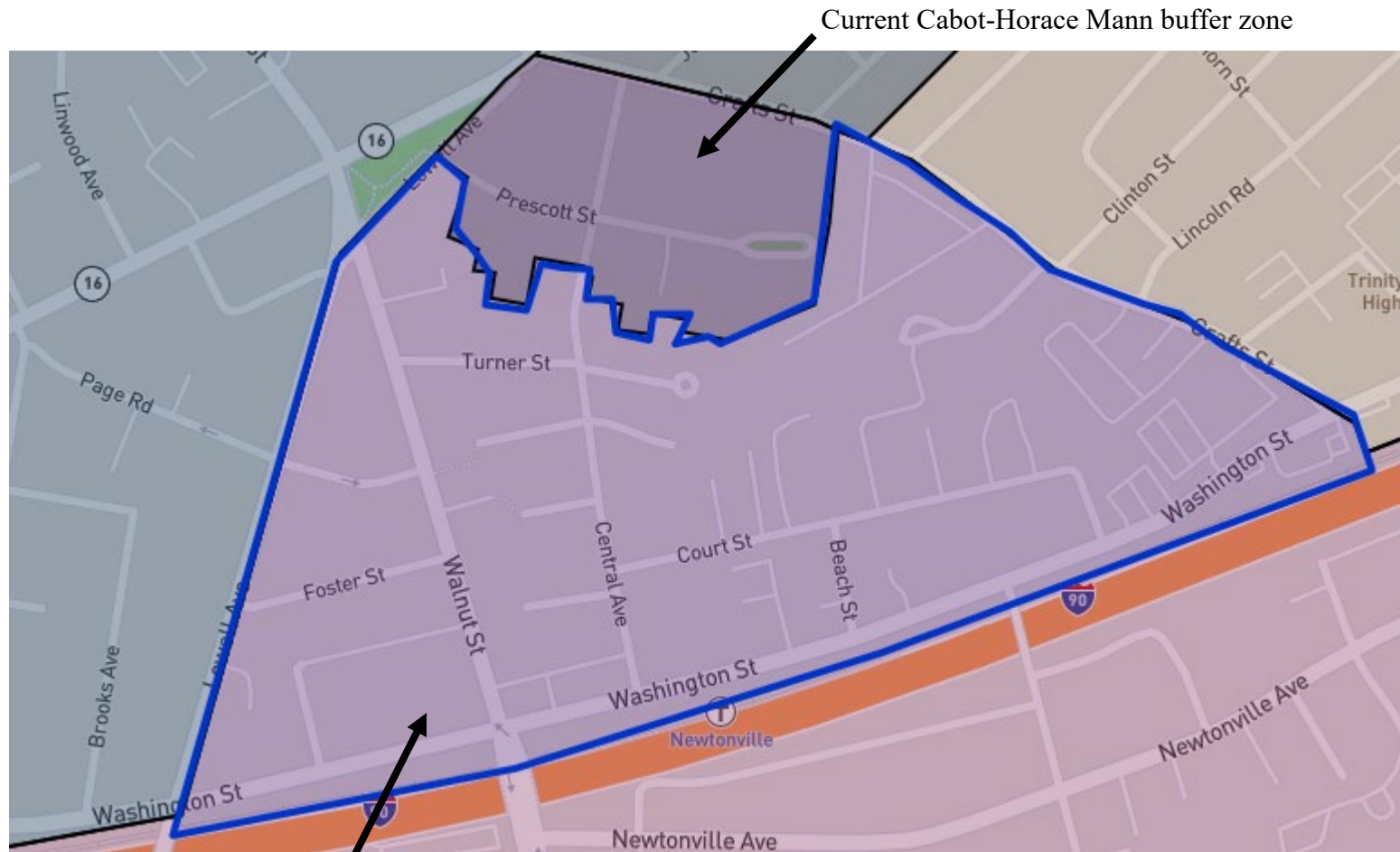
While we recognize that Cabot has already had a change to its middle school feeder pattern this year with the reinstatement of the Cabot split, the recommendation for this expanded buffer zone in the Cabot district will not impact existing Cabot families. It will only apply to students new to the district who do not have siblings in the Newton Public Schools. Students who reside in this expanded buffer zone will feed to Day Middle School, regardless of enrollment at Cabot or Horace Mann, as this portion of the Cabot district feeds to Day.

We look forward to discussing this recommendation with you on February 6<sup>th</sup>. We are requesting a vote on this recommendation on March 1<sup>st</sup> so that we can notify incoming kindergarten families of this expanded buffer zone as soon as possible.

Map 1: Cabot district



**Map 2: Recommended expansion of the Cabot-Horace Mann buffer zone (bounded in blue)**



Current Cabot-Horace Mann buffer zone

Recommended expansion of the Cabot-Horace Mann buffer zone