

Town breaks ground on new Wellesley High School

The town of Wellesley officially broke ground on its \$130-million high school Tuesday morning, pledging to complete the project by the fall of 2012 and continue what one official called the town's "strong commitment" to education.

At an 8 am event outside the current school, representatives from the school committee, the state's school building authority and the construction company donned hard hats and grabbed a shovel for the ceremonious ground breaking. Nearby, construction equipment stood ready to continue the real work of preparing the site.

"We look on this day with great pride as it is another milestone in this long journey," said Katherine Babson, chair of the Wellesley School Building Committee.

Planning for the project began in 2002, recalled school committee member Suzanne Littlefield.

The project continued, even as the economy worsened. In October, the Massachusetts School Building Authority approved its share. In December, voters in Wellesley approved an \$86.6-million debt exclusion, to help pay for the project.

It is one of several school projects underway or in planning stages, including the \$195-million Newton North High School project, the \$68-million Norwood High project, and the \$125-million Putnam Vocational Technical High School project in Springfield.

Bella Wong, the Wellesley High superintendent, noted that the project is one of the most exciting things to occur in the careers of many of the educators and officials gathered at the event.

"I can hardly believe the moment is finally here," she said. "We're absolutely thrilled."

The biggest impact to students and faculty will be the lack of parking. The school is encouraging bus use. She said other steps have been taken to minimize the disruption for students.

Under an agreement with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Wellesley Historical Commission, the School Building Committee must follow specific guidelines to document the current, 1938 high school. There will be a room off of the library known as the "1938 room," which will house artifacts from the 1938 building.