

Public Comment Analysis

Date: November 18, 2015

Topic: The Proposed Re-Siting of Satellite West Middle School (13K313) to New Building K611 in the 2016-2017 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: November 19, 2015

Summary of Proposal

On October 2, 2015, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) describing a proposal to re-site Satellite West Middle School (13K313, “Satellite West”) to new building K611 (“K611”), located at 19 Dock Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, in the 2016-2017 school year. Satellite West is an existing middle school currently serving students in sixth through eighth grade in building K307 (“K307”), located at 209 York Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, where it is co-located with P.S. 307 Daniel Hale Williams (13K307, “P.S. 307”), a zoned elementary school serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade and offering a pre-kindergarten program. Building K611 is located just 0.7 miles from building K307. If this proposal is approved, Satellite West will serve the entirety of its students in K611 beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. Building K611 will also house a District 13 Pre-Kindergarten Center (“Pre-K Center”), expected to offer 72 full-day seats, which is also expected to open in September 2016. A “re-siting” means that part or all of a school will be located in a different building than the building in which the school is currently located. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and cafeterias.

This proposal is intended to support Satellite West by re-siting the school to a new building that offers academic facilities designed for middle school use and that provides room for Satellite West to grow. Building K611 offers Satellite West, and by extension, the broader District 13 community, a number of new middle school amenities that are currently not available in K307, including, but not limited to, a science lab, science demo room, and a uniquely designed music suite with a classroom, practice cubicles, and music storeroom. Further, Satellite West is currently in the process of undergoing a school re-design that is expected to shift the academic programming and instructional focus of the school, which is anticipated to increase interest in and demand for the school beyond its current enrollment. This re-design process is being led by the District 13 Community Superintendent (“the District 13 Superintendent”) and the Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships (“OSDCP”), and involves the Satellite West School Leadership Team (“SLT”), Community Education Council 13 (“CEC 13”), and the broader District 13 community.

If this proposal is approved, in 2016-2017, when Satellite West and the Pre-K Center first begin serving students in K611, there will be approximately 202-232 students in the building, yielding a projected building utilization rate of 50%-57%. In 2018-2019, when Satellite West’s enrollment is at full scale, there will be approximately 357-387 students in the building served by Satellite West and the Pre-K Center, yielding a projected utilization rate of 88%-96%.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS, which can be accessed here:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2015-2016/November2015SchoolProposals>

Copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of Satellite West and P.S. 307.

Summary of Comments Received

Public engagement was conducted by the DOE in the course of creating this proposal, which included:

- Conducting a meeting with the District 13 Superintendent, Satellite West principal, and Satellite West SLT members on September 16, 2015 to discuss the proposal, respond to questions from the Satellite West community, and gather feedback on the proposal.
- An optional community meeting that was offered and held on October 13, 2015 at K307, which was open to the public and included representatives from the DOE to discuss the proposal and to address comments, questions, and feedback from the school community and the broader District 13 community. Approximately 40 people attended this meeting, including members of the CEC 13, District 13 Superintendent Barbara Freeman, Satellite West staff, and a representative on behalf of New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery.
- An initial school working group meeting that was led by the District 13 Superintendent on Tuesday, October 27, which focused on finalizing the working group comprised of students, teachers at Satellite West, Satellite West SLT members, members of the District 13 broader community, and CEC 13 members, and which discussed standards and goals for the working group as it plans to continue meeting to set the vision and focus for the re-designed middle school. The working group also finalized four additional district forums that are planned on different dates in November in locations dispersed across District 13 to ensure that members of the district, regardless of where they live, have a forum nearby that they can attend and share their input on the vision and focus for the re-designed middle school.

The DOE also held a Joint Public Hearing regarding this proposal at K307 on November 2, 2015. At that meeting, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 35 members of the public attended the hearing. There were nine (9) speakers. Individuals present at the meeting included: District 13 Superintendent and Chancellor's Designee, Barbara Freeman; CEC 13 President, David Goldsmith; CEC 13 2nd Vice President and P.S. 307 SLT member Benjamin Greene; CEC 13 members Maggie Spillane and Rob Underwood; Satellite West Principal Dr. Melissa Vaughan; Satellite West SLT member Holly Babin; P.S. 307 Principal Stephanie Carroll; and Jonathan Geis, David Harrington, Tyeshia Smith, Brandon Bloomfield, and Greg Whitten from the DOE. Representatives from the offices of New York State Assembly Member Walter Mosley, New York State Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon, New York State Senator Daniel Squadron, and New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery were present as well.

The following comments and remarks were made at the Joint Public Hearing on November 2, 2015:

1. CEC 13 president, David Goldsmith, commented as follows:
 - a. CEC 13 and the District 13 Superintendent are working across the district to improve middle school quality. There is a re-design process in place now that has begun and will be involving forums seeking input from the community. The CEC 13 needs help with the re-design and wants community involvement.
 - b. Members of CEC 13 are here to listen and learn with the other district stakeholders.
 - c. There is a history of district planning that is not informed by the community. CEC 13 and the District 13 Superintendent are trying to change norms in District 13. This proposal represents a chance to inform the policymakers.
2. CEC 13 2nd Vice President and P.S. 307 SLT member, Benjamin Greene, commented as follows:
 - a. He is looking forward to the re-design process, as this will be a historic opportunity for working with the District 13 community to seek the design and focus of a new middle school option.
 - b. He wants to make sure that this is a middle school for all students, not just those that are top performing academically.
 - c. He is looking forward to Satellite West being located in a building that is not co-located and that is designed for middle school use, as Satellite West has been sharing a building with P.S. 307 in an elementary-school designed building for far too long.
3. P.S. 307 principal, Stephanie Carroll, commented that she has come to know Satellite West Principal Melissa Vaughan over the last few months, and she has much faith in the re-design process of Satellite West and believes in the success of the newly designed middle school.
4. Satellite West SLT member, Holly Babin, commented that she is an SLT member at Satellite West and is the special education teacher for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade in the school and behalf of the SLT, she looks forward to the re-design to help serve the students of the school in the best way possible.

5. Satellite West principal, Melissa Vaughan, commented as follows:
 - a. She is excited that Satellite West is being given the opportunity to expand and grow in a building designed for middle school use and in which it will stand alone.
 - b. The Satellite West community is looking forward to the school design and the community input that will help to create a successful middle school for all students in the district.
 - c. The first working group session was a great kickoff conversation with various individuals around District 13, and she's excited to put in the hard work with others to make the school re-design great.
6. Evette Lopez, Representative for State Assembly Member Walter Mosley, commented as follows:
 - a. Assembly Member Mosley understands that this proposal is intended to support Satellite West by re-siting the school to a new building designed particularly for middle school use and that provides Satellite West room to grow.
 - b. Assembly Member Mosley also understands that this re-siting is in response to a growing student population and the subsequent rezoning proposal of P.S. 307 and P.S. 8. Assembly Member Mosley stated that he worked with the DOE to increase community involvement and delay the originally-planned vote on that proposal, and he asks the community to come together and be involved in the conversations pertaining to the rezoning to help make the school great.
 - c. The re-siting of Satellite West is part of the complex solution to school overcrowding, but the DOE is not involving parents enough in the conversation.
 - d. Assembly Member Mosley asks the DOE to consider adequate middle school facility space not only in not only Downtown Brooklyn, but also in Prospect Heights and Brooklyn Heights.
7. CEC 13 representative, Maggie Spillane, commented as follows:
 - a. She is disappointed with this proposal, as building K611 was promised to be a new middle school, and she feels that it should continue to be planned as a new middle school.
 - b. She is not opposed to re-siting Satellite West out of K307.
 - c. She feels that the re-design plan does not make sense and is an experiment by the DOE. She feels that the re-design process is flawed in that it is lacking clear benchmarks and accountability standards for the new school, and in that the proposal does not expand directly on what the re-design process will look like, or whether the current working team is the appropriate team.
 - d. She feels that the proposal should include plans for helping the new school obtain funding grants, or equal funding to what the funding of a new school would be.
 - e. This re-design process timeline is not adequate and is not as long of a timeline as other DOE re-design processes, such as Renewal Schools.
8. CEC 13 representative, Rob Underwood, commented as follows:
 - a. The re-siting provides opportunity for the re-designed school to work with partnerships that were began by the MS One Brooklyn advocacy group, which include partnerships with organizations that specialize in the arts, technology, and other areas.
 - b. He hopes that the four district-wide middle school workshops will give opportunity to reflect on the different models of middle schools in the district, as the current K-8 model that some schools have is not working.
 - c. He is disappointed that this is not a new middle school, as he claims that a new middle school was promised in this space.
 - d. He requests that the DOE consider altering the admissions methods for the middle school portions of P.S./M.S. 8 so that the school is more inclusive of either the entire district, or at the very least families that may be zoned out of P.S. 8 as a result of a re-zoning proposal that proposes to reduce the size of the P.S. 8 zone.
9. One commenter commented as follows:
 - a. He appreciates the opportunity to be involved in the Joint Public Hearing process. He feels that it is important for any district planning process to involve the entire community.
 - b. He feels that proposals such as the proposed re-zoning of P.S. 8 are only short-term solutions to fix the district's problems.

Summary of Issues Raised in Written and/or Oral Comments Submitted to the DOE

The DOE received zero (0) voicemails through the dedicated phone number for this proposal.

The DOE received twenty-nine (29) emails through the dedicated email address for this proposal.

The following comments were submitted through the dedicated email address.

10. Multiple comments stated support for the proposal.
11. Multiple comments stated support for the re-design process and the role of community involvement in this process.
12. Multiple comments stated that they will not apply for the re-designed school until it has a new mission statement.
13. Multiple comments stated that they would prefer K611 to offer a new middle school, rather than a re-designed middle school.
14. Multiple comments stated that they are concerned about the timeline of the re-design process as it relates to the middle school application period.
15. Multiple comments stated that they are concerned that the re-design timeline does not offer enough time to fully re-design the school.
16. Multiple comments were concerned about school performance at Satellite West and the school's designation on the New York State Education Department's "Persistently Dangerous Schools" list.
17. Multiple comments received related to the concurrent proposal involving the re-zoning of elementary schools P.S. 8 and P.S. 307.
18. Multiple comments offered suggestions for programs to be offered in the middle school at K611, including a STEM focus or a Harbor Middle School.
19. One commenter suggested that K611 be used as a K-8 school instead of a middle school.
20. One commenter suggested that K611 be used as an elementary school instead of a middle school.
21. One commenter suggested that this should be a district-wide middle school, but have admissions priority for Dumbo families.
22. One commenter opposed the location of a pre-kindergarten center at K611.
23. One commenter expressed concern about the increase in traffic as a result of K611's location.

The following comment was submitted directly to members of the PEP for consideration and was also submitted to the DOE for response.

24. Shirley McRae, Chairperson of Community Board No. 2, submitted the following written comment for response:
 - a. On January 14, 2009, Community Board 2 voted in favor of three land use applications associated with a project called "Dock Street Dumbo," which among other outcomes, approved land use that permitted the creation of a new public middle school on the site. The site, as intended, was to fill a significant need in the community that would expand middle school options for District 13 students.
 - b. The plan to site Satellite West to the Dock Street complex contradicts the understanding of a "new" middle school that would "fill a significant need within the community."
 - c. The Community Board 2 understands that this is part of a larger district plan to address overcrowding at P.S. 8, but another solution should be pursued with the re-siting of Satellite West that does not move the school to the new Dock Street complex.
 - d. The new middle school building should be used for a new middle school.

Analysis of Issues Raised, Significant Alternatives, Significant Alternatives Proposed

Comments 2(a), 3, 4, 5(b-c), 8(a), and 11 express support for the re-design process, while comments 2(c), 5(a), and 10 are comments in support of the proposal. As these comments were issued in support of the proposal or the re-design process, they do not require a response.

Comment 7(b) stated non-opposition to the re-siting of Satellite West generally, and does not require a response.

Comments 6(b), 9(b), and 17 pertain to the separate proposal to re-zone the elementary school zones of P.S. 8 Robert Fulton and P.S. 307 Daniel Hale Williams. As this proposal is being presented on its own merits and irrespective of the outcome of the re-zoning proposal, these comments are not related to this proposal, and thus do not require a response.

Comments 1(c), 6(a) and 24(a) are anecdotal and historical in nature and do not require a response.

Comment 2(b) expresses hope that the re-designed middle school be used as an option to serve all District 13 students, not just those that are top performing academically. Meanwhile, comments 18 and 21 express ideas for programs and admissions priorities that should be utilized by the re-designed middle school.

The DOE understands that there are a range of opinions and ideas that the District 13 community have regarding the re-designed middle school, if approved by the PEP, to be offered in building K611. By hosting four district-wide forums in the month of November across District 13, the DOE is confident that all community members will have ample opportunity to submit comments, share ideas, and have their vision considered in the re-design process. Through having a re-design led by the District 13 superintendent, the OSDCP, school employees, students, and District 13 community members, the DOE is confident that the re-designed middle school will offer a school option aligned to the unique needs and goals of District 13 community members.

Comment 23 expresses concern that the new building location of K611 will increase traffic in the area.

If this proposal is approved, the Office of Pupil Transportation (“OPT”) will work with the school organization to identify the most appropriate plan for drop-off and pick-up. Final student busing routes will be determined based on the home addresses of students at the school organizations.

To assist with student pedestrian traffic around schools, school crossing guards are allocated by local police precincts. School administrators can contact their local precincts to request additional crossing guards.

That said, based on experience with similar new schools around New York City, the DOE does not anticipate issues arising as a result of an increase in traffic, should this proposal be approved by the PEP.

Comments 7(a), 8(c), 13 and 24(b, d) offer statements that the DOE should use building K611 for a new middle school. Comments 19 and 20, meanwhile, assert that building K611 should be used for something other than middle school, such as a K-8 or elementary school, and comment 24(c) expresses a general opinion that K611 should not be used for Satellite West.

As noted by commenter 24, the construction of new building K611 had identified the use of K611 since its early conception as a middle school; consequently, building K611 has been designed in a manner consistent with middle school planning, equipping the facilities of K611 with a new science lab and demo room, which are uniquely tailored for middle school use rather than elementary school use.

In addition, when deciding the appropriate use of K611 as a new middle school versus the re-siting location for a currently existing middle school, the DOE considered overall District 13 needs with regards to currently available middle school seat offerings in the district and academic programming diversity in the district. District 13 has a surplus of middle school seats and several under-enrolled schools, so the DOE did not consider it appropriate to use the space at K611 to offer additional seats that would add to the surplus in the district and potentially threaten to further under-enroll existing schools.

These factors considered, the DOE proposed the re-siting of Satellite West for considerations unique to the Satellite West community and aligned to the broader goals of the District 13 community. K611 offers a location just 0.7 miles away from the current location of Satellite West, and offers new, more appropriate middle school specific facilities for Satellite West that are not available in its present location in K307.

Comment 6(c) asserts that the DOE has not involved community input enough in this proposal.

In the course of any proposal related to the significant use of school utilization, the DOE offers multiple opportunities for community input throughout the process. Consistent with the requirements of Chancellor’s Regulation A-190, the DOE held a Joint Public Hearing for this proposal and has had devoted phone and email lines for this proposal to offer community members opportunity to share their comment and receive response in this Public Comment Analysis.

In addition to these formal comment periods, the DOE met with the SLT of Satellite West on September 16, 2015, which included parent representatives, and held a community meeting at Satellite West on October 13, 2015 where DOE officials described the proposal and answered questions and concerns from community members in attendance.

In regards to the re-design process, the DOE has also sought community input throughout, holding a community meeting on October 27, 2015 to set goals for the working group and establish members of the working group, which includes members of the public, and has planned and publicized four working group sessions located geographically across District 13 throughout the month of November for community members to continue sharing their voices and input in this process.

The DOE is confident that the forums highlighted above have offered and those that it will offer the District 13 community ample opportunity to be involved in this proposal and the re-design process of Satellite West.

Comment 7(c) questions the effectiveness of the re-design process, while comments 7(e) and 15 assert that the re-design process does not offer adequate time to create a new vision for Satellite West.

While the re-design process may in part be unique, the DOE is confident that it has created a comprehensive process inclusive of both DOE offices and community input. As previously described, the re-design process is being run in collaboration between OSDCP, which is the office that helps to design and open new schools, and the District 13 Superintendent. OSDCP and the District 13 Superintendent are using principles and strategies of OSDCP's current new school design and development process, and are also working in partnership with the Office of District Planning, Office of Student Enrollment, Office of Leadership, Office of State Improvement, the Department of Teaching and Learning, the Office of Safety and Youth Development and Guidance and School Counseling to ensure that all relevant DOE offices for this proposal have the opportunity to contribute to the design and considerations needed to achieve a successful re-design. As the re-design process began in October and is built around plans for the middle school opening in September 2016, this process also mirrors the typical timeline for new school planning, which is approximately 10-11 months in advance of when a new school leader is selected on July 1 before the opening school year in September. Additionally, the re-design process will mirror the new school design process in that OSDCP and other relevant DOE offices will continue to work in close collaboration with the Satellite West principal to develop and refine the vision for the re-designed school, providing support in instruction and operations until school opening in September 2016. Though the re-design process is a few months shorter than that of a new school design process, the DOE is confident that the holistic and inclusive process it has created will effectively achieve the goals of the re-design.

In addition, with regards to comment 7(c)'s concern about adequate standards in the re-design, the District 13 Superintendent and OSDCP have already began working with the middle school working group to ensure that effective and sufficient standards are developed consistent with the goals of the broader District 13 community and those that the DOE already uses when establishing plans for new school offerings. While the proposal to re-site Satellite West mentions the re-design process that will take place concurrently along this proposal, the working group itself is working to ensure that appropriate standards and goals are being developed throughout the re-design process.

Comment 7(d) questions why funding and grants are not included in this proposal.

Most funding in schools' budgets is allocated on a per pupil basis, based on the Fair Student Funding ("FSF") formula. Schools receive additional funds for students with disabilities, English Language Learner students ("ELLs"), and those with other supplemental academic needs. If a school's population increases or decreases, the school receives more or less funds based on the formula weight of each student. Please refer to the FSF Budget and Resource Guide for the Full-Year 2015-2016 for additional information on cost of instruction and how the changes to FSF funding and other school allocations will be impacted as a result of register changes, available at http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy15_16/FY16_PDF/FSF_Guide.pdf.

Last, all schools are welcome to apply for grants designed to the needs and vision of their school. The proposal to re-site Satellite West to K611 does not preclude the opportunity for Satellite West to apply to any grants for additional funding that the school wishes to pursue.

Comment 14 questions whether the re-design process will allow families opportunity to make informed decisions in the middle school application process.

Though middle school applications for existing middle schools are ongoing and will close on December 1, 2015, applications for new schools or programs will be available in February 2016. The re-design process is being led with a goal of being complete by early January 2016 so as to allow the new programming offerings to be reflected in the new schools round of the middle school application process. If families wish to apply in the middle school at K611, they may do so by completing the new schools application. Families who participate in the new schools round may get two offers: one from the main round and one from the new schools round. Families then choose between the two offers to determine where their child will attend middle school.

Comment 16 expresses concern about performance at Satellite West and the school's designation on the New York State Education Department's "Persistently Dangerous" list.

The DOE works to support all schools in improving school performance, and the DOE is confident that the District 13 Superintendent and staff at Satellite West will continue to work to ensure that Satellite West offers competitive academic programs that seek to continuously improve instruction in the school.

The DOE acknowledges that Satellite West appeared on the most recent version of the New York State Education Department's "Persistently Dangerous" list, available at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/documents/FINALPDSCHOOLSLIST1516.pdf>, for the first time in the school's history. The DOE is committed to providing the best education and a safe learning environment to all students. In New York State, schools are designated Persistently Dangerous if, for two successive years, they have had serious incidents that meet or exceed criteria established by the State Education Department. This is a requirement imposed on school districts in all States. A school is considered Persistently Dangerous if for both 2013-14 and 2014-15, it has either: a School Violence Index (SVI) of 1.5 (approximately 6 incidents per 100 students) or at least 60 serious incidents and an index of at least .5. Schools that are identified as Persistently Dangerous Schools (PDS) must present a plan to the state for reducing incidents and increasing safety.

Although Satellite West was identified as a persistently dangerous school by the New York State Education Department, the DOE commends the schools efforts and feedback that indicates that many students, teachers and families in the community now feel safe at the school. The DOE will continue to work with Satellite West to increase and ensure safety at the school irrespective of the results of this proposal.

Comments 1(a, b), 6(d), 8(b, d), 9(a), 12, and 22 do not relate to the contents of this proposal and do not require a response.

Changes Made to the Proposal.

No changes have been made to this proposal.