

### **Public Comment Analysis**

Date: February 23, 2016

Topic: The Proposed Re-Siting of Crotona Academy High School (07X321) to New Building X358 Beginning in the 2016-2017 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: February 24, 2016

### **Summary of Proposal**

On January 7, 2016, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) proposing to re-site Crotona Academy High School (07X321, “Crotona Academy”), an existing transfer school<sup>1</sup> in Community School District 7 (“District 7”) that currently serves students in ninth through twelfth grades,<sup>2</sup> to new building X358 (“X358”), located at 1211 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10459, in Community School District 12 (“District 12”), in the 2016-2017 school year. 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. Crotona Academy is currently housed solely in Transportable Classroom Units X963 (“TCUs X963”), located at 639 St. Ann’s Avenue, Bronx, NY 10455 in District 7, which is approximately 1.6 miles away from building X358. If this proposal is approved, Crotona Academy will serve the entirety of its students in building X358 beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. TCUs X963 also house a Learning to Work program in partnership with South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (“SoBRO”). If this proposal is approved, SoBRO will also relocate to the X358 building in the 2016-2017 school year and will continue to provide services to Crotona Academy students at the new site.

This proposal is intended to support Crotona Academy and improve learning conditions by facilitating the removal of TCUs and re-siting the school to a new building that offers academic facilities designed for the school, which the DOE believes can accommodate Crotona Academy’s enrollment. Building X358 will offer Crotona Academy a number of new amenities that are currently not available in its TCUs, including a science lab, a library/media room, and a fitness center. New building X358 will also enable Crotona Academy to operate within one contiguous space instead of multiple TCUs, and it will provide a better environment for the students.

In partnership with the SoBRO, Crotona Academy promotes higher academic expectations with intensive math and literacy remediation for every student. Crotona Academy charts a new path to success for young people who have fallen behind in school and are looking for a different kind of high school experience. Students are expected to meet high academic standards and complete New York City high school graduation requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> Transfer schools are small, academically rigorous high schools designed to re-engage students who have dropped out of high school or have fallen behind. These schools are designed to create a personalized learning environment and to provide students with connections to colleges and careers. Students graduate with a high school diploma from the transfer school they attend. For more information about transfer schools, please visit the DOE website at <http://www.goingforme.org>.

<sup>2</sup> While transfer schools serve students in grades nine through twelve, they do not adhere to strict grade distinctions, as students typically enroll at various stages of credit accumulation or number of Regents exams passed.

Building X358 is anticipated to be ready for occupancy by September 2016. The re-siting of Crotona Academy is contingent upon completion of this construction. If building X358 is not ready for student occupancy in 2016-2017, the DOE may issue a new proposal for an alternative siting in accordance with Chancellor's Regulation A-190. Due to the fact that the building is new and currently under construction, no school organization currently occupies building X358. According to the School Construction Authority, building X358 is projected to have the capacity to serve 150 students. As mentioned, the DOE seeks to improve learning conditions for Crotona Academy students by re-siting the school into new building X358.

If this proposal is approved, as of the 2016-2017 school year, Crotona Academy will serve approximately 135-175 students in building X358, which equates to an estimated building utilization rate of 90%-117%. Although a utilization rate in excess of 100% may suggest that a building will be over-utilized or overcrowded in a given year, this rate does not account for the fact that rooms may be programmed for more efficient or different uses than the standard assumptions in the utilization calculation. Therefore, the DOE believes that building X358 has sufficient space to accommodate Crotona Academy.

The EIS can be found on the DOE's website at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2015-2016/February242016SchoolProposals>.

Copies of the EIS are also available in the main office of Crotona Academy.

### **Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing**

A Joint Public Hearing was held regarding this proposal at building X470 on February 12, 2016. The Joint Public Hearing was held at neighboring building X470 instead of TCUs X963 due to space limitations and lack of a public assembly space in the TCUs. Building X358 was also not an option for the hearing since it is currently under construction. At the Joint Public Hearing, interested parties had the opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 10 members of the public attended the hearing; only 1 member of the public spoke, and several members of the impacted School Leadership Team ("SLT"), as well as a representative from the Citywide Council on High Schools ("CCHS") made statements. Present at the hearing were: Paul Rotondo, Transfer High School Superintendent; Neyda Franco, member of CCHS; Patricia Williams, Principal of Crotona Academy; Deborah Claudio, Cinda Becker and Jem Hill, members of the Crotona Academy SLT; and Matt Pearson, from the DOE. Jyoti Folch and Bridget Mercier from the DOE's Office of District Planning were also present. The District 7 and 12 Community Education Councils ("CEC 7" and "CEC 12" respectively) confirmed acceptance of an invitation to attend the hearing, but no CEC 7 and CEC 12 members ultimately attended due to unexpected scheduling conflicts.

### **The following questions, comments and remarks were made at the Joint Public Hearing**

1. CCHS member Neyda Franco expressed that she is in full support of this proposal, stating:
  - a. She had been hoping the DOE would remove the TCUs since they do not provide an ideal learning environment for students.
  - b. She feels that this move is what is best for all children, and that it is a new beginning for this transfer high school.

2. SLT member Jem Hill expressed her support for the proposal, stating:
  - a. She has been a teacher for the past 10 years and fully embraces this move.
  - b. During the winter months there is a noticeably lower attendance rate due to issues with ice and students needing to move between TCUs, and she believes the new building will help address this attendance issue since the students will no longer have to walk outside to get to their classrooms.
  - c. Ms. Hill also expressed excitement about the designed library at the new building since she is an English teacher, and there is currently no library available at the TCUs.
  - d. She also added that the new building will be one contiguous space and will allow for more collaboration among staff and students.
  
3. SLT member Cinda Becker expressed her support for the proposal, stating that:
  - a. The school has been waiting for this type of move since its inception.
  - b. The contiguous space will have more of a community feel for the staff and students.
  - c. The new space offers facilities, such as a library/media center, fitness room, and a teacher's room, to which the school currently does not have access.
  
4. Principal Patricia Williams expressed her support for the proposal, stating:
  - a. This proposal and the school's move will be good for overall morale.
  - b. She believes that this re-siting will increase student engagement.
  
5. One commenter, who identified himself as the Dean of Crotona Academy, expressed support for the proposal.
  - a. He stated that the contiguous space at the new building will allow for improved communication across the school.
  - b. He also noted the correlation between inclement weather and a decrease in student attendance in the current TCUs.
  - c. He agreed that this re-siting will have a positive impact on student morale and students will feel like they are attending a "real high school" with its own space.

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

The DOE did not receive any comments through the dedicated email address or the dedicated phone line for this proposal.

#### **Analysis of Issues Raised, Significant Alternatives Proposed and Changes Made to the Proposal**

Comments 1-5 are in support of the proposal and therefore do not require a response.

#### **Changes Made to the Proposal**

No changes have been made to this proposal.