



Community Feedback and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Regarding Proposed Long-term Building Assignments

In “*What Would it Take?*” The Recovery School District committed to identifying long-term homes for school programs currently housed in temporary facilities or trailers by the end of 2011 and including community feedback in those decisions. To fulfill the commitments, the RSD held three public meetings November 14 – 16, 2011.

- Lake Area High School for assignments in Planning Districts 1, 6, 7 and 8 (Marigny, Bywater, Gentilly, 9th Ward and French Quarter);
- Schaumburg Elementary School for Planning Districts 9, 10 and 11 (New Orleans East); and
- Langston Hughes Academy for Planning Districts 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Uptown, Mid-City, Central City, Treme and Lakeview).

No public meetings were scheduled for the West Bank because all school programs had long-term facilities identified in the latest version of the facilities Master Plan.

The following information is a summary of the community’s comments and questions raised during the most recent public meetings:

QUESTION: How is the RSD including parents and community members in final siting decisions?

ANSWER: Beyond the most recent community meetings, the RSD first held siting meetings in December 2010 followed by Facilities Master Plan meetings this past summer, where it presented recommendations and received public feedback. RSD leadership meets regularly with advisory groups of community leaders, parents, charter school board members and leaders, among others, to evaluate proposals before major decisions are made. This includes siting decisions.

QUESTION: For schools not already under construction or with established design plans, will the RSD consider community input into the design of the school, the school grounds and its landscaping?

ANSWER: The RSD will hold five community meetings throughout the phases of designing a building. When a school renovation or construction project enters the design phase, the RSD will consider any design proposals introduced by the community – subject to budgetary constraints and design standards.

QUESTION: Why do the RSD's criteria for matching programs to long-term home sites include "prior commitments to schools and communities?"

ANSWER: Previous Master Plan amendment processes identified long-term homes for school programs. Additionally, several school sites were committed to programs during design and ground-breaking processes. The RSD's proposal attempts to balance previous commitments with other criteria as these previous public commitments have received investment from students, families, schools, and neighborhoods. For schools that may exist in the future, RSD will apply the prospective criteria in making those decisions.

QUESTION: How will the RSD's new enrollment system create opportunities for students to attend schools in the surrounding neighborhood, if they so choose?

ANSWER: Students wishing to attend schools closer to their neighborhood will have the opportunity to rank their preference for those schools through the RSD's new enrollment system, which will be launched in February 2012. The enrollment system will provide a higher enrollment priority to students living in a zone with a large number of schools for up to 50% of the seats in those schools.

QUESTION: How is this process different from the Facilities Master Plan process that just concluded in October?

ANSWER: The Facilities Master Plan and the meetings surrounding it were focused on where school buildings were needed in New Orleans to serve the population of children needing a public school seat by 2016, as well as the extent to which those buildings would be refurbished, renovated, or replaced with a new school building. The current process is about identifying long-term homes in current or future school buildings for school programs currently operating in trailers or temporary space, such as leased space.

QUESTION: If a school does not like its long-term home assignment, will it have a chance to relocate sometime in the future?

ANSWER: That's not part of our current process, but the RSD has not ruled it out. It may be possible in the future if there is excess building capacity in the system, but on the other hand, excessive capacity is something the RSD is trying to eliminate. Further, the ability for school programs to remain in a school building is contingent on that school program (i.e., its management) continuing to exceed academic and other performance standards.

QUESTION: How can we give feedback on an ongoing basis?

ANSWER: You may e-mail comments and suggestions to the RSD at rsd@rsdla.net.

SCHOOL BUILDING SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- **ABRAMSON**

QUESTION: What is the plan for the Abramson site on Reed Boulevard after Abramson Elementary moves to the Morial building?

ANSWER: The Abramson land will be transferred to the Orleans Parish School Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Locating a high school at the Abramson site is advantageous because it is on a major N.O. East thoroughfare, it has lots of available acreage, it is across from Joe Brown Park, and it is near a hospital, a police station and fire protection. The Livingston site has no major bus lines running down Dwyer Road whereas the Abramson site on Reed Boulevard does.

- **DUNBAR**

QUESTION: Benjamin Banneker Elementary is proposed as being assigned to the Dunbar building. What is the status of management for that school?

ANSWER: Currently Banneker is a direct run school in the Recovery School District. In the 2012-13 school year it will continue to be operated as a direct run school in the Recovery School District. In the future, the school will continue to have the opportunity to apply for a charter if it so chooses as long as its performance remains strong. If its performance does not remain strong, other charter applicants will be considered to operate the school on a long-term basis.

- **COLTON**

QUESTION: Can KIPP New Orleans Leadership be located at the soon-to-be-built Wheatley school site instead of the Colton site?

ANSWER: KIPP New Orleans Leadership is projected to have up to 900 students by 2015. The Colton site is able to accommodate that many students, whereas the Wheatley building will be able to accommodate approximately 600 students. The RSD committed to identify a long-term home for currently operating school programs by the end of this year. KIPP New Orleans Leadership is a currently operating school program located in temporary space.

- **JOHNSON/PRIESTLEY**

QUESTION: Will the RSD commit to working closely with the community surrounding Johnson school in its efforts to determine if the Priestley building can feasibly be the new home of Johnson Elementary?

ANSWER: The RSD seeks to be a community partner in all decisions it makes. The RSD is committed to studying the impacts of developing the Priestly site following a site analysis. The RSD is open to considering other criteria for assessing the costs and benefits of such a development.

- **LAWLESS**

QUESTION: Will the Lower 9th Ward have a high school building?

ANSWER: Yes, a high school for approximately 800 students will be built at the Lawless site.

QUESTION: What needs to be determined to finalize a decision regarding the high school operator at the Lawless site?

ANSWER: There does appear to be a community consensus that the high school operated by the MLK charter school should be located in the future Lawless building. However, a community engagement and decision-making process has begun, but has not yet concluded. In addition to community input, the RSD will consider other criteria in its long-term siting decision making such as the capacity of the program to successfully operate in the facility and raise academic performance in the long-term.

- **OSBORNE**

QUESTION: What are the details of the Osborne construction project?

ANSWER: Osborne is scheduled to be complete in April 2012 and open for fall 2012. It is designed to be a PreK-8, but that is up to the future operator. The building should serve approximately 600 students.

- **WHEATLEY**

QUESTION: Why is the future school program at Wheatley listed as TBD?

ANSWER: We are currently working with the surrounding communities to identify a school program that would best fit in the Wheatley building and meet the proposed criteria.

- **BOOKER T. WASHINGTON**

QUESTION: Why is it said that only the Booker T. Washington auditorium is a historical structure, and not the entire school?

ANSWER: Given the cost of renovating the entire structure, the community agreed that demolishing the existing school building, replacing it with a new structure and renovating the historical auditorium was the best option to avoid the chance that the B.T.W. site would be abandoned.