

Regional Community Conversations

October 16, 2019 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Sutton Middle School

Outreach

The following methods were used to reach the public:

- Information posted on the APS website
- AJC-Interview/Article
- Flyer posted on social media (Twitter and Facebook)
- Robo calls and emails to families three days prior to event (~40,000 people)
- Text messages to families day of event (~40,000 people)
- Coordination with SPLOST Oversight Committee
- Coordination with Expanded Cabinet (approximately 200 administrators)

Attendance

A total of 13 individuals signed into the meeting

Meeting Format

The meeting began with a welcome by Larry Hoskins, Chief Operating Officer of Atlanta Public Schools, who introduced the process and board members in attendance. A formal presentation was then delivered by members of the Consultant Team, followed by a question and answer period before the meeting moved to an open house forum. During the open house, attendees were invited to speak one on one with Atlanta Public Schools staff and the Consultant Team. The public was also asked to provide feedback on four questions during the open house session.

This document summarizes the questions and comments heard during the question and answer period as well as the input received during the open house session.

Summary of Q&A

Q. Why are we looking back at population trends from years past that got things wrong? I want us to move forward, not backwards. The Grady Cluster is busting at the seams, we have buildings that can't house kids.

A. Please come to the next series of meetings. The information presented tonight provides context for us moving forward. The next meetings will have the more detailed information you are looking for.

Q. The auditorium here tonight is not full. How are you going to make sure that you are getting input from the greater community?

A. Our goal is to get input from as many people as possible. Information regarding the FMP process is on the APS website and we are utilizing “Let’s Talk” as a tool to collect input. We will also be sending out a Survey Monkey questionnaire.

Last month we met with the APS Expanded Cabinet, and had more than 200 administrators from across the district provide input on how we can best engage student families. We will be working with this group to have principals send out FMP information and the questionnaire.

Q. Where do Charter schools play in your discussion?

A. We are expecting that agreements in place at this point will remain in effect. Each school size is based on its native population. We are assuming continuation of the current model unless we hear otherwise from the community.

Q. What is the likelihood of redistricting and what is the timeline?

A. Chances are that some school redistricting will occur. Please come to the next sessions, where we will have more information. We will be making projections for 5 and 10 years out, as well as long range projections for 2040. Obviously, the projections for the nearer terms are more easily predicted.

Q. Data trends provide good information. Population demographics have changed. Will you have projections as to where growth is likely to occur? How are the Tax Allocation Districts being considered?

A. We are definitely working on compiling that data right now. In addition to where new housing will be, we also need to look at trends in the type of housing being developed. Will new units be studio or 3-bedroom apartments? Atlanta Housing will be redeveloping 6 former public housing sites that will include some affordable housing units. We are working with planning partners and are aware of several new big developments but we don’t yet know housing types – we will continue to track these projects.

Regarding the Tax Allocation Districts, we are working with other agencies – Invest Atlanta, Atlanta Housing, Atlanta Regional Commission, etc. – to gather data on where growth will occur, numbers of units by type of unit, as well as the cost per unit. We can use this information to project how many students are likely to come from those specific types of units.

Q. I’m curious about seat increases in Charter Schools and the ability of Charter Schools to recruit inside and outside of school clusters. Is there any plan to expand this model?

A. We have not received any specific direction from the Board. We are proceeding with what is currently the standard and are completing analysis to determine if there are any surplus units and if so, how they can be used.

Q. Regarding your stated goals, population trends are different in different school zones. Will the Facilities Master Plan use population trends to produce the outcomes of the FMP?

A. Population trends will be a significant factor, but the Facilities Master Plan will need the APS Board to make decisions to ensure equity among the students remaining in the underpopulated school zones. The closer we are to the forecast the better the data. We have to look at capacity, but we also need to consider what we want to do in the facilities to foster educational excellence.

Q. What types of partnerships are you considering?

A. We want to look at wrap-around services for under-performing schools and are considering metrics to determine these needs. The types of support and partnerships will vary. The goal is to create facilities for the benefit of the community, especially when thinking about times when school is closed. Various types of services such as legal help, laundry facilities, food pantry, and counseling services could be made available at different schools based on need.

Q. Are you looking at growth in Pre-K programs by cluster?

A. Yes, we are working with APS staff to propose a facilities policy that the Board can adopt to engage the entire community. With a policy in place, we can assess the needs of the children in the district, i.e. are the multiple options for Pre-K in the community? How can we be a supportive partner to meet the needs of the community?

Summary of Open House Input

Question 1: What will constitute 'a successful master planning process'?

- Ensuring any moves that are made will be to better or equal performing schools.
- A successful master planning process is one that will not be driven by population trends only.
- The plan should look at student needs first and then population.
- Be careful about giving away property that can be used later.
- Make sure the community/parents input on what is desired is weighed.
- Minimal disruption/moving of currently enrolled students.
- Reach goal of quality education in safe in environment in a speedy manner.
- Develop a ROI for part of the equality goals. Equality can be subjective but what numbers are used to gauge goals?
- That we don't have to study the process over a year.
- Deep engagement with our most vulnerable populations to be sure we are addressing their needs/concerns and desired outcomes (Hispanic, low income, vulnerable to displacement).

Question 2: What must this process accomplish [for APS, For the City of Atlanta: interagency dialogue (AH, IA, Planning), beyond]?

- It is time for the school system and the city government to work together.
- Equity, communication, parent buy-in, affordable.
- Fiscal responsibility, a plan that is actually doable.
- Clear direction on APS capital projects – investments, timelines, locations coordinated with the City, Invest Atlanta, Beltline, MARTA and other partner projects to integrate APS facilities into the city footprint and provide a prominent social/civic infrastructure for our communities.

Question 3: What is the most important outcome this process must provide for, enable, or support?

- Quality education in a safe environment.
- A plan with a clear vision, direction and steps outlining how to bring this vision to fruition.
- Direct commitment and timeline for implementation from the Board.
- Education system worthy of the city we live in and have become.
- Fiduciary responsibility.
- Facilities that support quality learning for students all over Atlanta.
- Local – cluster level – feedback and buy-in.
- Consideration of all options for the district's assets including:
 - Alternate use of facilities for wrap-around services, teacher professional training, bus depot, etc.
 - Exploring market options such as selling or leasing the space.

Question 4: What are your Issues or Concerns?

- How do we provide different interventions or different facilities to address the needs of each community/school/cluster, but leverage these different interventions across the whole APS system?
- The use of equity in terms of input (dollars, time, facilities) rather than equity as outcomes. Different facilities/schools/clusters will need different things to support each student reaching their potential and being ready for college or career.
- Decisions are too centralized. The clusters are very different – would like more decision making to reside at the cluster level.
- Mays and Douglas clusters appear to be in a lot of trouble.
- Homelessness not being addressed.
- Lower income folks not being considered.
- Rezoning of communities that worked hard to improve and having to start over after rezoning. Disruption to kids.
- Concern: Lack of investment in underperforming schools – attract good teachers for underperforming schools.

- That egos have gotten in the way of our children's education. The kids are losing.
- Concerned that not all that data used gives accurate population prediction, i.e. NAHS & other high performing schools might attract more students than predicted.
- The City needs to be more engaged and supportive of APS and facilities, i.e. transportation projects/safety improvements prioritized at APS facility locations.
- Concern about intergovernmental relationships. The City and school district need to be on the same page regarding affordable housing and TADs.
- "Equitable" is the new buzz word. What do we mean?
- Extremely concerned that Bolton Academy (or our area of the Bolton district) will get switched from North Atlanta to Douglas – hence cutting home values by more than half. (This comment echoed by one other person with a "me too" notation on the sticky note).
- Big issue given the NA cluster focus on IB and DLI (dual language immersion)!