

Regional Community Conversations

October 17, 2019 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Martin Luther King, Jr. 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 26 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. What are you using for data sets for projections? There is change in some areas but not necessarily in others.

A. We will use actual enrollment, changes in the birth rate, number of housing units, and types/location/rental rates of the units. We will also team with planning partners to find out about new

developments through permitting and other projects planned by organizations such as Invest Atlanta and include that information in our model to project new students.

C. In this day and age there is no excuse for having a presentation that can't be read on the screen or on the handout.

Q. Regarding the facilities assessment, what guidelines are you using to assess existing stock?

A. We will make two assessments. First, we will assess the actual facility – mechanical, lighting, etc. – Does it work? Secondly, we will assess how well each facility meets the educational goals. The guidelines are currently being developed and will be presented to the APS Board for their consideration on 11/14. You are welcome to attend.

Q. When talking about “how well a facility meets educational goals” does that include the number of students in the school?

A. Yes.

Q. If a school is determined to be overcrowded, what is the process? Who makes the recommendations?

A. We will work with the Board to determine what gets measured – what must be in every school, where there are special needs, and set standards for classrooms. In the next round of meetings we will show school capacity and enrollment projections. In the third round of meetings we will present specific recommendations about additions, re-zonings, new buildings, etc. Then we will make specific recommendations regarding how to accommodate educational programs in each space.

Q. What do you do if schools are overcrowded and there is no more space?

A. We can't answer that yet. We have to go through the process. This is a long range planning process.

C. As you move towards the 11/14 meeting and are thinking about parameters such as square footage per child? There are some frames of thought about more traditional schools and others are more forward thinking. In thinking about my kids, I want this process to result in more progressive learning spaces.

R. The goal is a site-based system in the district where the administration and Go Team for each school will determine the signature program for that particular school. We need to provide flexibility with the model to accommodate the needs of each program, whether that is IB, college prep, gifted, STEM, etc.

The base is the minimum criteria that is needed for a great educational environment that will be tailored for each school's program.

Q. There are differing formulas for evaluating capacity. Some work without looking at music, art, special education, etc. What is your formula for figuring out capacity?

A. Every item mentioned should be put before the Board for their consideration.

C. Regarding population projections, federal laws and regulations require certain things for exceptional populations. This plan needs to ensure that the facilities can be in compliance with those regulations. The services for autistic children have been lacking – from having to bus children, no classrooms in the entire cluster, etc.

R. This plan will address how to serve the entire spectrum of exceptional children.

Q. What are you presenting to the Board in November?

A. The school board determines issues and policy, particularly when they affect the budget. We will be presenting guidelines and impacts on 11/14 for the Board to consider.

Q. What is an example of a guideline/impact?

A. The basics of what are required in each school. A media center, gym, etc. What is it that we must have as a standard in each school, and how much latitude should each principal have to determine the best process for his/her school?

Q. Will an executive summary of the 11/14 meeting be published?

A. Yes. It will be uploaded to the website within two weeks of the meeting.

Q. Are the dates/schedule for the process as currently listed on the website accurate?

A. The date have shifted. The meetings planned for later this year have been rescheduled for January. Recommendations will be presented in the spring.

Q. Could this process result in a recommendation for rezoning?

A. In January you will be able to see what schools are overcrowded. At that point we will look towards strategies such as rezoning, combining schools, etc. In areas where all schools are over capacity there are other strategies.

Q. To be clear, you are not telling us that our children are going to be redistricted in the fall?

A. The Board will make that determination. This process will provide facts and projections that will assist the board in making decisions.

Q. Can you provide more information on the community engagement portion of the FMP?

A. Our goal throughout this planning process is to include the community. We have a project website: <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/FMP>, where all FMP information will be posted. Comments from the public are always welcomed at APS via the Let's Talk online portal.

We are working with APS to distribute FMP information via social media and their database of 40,000 households. Attendees at each meeting will be added to that database.

We will be conducting a survey to reach out to those folks who don't regularly attend public meetings. All of our meetings will have a feedback component included.

We want to hear from the community. If you have ideas for other avenues for engaging with the public please let us know after the meeting.

Summary of Open House Input

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

- Different stakeholders (parents, teachers) on a task force as part of the process.
- APS holds a lot of property. This process will help leverage underutilized property for other needs of the city.
- A system of schools that will not need to be rezoned within 3 years.
- As much information as possible about empty buildings and APS-owned land. Maps, renovation data, size.
- Information is given freely when asked for. Parents are not talked down to. People are heard and respected.

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

- A school system with equitable facilities.
- Thinking big picture about what could happen in the schools – after school programs, clinics, mental health, recreation, intergenerational opportunities.
- Plan for demographic changes with accurate data.
- A forward-thinking plan that will take us into the future (and not stop where we are today).
- Relationship with the City of Atlanta. Plan for growth and surrounding communities.
- Facilities that include vocational and STEM training options.

- Fair distribution of resources.
- Equality across the district!
- Open Coan Middle School.

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

- Another high school option in the Grady cluster.
- Every community has:
 - Community based elementary schools.
 - More than one middle school feeder.
- Every school gets what it needs. No schools appear to be favored.
- Facilities fit the school goals, missions, and values. STEM schools should have robotic space, college and career should have career/technical college classrooms, etc.
- Open Coan Middle School.

Question 4: What are your Issues or Concerns?

- Keeping “sustainability” and proximity of students closest to school where they should attend is important. Keep green initiatives.
- Not open a school that is already over capacity.
- Concerns: voices will not be heard regarding the most urban schools! (non-diverse schools).
- What are the formulas you are using?
- Board is not going to do the right thing.
- Involvement with parents.
- Non-answers tonight regarding specific questions. Don’t bring up the 11/14 meeting with the board – or don’t hold these public meetings until after that meeting so you can tell us what is going on.
- A lot of change that feels like it is being pushed through too quickly.
- The makeup of the APS Board that started this process will not be the same as the Board or Superintendent that will inherit the plan.
- Annexation of parcels into the City of Atlanta.
- Transportation – planning with DOT and City for city transportation. Look at Boston for examples.
- I don’t like hearing that funding is limited when I don’t see APS and the Board advocating for more funds with the State. We need to push our weight around. Atlanta is the engine of Georgia. Parents could be a powerful force. SPLOST hurts working and low-income families.
- Are you considering annexation of new areas of Atlanta?