

Regional Community Conversations

October 2, 2019 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Benjamin E. Mays High 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 29 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. Have you ever seen a way to stop gentrification?

A. I've not seen it stopped but there are ways to manage how it is handled. An economic slow down or reversal is the only sure way to stop it. Economic growth is a double-edged sword. The rising real estate prices are good on one hand but it impacts the ability to afford a home in the neighborhood.

Q. How likely is it that Sizemore will recommend a variable capacity/sized school?

A. It is a certainty in that populations change over the course of time. We try to spot trends so that schools sizes aren't unmanageable or so small that they can't maintain curriculum. Learning cottages can be added or removed to alter physical requirements.

Q. What does school quality mean to you?

A. Our responsibility is to provide the 'sticks and bricks' to support the educational efforts and improve educational outcomes.

Q. What is your understanding of enrollment and charter schools?

A. Charter schools have dramatically increased since 2014, but they are not evenly distributed throughout the city. We are charting enrollment on a geography-based model. Enrollment is reported to the state Department of Education on the same date each year.

Q. Were you involved in the last Facilities Master Plan? It was a disaster with the Douglas cluster, Gender based charter schools, Atlanta Housing Authority, etc. It was a complete waste of taxpayer money.

A. We were not involved with the last plan. We are coordinating with Atlanta partners for a more holistic approach to this FMP. Coordination will continue with Invest Atlanta, Atlanta Housing, and the City of Atlanta.

Atlanta Housing is currently planning for redevelopment of the Bix 6 (six sites of former AHA properties) with a commitment to having 40% of the units developed classified as affordable housing.

Q. How will the public engagement work for the Facilities Master Plan?

A. There will be a series of meetings throughout the plan development process, and public feedback will be encouraged at several key milestones. We will also utilize Let's Talk.

C. I don't like the fact that the questions you have for us to answer are already formulated. How do you already know what we want to tell you?

Q. Can you provide your definition of affordable housing?

A. We use the definition that is provided by Atlanta Housing and the federal government. The number of units dedicated as affordable does not meet the needs of the population but it is an issue that is on the forefront of Invest Atlanta and Atlanta Housing among other organizations.

C. I hope you will treat this process differently than past Facility Master Plans. Don't focus on the classroom seats in each cluster. Focus on the needs of the students. Ensure equity. Equity is a huge issue. Alter the process to get our input. At the end of the day, we are going to be asked to vote on a SPLOST. HEAR US!!!

Q. How do you know where growth will occur and how do you link students to housing type?

A. The answer to this question is what we are driving toward. We have data on new housing units/development and have to drill down to the fine grain of housing type, value, and size to determine what enrollment numbers might come from that type of housing unit.

C. All things are not equal across the city. What one side of town is experiencing does not equate to the same growth in another area. Resources within communities drive population growth. Communities without resources and investment will follow behind in development. I'd like to see multi-dimensional use for APS facilities.

Summary of Open House Input

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

- Consider all needs of all students, including special needs that have more classrooms or help.
- A process that includes ideas and recommendations directly from the community. Having the APS board hear exactly what the people want.
- Fully engaging with REAL input reflective of needs specific to the community/school.
- Buy-in and confidence from the community, stakeholders, administration and Board. A feeling that the plan was designed by and belongs to all of us.
- Autism, ADHD, special needs, etc. More classes.
- Mentorships for students.
- We will see our needs and wants reflected in the Master Plan.

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

- We need direction for our investments in facilities that will last through generational changes in Atlanta.
- Must reflect what each community wants and needs.
- Yield a design that is equal across all of APS. A design that can sustain for many years.
- Focus group at cluster or school level to get pertinent input.
- School that in community zones could specialize in having programs for after school. Help on creating jobs for students to become teachers to help other schools.

- Please have earlier meetings so everyone could join. Thanks for the several texts; that was helpful to get me here.

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

- We need clear direction on how schools will look in varied communities. Will the district allow for smaller (under-enrolled) schools in aging neighborhoods?
- A plan that meets current needs and addresses future projections while it is based on the needs at the community school level.
- Having schools with community sustainability for the future.
- That equity be at the forefront and not just stated.

Question 4: What are your Issues or Concerns?

- School performance affects enrollment.
- Looking for support for mentoring programs, which have been successful in the past but current administration is not engaging.
- When will communities be able to cast their vision for their schools? What is the timeline?
- I worry about whether there are questions or decisions that are already baked in?
- Are all options truly on the table?
- Is the Board and Administration open to every possible solution to these issues?
- Equitable resources for Mays cluster have not been evident.
- Process seems based on us agreeing to decisions already made.
- We need a process where Mays' needs are included.
- Because the Facilities Master Plan is only dealing with brick and mortar, approach is putting the cart before the horse. How are the needs of this area in terms of what is going on inside the building for our student outcomes being addressed?
- Who has looked at what we need?
- Why was the Mays cluster the first meeting? Limited advanced notice.
- Our ideas, wants, and needs fall into a black hole.
- False perception of 'meeting with the community'.
- Not having APS Board really hear and take into account what the community wants.