



Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Sean Davis, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

REQUEST: City Schools' 2018 Comprehensive Educational Facilities Master Plan (CEFMP)

RECOMMENDATION: Approval with Recommendations

STAFF: Kristen Ahearn

PETITIONER: Baltimore City Public School System (City Schools)

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The Regulations for the Administration of the Public School Construction Program (under the Maryland State Department of Education, or MSDE) require that Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) annually submit an updated and detailed Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP). Maryland's school districts are expected to have clearly established master plans for their facilities, and the annual EFMP submittal is the means for updating or reporting any changes to the existing master plans. The Plan serves as a tool to evaluate current resources, assess future needs, determine project priorities, and establish a framework for decision-making and policy development. As such, it is an important consideration for City Schools when it makes decisions about school closings and consolidations, develops its annual Capital Improvement Program, and manages the 21st Century Buildings Program.

This plan is a requirement of the State of Maryland Interagency Committee on Public School Construction (IAC). Traditionally City Schools has submitted an annual EFMP that consisted of an updated master plan. With the 2013 approval of the 10-year, 21st Century Building Plan (Building Plan) however, City Schools submitted a *Comprehensive* Educational Facilities Master Plan (CEFMP), to provide a long-range perspective and a set of goals to be realized over the next five to ten years.

City Schools currently has 159 buildings and an enrollment of 71,789 K-12th grade students in City Schools' buildings, as of September 30, 2017. An additional 8,803 students are housed in non-City Schools' buildings.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

This CEFMP is consistent with the City's adopted Comprehensive Master Plan, LIVE EARN PLAY LEARN, specifically LIVE, Goals 1 (Improve Public Schools and Libraries) and 3 (Ensure a Culture of Learning by Enhancing Educational and Vocational Opportunities for all Baltimoreans). The CEFMP is cross-referenced in the Comprehensive Master Plan.

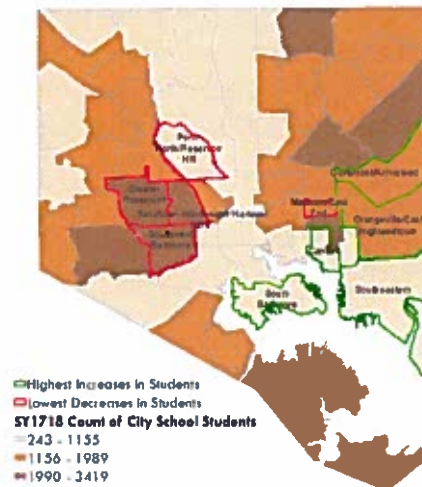
The CEFMP is consistent with the FY2019-2024 Capital Improvement Program, and will inform the development of the FY 2020-2025 Capital Improvement Program for City Schools.

ANALYSIS

The 2018 CEFMP builds on City Schools' comprehensive plan developed under City Schools CEO Dr. Santelises, called the Blueprint for Success (Blueprint). The Blueprint focuses on three key areas, including student wholeness, literacy, and staff leadership. It provides a five-year roadmap to inform policy and programming decisions, which in turn affect facilities decisions. An example of a policy and programming decision that affects facilities is social and emotional learning sites, which require a specialized space for students to decompress and visit with a specialist to connect to academic support or other services. The Blueprint includes a focus on equity, which is defined as providing what each student needs rather than providing the same to each student.

A very important component of the CEFMP is the annual update to enrollment projections, both by school and district-wide. Enrollment projections inform annual decisions related to school closures and consolidations in the Annual Facilities Review, school renovations, and the capital improvement program. All of these items, but school closures and consolidations in particular, can have a dramatic impact on the communities in which schools are located.

Enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year was 80,592, the third consecutive year of declining enrollment. The decline is likely related to a number of factors, including declines in overall population in Baltimore City and families with children in particular. The largest enrollment declines were in areas with high enrollment, highlighted in red in the map below, provided by City Schools. City Schools has noted that these are areas where the "composition of housing is changing." There were modest enrollment increases in some neighborhoods in Southeast Baltimore. City Schools notes that the only Community Statistical Area (CSA) with a significant enrollment increase was Orangeville/East Highlandtown.



City Schools has several initiatives and policies underway to increase enrollment, including:

- Geographic alignment of Pre-Kindergarten options,
- Middle grade strategy workgroup working to improve options,
- An enrollment taskforce and partnership with the Mayor, and
- Efforts to re-engage students who are not regularly attending school.

City Schools expects these initiatives to begin to impact enrollment in the 2020-2021 school year.

Declining enrollment, among other factors, affects the district’s utilization rate. Another key factor affecting the utilization rate is changes to school construction and closure schedules that are part of the 21st Century Buildings Plan (Building Plan). City Schools is required to meet certain utilization targets, and the Building Plan provides a roadmap to achieve these targets through school consolidations, reconfigurations, and closures. City Schools detailed recent board actions, through the Annual Facilities Review, that resulted in progress towards meeting utilization targets. These included turning three buildings back over to the City of Baltimore (through the building surplus process): Patapsco, Westside, and Rognel Heights. The chart below shows utilization targets for various milestones outlined in the Building Plan. City Schools met its intermediate target in 2015-2016. The 2017-2018 utilization rate was 83 percent, and City Schools is projecting that it will not meet its 2019-2020 target of 86 percent.

Milestone	School Year	District-wide Utilization Target w/o Swing Space	District-wide Utilization Target with Swing Space
Base Year	SY12-13	77%	
Intermediate ¹	SY15-16	80%	76%
End of Phase I ²	SY19-20	86%	80%

Per MOU requirements, “future IAC project approvals may be withheld if projected utilization rates do not meet utilization targets during the annual review.” City Schools will engage with MOU partners to discuss revising utilization rates.

Recognizing a need to balance enrollment and capacity across the district, the School System recently engaged a consultant to perform a Rezoning Feasibility Study. Unlike many jurisdictions which perform a comprehensive rezoning every ten years, a comprehensive review of school zone lines for PK-5th grade schools in Baltimore City has not been done for over twenty years and city population has changed dramatically in that time. The Rezoning Feasibility Study was recently completed and is now published on the School System website. Meetings were held across the district to gather input, and the priorities that emerged were balancing enrollment and building capacity, equitable program access, minimizing disruption for students, and the desire for neighborhood schools. The study report outlines five potential approaches to rezoning, including: large choice areas, small choice areas, home-based zones with choice, grade level reconfiguration, and comprehensive boundary changes. City Schools

has noted that next steps will occur through the Annual Portfolio Review Process and will include engaging the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For any City Schools facility undergoing significant changes, the Department of Planning encourages City Schools to meet with Planning staff at the beginning of the process in order to help inform key decisions, through feedback about issues such as surrounding land use opportunities and site constraints. This will increase the likelihood that the project will enhance the community-school connection and have long-lasting positive impacts for both.
- The School District's outdated zones remain a major obstacle to achieving better utilization of its buildings. The Department of Planning recommends that City Schools prioritize maintaining neighborhood-based schools in its consideration of rezoning options, for their positive impact on utilization rates and walkability and their potential to act as community resources.
- The Department of Planning recommends that the community space that is part of each of the 21st Century School buildings be designed to afford as much flexibility as possible. While siting of the community-accessible space is important to maintain security of the school, the programming of the space will likely change over the long period of time that the school building is in service. Flexibly-designed space will allow for this natural change in programming needs.
- The Department of Planning recommends that City Schools, Planning, and others work together to ensure community use of important public resources such as education and recreation space in the schools, and schoolyards, playgrounds, and sport fields, outside of school hours.

NOTIFICATION

The Planning Commission list of 10,000+ email addresses was notified of this action.



Thomas J. Stosur
Director