

Better Buildings: Better Schools, Issue 54 April/May 2010

Monthly news and commentary on public school facilities with a local and national perspective from the 21st Century School Fund (21CSF), a Washington DC based nonprofit - **working to build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities**. To subscribe/unsubscribe, please email: newsletter@21csf.org

Public School Co-Location in New York City

The 21st Century School Fund conducted an [analysis of the utilization of PS-15](#) elementary school building in the Red Hook neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY at the request of [Campaign for Fiscal Equity](#). After visiting the school and reviewing space utilization and educational program documents of PS 15, 21CSF recommended that the Department of Education (DOE) reconsider its decision to decrease the classroom space in PS 15 in order to support the increase in grades offered for PAVE Academy. Executive Director, Mary Filardo, who conducted the review reported, "There are three elements critical to any successful shared use—collaborative process, comprehensive educational facility planning and space design modifications to support shared use. It seems that improvements are needed in all three areas at PS 15."

Joint-Use of PK-12 Public School Buildings

["Joint Use of Public Schools: A Framework for a New Social Contract"](#) was released by the 21st Century School Fund and the [Center for Cities & Schools](#) at the University of California, Berkeley. This report, supported through funding from the [Convergence Partnership](#) explores joint use as a way to provide services to children and families in convenient locations, improve opportunities for physical activity of youth and adults, leverage capital investments, and reduce the consumption of land. Joint use of public school buildings and grounds presents challenges to school and community leaders. This report attempts to frame the basic challenges and opportunities for joint use to increase the quantity and quality of joint use policy and practice.

Facility Data Definitions

The 21st Century School Fund has recently developed a new online community of people working to develop common definitions for public school facilities data. This is the first ever review of the National Center for Educational Statistics school facility data definitions and is **taking place between May 12-24th**. If you would like to review and comment on facilities data definitions, please email us at info@21csf.org and we will give you a username and password for access to the site, at: www.binarywerks.net/datadefreview .

District of Columbia Public School Capital Expenditures

On Tuesday, April 27th the 21st Century School Fund provided testimony before the Committee of the Whole regarding D.C. public school capital expenditures. The District of Columbia has spent about \$1.8 billion on DCPS capital projects since 2000 and has plans to spend \$2.7 billion more by 2019. The back-up detail and analysis on DCPS capital expenditures is available at 21CSF [Datashop](#).

Local School and Community Planning: Bruce-Monroe at Park View Elementary School with the Georgia Avenue Community Development Task Force

Two years ago DC Public School's Bruce-Monroe Elementary and Park View Elementary were consolidated at Park View. At that time, parents and community members at Bruce-Monroe entered into discussions with DCPS, the DC Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization and the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development developed an understanding that Bruce Monroe Elementary School could return to their original site to a new school as part of a public/private partnership that would re-build Bruce-Monroe along with commercial use or housing along the Georgia Avenue site.

The Bruce Monroe Community has done a tremendous job to make sure the city works diligently to implement this shared vision. At the school's initiation, they worked with 21CSF to develop [educational specification plans](#) for a new Bruce Monroe Elementary School. Friends of Bruce-Monroe have testified in

force at Council oversight and budget hearings to get the project moving. The Parents and Friends of Bruce Monroe and other interested neighbors met April 6th with the DCPS Chancellor Michelle Rhee and Ward I council member Jim Graham to press their case for a new school. The city is in the process of developing an interim use for the site (basketball court, community gardens, etc.), to keep the location actively in use during development.

The long delayed demolition of the 1970's open plan school is almost complete. The school community held a memorial for the old building at the site on Friday, April 23rd, complete with a commemorative poem, candles, testimonials, songs, an array of student art work and expressions of heartfelt desire that the school return.

Parents and neighbors of Bruce-Monroe meet regularly with the [Georgia Avenue Community Development Task Force](#), in a common goal to see the entire neighborhood revitalized. This intense and well-managed process of community planning should provide a firm basis for any development partnership (public or private) investing in this vitally engaged and diverse neighborhood.

Illinois General Assembly Insists on Facility Planning for Chicago Public Schools

After many years, education, neighborhood, equity and good government advocates were able to secure unanimous support from the Illinois General Assembly to require that Chicago Public Schools improve its practice related to school closings, consolidations, and capital investment. The Illinois General Assembly established the [Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force](#) co-chaired by State Representative Cynthia Soto and State Senator William Delgado. The full task force has met twice in Springfield, IL and is now working in committees: Public Input; Review of Chicago Public School Policies; Facilities Master Planning Best Practices; and Facility Needs, Spending and Funding. 21CSF is an advisor to the Task Force and key participants in the Task Force are [BEST](#) partners and colleagues from [Designs for Change](#) and [Grand Boulevard Federation](#). For more information, contact Jackie Leavy (wleavy8396@aim.com), Pro Bono staff to Task Force—also long time BEST partner and advisor. The Task Force is working to prepare recommendations for policy action by the General Assembly.

At the April 26th Task Force meeting, Robert Runcie, Chief Administrative Officer of CPS acknowledged that the CPS' previous decision making process that determined school closings, phase-outs, consolidations, and turn-arounds failed to adequately engage the community. He stressed that based on community input at hearings held earlier this year, CPS CEO Ron Huberman removed 6 schools from the list of 14 "school actions" originally proposed. Mr. Runcie stated that CPS is developing an internal organizational infrastructure that is in line with the Task Force's goals; and recognizes that parental, community, and other public input will result in stronger partnerships.

Mr. Runcie pledged that CPS will partner with communities in an unprecedented way and that it will have to embrace information sharing, power sharing, and decision making with the public and communities. He added, "Collaboration is about addition and multiplication, not about subtraction and division."