

COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS ELEMENTARY



October 5, 2023 | Project Update Meeting Questions & Answers

3/9/23 MEETING FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

Q: How and where will Commodore John Rodgers (CJR) staff queue cars, parents, and students during arrival and dismissal at the new building?

A: We are discussing the following options for arrivals and dismissals:

1. Utilizing the plaza at the front door for dismissals and arrivals.
2. Widening the Washington Street sidewalks and the parent drop-off walks to allow kids to stand outside.
3. Potentially using the entire length of Bus Drop at Washington Street because, per Principal Martin, they are usually vans and only have 7-8 kids each, so they can que in with parent cars.
4. Just as it is currently, due to the physical site constraints, this issue is largely operational and will have to be managed by school staff.

Q: How will students get from the front drop-off to the queue and play areas?

A: The current design affords clear sight lines and traffic controls. The design team can add interior corridor doors to create a control corridor to guide kids from the front door through the building to play areas to prevent students from roaming the halls unsupervised prior to school starting. Just as it currently is, due to the physical site constraints, this issue is largely an operational issue that will have to be managed by school staff.

Q: A couple of the community members and staff expressed concerns with parking both on site and on the street adjacent to the school. They said they were receptive and supportive of the Department of Transportation (DOT) using signage to designate the street parking along the school walks to staff parking during school hours and neighborhood parking before and after school hours. They even offered to discuss this with the community association and have them provide a letter of support.

A: After this meeting, no-parking signs were installed at the current transportation hub. Additionally, City Schools and the design team will work with the City of Baltimore and the DOT to request a re-designation of street parking and signage. We will provide updates and seek additional input on plans in future community meetings.

Q: It is possible to reduce the fencing around the individual play spaces in the main play area? Perimeter fencing is fine, but fencing each of the play areas makes it feel like a "prison yard." If fencing has to be included for the prekindergarten and kindergarten kids, it should be kept low.

A: The fencing will be reduced as suggested and kept low for the prekindergarten and kindergarten area.

Q: Will site lighting and security cameras be provided for play areas?

A: Yes, there will be site lighting and surveillance.

Q: Can the community use the play areas after hours?

A: This is an operational issue that should be raised with Principal Martin.

Q: Why is the enrollment being increased at CJR?

A: This school already exceeds their enrollment numbers. The increase would account for more accurate student numbers in the community.

Q: What is the seating capacity for the Cafetorium for dining & performances?

A: Cafetorium seating for dining is 343 people per seating, and performances are 531 people per performance. This will allow for 3 dining periods a day in lieu of the 4 dining periods they currently have.

CURRENT CJR SCHOOL BUILDING SAFETY

Q: During teardown and construction, where will the protective barriers be located? Is there room for worker parking in the street?

A: The sidewalks and back-in parking on the school side of the streets on North Chester, East Fairmount, and Washington Streets will be closed during construction and demolition. The protective barriers will go up along the street which will prohibit parking.

Q: Can we put a barrier up on Chester Street to make sure outside influences are not able to utilize the space for illegal activity?

A: Yes, the barriers will protect the construction site. In addition, there will be cameras and lights that will help to deter concerning activities.

Q: In the letter regarding parking, it mentions that there will be sidewalk closures around the school. This means the sidewalks will not be available on Washington Street, where bus pick-up occurs. Does that mean that the pick-up or drop-off stop will need to change?

A: The current Washington Street pick-up and drop-off bus stop will remain in effect until 1/2/2024. The sidewalks and back-in parking on the school side of the streets (North Chester Street, East Fairmount Avenue, and Washington Street) will be closed during construction. The current Washington Street pick-up and drop-off bus stop will be relocated. City Schools is currently reviewing new locations for this stop and will notify parents by 12/1/2023.

Q: How do we address safety issues at the old building, as well as the swing space?

A: We work with school police and Baltimore City police to have more folks on site monitoring activity. We will also look for an alarm system with cameras so response time will be faster.

TRANSPORTATION

Q: How has this transportation issue been handled in the past?

A: In the past City Schools has worked with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to provide OneCards to support middle school students impacted by the swing space move. City Schools Transportation has provided yellow bus transportation for elementary school students impacted by the swing space move. The district has a DOT workgroup that was formed because of traffic safety concerns throughout the district. City Schools Transportation also meets regularly with the MTA and DOT to address student transportation concerns.

Q: We have two dedicated MTA buses that do not fit a quarter of our students. What are the other options that the kids have to get safely to school if we are unable to work with the DOT?

A: City Schools will continue to work with both MTA and DOT to provide viable options for student transportation. We will continue to raise MTA-related concerns in our regularly scheduled meetings with MTA.

Q: Can there be more personnel or security at the bus stops they are currently being dropped off at?

A: 21st Century School Buildings program has presented an opportunity for five volunteers to assist at the bus stops with a \$200 stipend per month. Additional support would need to be reviewed operationally with the CJR school leadership teams.

Q: Will the buses be on time for our bus stops?

A: The office of pupil transportation will continue to work with staff to prioritize an efficient student pick up and drop off.

Q: The buses run late, and it's getting dark earlier. What can we do to make sure kids are safe at the bus hubs?

A: We are working on lighting at the bus hub. The current location of the hub must ultimately move due to the construction of the building, so we will discuss the identified site with Bill Levy, the executive director of facilities.

Q: When can we expect updates on lighting at the bus hubs?

A: City Schools Operations has requested that the city remove obstructions to improve the lighting provided by the streetlights. We will provide an update in the next community meeting.

Q: How far are you moving the bus hub from where it is now, and how far in advance will we receive that information?

A: One of the considerations for hub relocation is Fayette Street. We will provide an update by Thanksgiving break.

Q: Is it possible to schedule a transportation meeting to discuss the impacts? I know right now it is temporary, but in my opinion, it would be better to have a meeting with DOT. There are a lot of concerns about safety.

A: We will look into setting up a community meeting with transportation to provide additional information once they set up the new bus hubs.

Q: When you talk about transportation, how are you going to work with the DOT? We are bussing students daily, and we must relieve them in the middle of Washington Street. We are in a constant battle with DOT to make sure we receive timely updates.

A: We have regularly scheduled meetings with DOT and raised concerns about the challenges and will continue to do so. We also encourage you to continue to raise all DOT concerns with your elected officials.

SWING SPACE

Q: What can City Schools offer the families while we are in this swing space for three years? People are concerned about the lack of recreational spaces like the playground.

A: Cost proposals for the playground are being prepared.

Q: Why do we not have a swing space budget separate from the new building one?

A: There is only one pot of funding for the 21st Century School Buildings Program, the new building renovation and the updates to the swing space share the same funding. Any funding used on the swing space affects the building renovation budget.

Q: We have some bathroom issues at the swing space. The younger students are unable to reach anything without stepstools. Additionally, on a larger scale, the bathrooms are not in quality condition for the school as a whole. Do you provide bathrooms for pre-k and kindergarten students at this swing space? What will you do to fix this?

A: Since the community update meeting, Facilities has walked the building with Principal Martin and identified the bathrooms that needed towel and soap dispensers modified to accommodate younger students. Bathroom modifications will be managed through the work order process to ensure those spaces meet the early childhood education standard.

COMMUNICATION

Q: Will we receive daily updates? Is there a predictable highlight to know if we are on track?

A: The 21st Century teams will work with school leadership to provide weekly project updates and to develop a schedule for community meetings.

Q: Can we meet at a location near our families and community?

A: Yes, we will prioritize meetings in a location more ideal for families and community stakeholders located closer to the original building.

BUILDING DESIGN

Q: How many exits will there be in the new building, and how many will go into the play area. Also, are people able to get out of the play area without going into the building or up the ramp?

A: There are 23 exterior door exits in the new building, 7 of which open to the main play area. There are three ways to exit the main play area without going back into the building:

1. People can go through a gate that is located near the service area to get to the parking lot.
2. People can use the exterior stairs.
3. People can use the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramp to exit the main play area.

Q: The new building is being built for 1,000 kids. Will they all come in through the same entrance?

A: Yes, students will enter the building through the main entrance.

Q: Will we have a nursing office at the new building?

A: Yes, there will be a health suite. The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) staffs and operates all the district's School-Based Health Suites on a regular basis. BCHD's services include first-aid, emergency response, medication administration, and health screening for vision, hearing, and scoliosis screenings. In addition, BCHD assists with immunization compliance, health appraisals, and medical follow-up referrals, asthma monitoring and support for diabetics.

Q: What is the difference between this concept and the one presented in March, and has anything we have given feedback on been taken into consideration?

A: The building presented on 10/5/2023 is very similar to that presented on 3/9/2023. However, due to the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system change, the building presented on 10/5/2023 is a little over 5000 square feet (about the area of a basketball court) larger than the March version. The square footage specified for classrooms, special education, science, art, music, media center, gym, admin, and support spaces remained consistent between March and October. The layout of all of these spaces has changed to accommodate the added space needed for the HVAC system change. This change affected each aspect of the project.

Under the March design, the HVAC system had the bulk of the equipment mounted on the ceilings and on the roofs. The October design of the HVAC system requires the equipment to take up floor space, which then requires mechanical closets and approximately doubles the space in the main mechanical room. In total, this change added 37 new equipment closets and an entire 2nd floor on the main mechanical room, which equates to a little over 5000 square feet added to the building. The additional space drove a redesign of every aspect of the project, including structure, windows, doors, walls, finishes, roof, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and civil.

Q: Regarding the new building, windows facing north are to the left, facing the play areas. Is that the side the apartments are on?

A: Yes, that is the side of the apartments at the corner of Fayette Street and Chester Street.

Q: Is the play area at the new building large enough for 1,000 kids?

A: Similar to current operations, the school will rotate students on and off the play area with the lunch schedule, which accommodates a maximum of 376 students.

The play areas are not designed to hold the entire student body at one time. In the event of a situation that requires vacating the building, the school would implement an emergency plan with gathering places a safe distance from the building.

Q: Do you have a sense of how many people can fit in the plaza at the new building?

A: The plaza area is 1870 square feet. At 5 square feet per person for standing, the plaza should accommodate approximately 374 people per code.

Q: How does this design address safety in the neighborhood? Is there security for evening events?

A: The new design will incorporate cameras, lighting, and a secure vestibule to accommodate the school community. Evening events hosted by the school will be operationally supported by school staff.

Q: Where will the main entrance and parking be at the new building?

A: The main entrance is at the corner of Fairmount Avenue and Washington Street. The parking lot is entered from Washington.

Q: Why is the HVAC system causing an automatic 12-month extension on the project?

A: The HVAC system change had huge ripple effects on the entire project. Under the previous system, the bulk of the equipment was mounted on the ceilings and on the roofs.

The new system requires the equipment to take up floor space, which then requires mechanical closets and approximately doubles the space in the main mechanical room.

In total, this change added 37 new equipment closets and an entire 2nd floor on the main mechanical room, which equates to a little over 5000 square feet added to the building. The additional space drove a redesign of every aspect of the project: structure, windows, doors, walls, finishes, roof, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and civil.

Due to redesigning, the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) Concept, which is the first step in the MDE Permit Application Process, was delayed until 9/19/2023. As a result, we do not expect to have the MDE permit in hand until May 2024, which means we will not be allowed to break ground until that permit is in hand.

To optimize time, it is our intent to start building demos in January or February 2024 and bring the building down. Then, when the MDE permit is received, proceed with the below-grade building demo. Once the below-grade demo is complete, the site can be graded, and construction can move into the preparation of the site for the new building.

Q: Was 5000 feet removed from the HVAC?

A: No, 5,000 feet were added.

Q: How many bathroom stalls are in the new building? I have been in some of the finished schools, and there are only 2-3.

A: There will be 6-8 bathroom stalls, as well as individual toilets for gender-neutral, staff, and family toilets.

Q: How many exits are there on the bottom floor of the new building? Is there a third way to get out of the play area in case of an emergency?

A: There is access from the building itself. This section is recessed, so there are access points from the ramp, and there are five egress points.

Q: Are permits submitted and approved? Why has the demo not started and when will it begin? What is the anticipated substantial completion date?

1. Jan/Feb 2024: Above Grade Building Demo
2. May 2024: MDE Permit
3. June 2024 - June 2026: Building Construction
4. July 2026: Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FFE) & Move Back from Southeast Building
5. August 2026: Move into New Building

The MDE concept was submitted on 9/19/2023, and the full MDE permit is expected in May 2024.

Demo has not started because City Schools requested the HVAC system in the new building be redesigned, which caused a delay in the MDE approval process and, as a result, delayed the entire project.

The above-grade building demo is scheduled for January or February 2024. The below-grade building demo will begin when the MDE permit is issued, which is expected in May 2024.

Substantial completion is July 1, 2026, and occupancy for school is August 2026.

Q: Please show us a construction timeline with dates.

A: See updated schedule below. For more information, please refer to the [community meeting presentation](#) from the October 5th meeting.

Schematic Design:	Winter 2022/Spring 2023*
Design Development:	Fall 2023*
Construction Documents:	Spring 2024*
Early Demo:	Winter 2024*
Bidding:	Spring 2024*
Building Construction Start:	Summer 2024*
Substantial Completion:	Summer 2026*
Occupancy:	August 2026*

** Dates listed are based on a projected schedule and are subject to change.*

For more information or to view the meeting presentation please visit:
baltimore21stcenturyschools.org