



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO



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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR SCHOOL REPURPOSING ANNOUNCES  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Plan Emphasizes Transparency and Community Engagement to Find New Uses for Buildings  
that Will Spur Economic Activity and Maximize Community Benefit*

The Advisory Committee for School Repurposing and Community Development, a group comprised of community and civic leaders submitted today their recommendations for a framework and implementation plan for repurposing the sites of former schools. These recommendations are intended to create a balanced, transparent and inclusive process that will engage the community and find new purposes for buildings that can spur economic activity and maximize community benefit.

“For months, the Advisory Committee has been meeting to discuss how to create a strategy that empowers the community in finding new uses for vacant buildings and turns them into valued community assets,” said Wilbur Milhouse, Chair of the Advisory Committee for School Repurposing and Community Development. “The recommendations in this report reflect feedback from experts in community development and planning on how to create a straightforward process that strategically and urgently engages the community and revitalizes buildings and its surrounding neighborhood with a new purpose.”

In their recommendations, the Advisory Committee emphasized that even with regulatory constraints governing the conveyance of property, community outreach and engagement is critical to ensuring the repurposing of buildings will be of the most benefit to residents.

“Community members are our greatest stakeholders in this process, so we wanted to ensure their voices were heard throughout the process and were also eligible to submit proposals for re-use of buildings,” Wilbur Milhouse said. “After all, residents and City and CPS leadership alike are interested in ways to increase economic opportunity and strengthen neighborhoods. This partnership will be integral for the Repurposing process to be successful.”

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Ideas have already been suggested for a number of the properties including using them for tutoring and mentoring programs, health clinics, arts centers, community centers, senior affordable housing and an urban farm. Parties interested in purchasing one of the buildings will be required to present to their proposed reuse to the community, who will be offered the ability to review and provide input.

“I would like to thank the Repurposing Committee for their diligent work to put forth these recommendations that create a blueprint to find new uses for buildings that support each neighborhood’s economic activity and unique cultural vibrancy,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “Now that the framework has been built, CPS will review the proposals and work with the community to hear their input on how we can strengthen their neighborhood and improve their quality of life.”

“These recommendations will help guide our community engagement process and how we will structure receiving proposals to ensure the process is inclusive and transparent,” CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett said. “Each neighborhood has their own vision for these buildings, and we look forward to hearing their proposals of how we can find a new use that maximizes community benefit.”

The Advisory Committee recommended a multi-phase effort, which is broken into three categories:

- **Immediate Reuse** – Recognizing that immediate occupancy that serves the public good is ideal and can help preserve buildings and reduce maintenance costs, this early phase would allow for the immediate transfer of properties within CPS or to sister agencies who have demonstrated need and financial viability to take ownership of the facilities in 2014.
- **Competitive Redeployment** – The majority of schools will have a solicitation process where community groups and other interested parties submit proposals for reuse. Due to regulatory and bond requirements, this process would be managed by CPS this year, and a community engagement strategy would begin early so that residents have information about all properties and are offered the ability to review and provide input.
- **Development through a Revitalization Partner** – If community or financial benefit is not immediately apparent, an external partner with expertise in real estate planning and community development would assume responsibility of the building to create a plan for stronger options.

The majority of the buildings will be opened to public bidding via a solicitation process, which will be managed by Chicago Public Schools and initiated in early 2014. Due to bond requirements, tax considerations and State statutes governing the conveyance of these

school properties, CPS must choose the highest bids, however, CPS is able to include additional criteria recognizing community input when it solicits the property. The solicitation process would:

- Incorporate criteria that clearly articulate the guiding principles and recommendations
- Provide sufficient time for community engagement and technical assistance
- Offer site tours at scheduled times between mid-February and mid-March
- Include on the website information for individuals unable to attend the site tours, include photographs and basic physical and financial information about the properties
- Provide on the website a forum function allowing visitors to leave ideas about proposed reuses
- Offer technical assistance to potential applicants before proposals are due, helping interested community groups understand solicitation requirements, viable financial scenarios, and attributes of a strong proposal.

Through the immediate reuse phase, the Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts) will have a permanent home at Lafayette. Since its establishment in 2009, the Chicago High School for the Arts has quickly become a national model for arts and academic training, yet the school has struggled to find a permanent home that can meet the needs of its demanding program. The school has moved three times, and the plan to move into Malcolm X College was ultimately deemed not workable because it would have meant another year of transition for the school and maintenance costs that far exceeded what ChiArts was able to realistically handle. Lafayette met the space requirements and its layout is conducive to their art-heavy curriculum.

“ChiArts will create another high-quality education option for families in the Humboldt Park community as well as across the City,” Alderman Maldonado said. “The 26th ward is proud to be the permanent home to this renowned performing arts school, whose students and teachers will bring more energy and vitality to the neighborhood.”

William King Elementary School was also identified through the immediate reuse phase as location for the City of Chicago’s Department of Fleet and Facility Management to consolidate several facilities into one. This consolidation will save taxpayer money and will house the work that was previously done at two facilities, under one roof. Fleet and Facility Management will work with the community and Alderman Ervin before proceeding with this. John Fiske Elementary is also temporarily being used by the Woodlawn Children’s Promise Community to house community health programs.

"In looking at the best possible ways to approach the repurposing plan for shuttered CPS locations, the committee considers having a seamless and inclusive process - that considers

maximum positive community impact - its first and foremost priority," said Alderman Thomas, Chair of the Chicago City Council Committee on Education and Child Development. "Since Chicago's neighborhoods are so varied in composition, inviting local stakeholders, concerned residents and parents from each community to the dialogue will provide vital statistics and feedback essential in the success of each community's repurposed properties. I think that this plan shows every indication that we can be successful in this respect."

To support CPS in further defining the community engagement process and appropriate criteria for solicitations, a committee that includes those with expertise in real estate, development, social services, finance and lending, will be engaged with members of the CPS staff. Final recommendations on reuse of each property will be made to the Board of Education. The Board of Education will be able to accept or reject proposals by a vote at its monthly meeting.

Attached is the full report.

The members of the Advisory Committee are:

- Wilbur Milhouse (Chair), Milhouse Engineering & Construction, Inc.
- Jim Capraro
- Ald. Rey Colon, 35th Ward
- Ald. Jason Ervin, 28<sup>th</sup> Ward
- Ricardo Estrada, Metropolitan Family Services
- Linda Goodman, Goodman Williams Group
- Bernita Johnson-Gabriel, Quad Community Development Corporation
- Avis LaVelle, A. LaVelle Consulting Services, LLC
- Andrew Mooney, Department of Planning and Development
- Raul Raymundo, The Resurrection Project
- Julia Stasch, John T. and Catherine D. MacArthur Foundation
- Ald. Latasha R. Thomas, 17th Ward
- Tom Tyrrell, Chicago Public Schools
- Susana Vasquez, Local Initiatives Support Corporation

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