

School Closures and Building Surpluses

Approved on January 11, 2022, by the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. Decision issued on February 8, 2022.

City Schools' primary goal is to make sure that every student receives **high-quality educational experiences** that support their learning and their personal growth where our students will thrive and graduate from our high schools with the skills, knowledge and understanding to succeed in college, careers, our community and anywhere and everywhere their dreams will take them.

Each year City Schools undergoes a review of schools, a process to make difficult decisions that will improve our ability to offer the rich and varied educational programming our students deserve, and ensure that a range of school options exist in every area of the city and that all schools are able to do the best job possible of positioning students to succeed. This process, **the Annual Review of Schools**, includes a broad range of considerations, including programming, student achievement, school climate, financial management and governance (for schools managed by external operators, including charter schools), and quality of school buildings. While this process can result in a variety of recommendations such as opening new traditional schools, reconfiguring grade spans in existing schools, merging school communities, relocating schools, and facility surplus, the most challenging of these recommendations are those for school closure.

Schools that are part of the Annual Review recommendations and where the Board approves school closure and combining with other school communities receive ongoing support through school transition to assist the school community with creating a shared identity, resolving concerns, and identifying potential partnerships and other supports to aid in school improvement.

On November 9, 2021, City Schools recommended closing three traditional schools at the end of school year 2021-22 and surplus the buildings in summer 2022: Dr. Bernard Harris, Sr. Elementary School, Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School, and Steuart Hill Academic Academy. City Schools also recommended closing one traditional school, New Era Academy, at the end of school year 2022-23¹ and retention of the building. In addition, City Schools recommended surplus one additional school building, George W.F. McMechen High School in summer 2022.

On January 11, 2022, the Board of School Commissioners voted on the 2021-22 Annual Recommendations Report. The votes for the recommendations to close the programs and surplus the buildings for Dr. Bernard Harris, Sr. Elementary School, Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School, and Steuart Hill Academic Academy and the recommendation to close New Era and retain the building were postponed to the January 25, 2022 Board meeting.

An additional closure and surplus report will be created as an addendum to this report for these school programs and buildings.

In compliance with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), the decision to close schools and to dispose of school buildings requires time and community input. Community engagement is a pillar of City Schools' work, and City Schools therefore urged the public to provide input to inform the decision-making process and to help make sure necessary steps were being taken to meet the needs of students, families, and school communities.

Summary of the Recommendations

Closures with Building Surplus

¹ This recommendation was modified since it was originally presented in November 2021 to change the effective date from end of school year 2021-22 to end of school year 2022-23.

- Close Dr. Bernard Harris, Sr. Elementary School at the end of school year 2021-22 and rezone students to either Johnston Square or Harford Heights. Expand the zones of Johnston Square and Harford Heights and split the Dr. Bernard Harris zone between these two schools. Surplus the Dr. Bernard Harris Building to the city of Baltimore in summer 2022 after it is no longer needed for educational purposes.
- Close Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School at the end of school year 2021-22 and rezone students to either Dorothy I. Height Elementary School, The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School, or Furman Templeton Preparatory Academy. Expand and adjust the zones of these schools to include divided portions of the Eutaw-Marshburn zone. Surplus the Eutaw-Marshburn Building to the city of Baltimore in summer 2022 when the building is no longer needed for educational purposes.
- Close the Steuart Hill Academic Academy program at the end of the 2021-22 school year and rezone students to Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School. Expand the zone for Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School to include the Steuart Hill zone. Create a 35% Geographic Attendance Area for Frederick Elementary School for the area that is currently the Steuart Hill zone. Surplus the Steuart Hill Building to the city of Baltimore in summer 2022 when the building is no longer needed for educational purposes.²

Closures and Retain Building

- Close New Era Academy at the end of school year 2022-23³ and create preference for students from the Cherry Hill, Maree G. Farring, Curtis Bay, Bay Brook, Westport and Lakeland zones at Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove and Digital Harbor High School for the 2023-24 school year. Relocate the PTECH and Seagoing CTE pathway from New Era Academy to Digital Harbor High School. Relocate the Army Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (AJROTC) program to Benjamin Franklin High School. Each of these programs relocate for the 2023-24 school year. Retain the Southside Building where the New Era program is housed.

Surplus

- Surplus the George W.F. McMechen Building in summer 2022 after it is no longer needed for educational purposes.

Public Engagement

Beginning at a public meeting on November 11, 2021, when the Board received the CEO's recommendations on school closures and building surplus, City Schools encouraged the public to

² This recommendation has been modified since originally presented in November 2021. The original recommendation included rezoning Steuart Hill students to either Frederick or Franklin Square and splitting the Steuart Hill zone between Frederick and Franklin Square. As discussed later in this report, the recommendation was modified based on community feedback during the public engagement process in fall and winter of 2021.

³ This recommendation has been modified since originally presented in November 2021. The timeline for the recommendation was revised in December 2021 so that the school closure would take effect at the end of school year 2022-23, rather than at the end of school year 2021-22 as originally presented.

provide input to inform decision making and to help make sure City Schools continues to take the necessary steps to meet the needs of its students, families, and school communities.

Taking the Recommendations to the Community

City Schools staff facilitated over 60 meetings related to the schools in this year's recommendations, including staff and community meetings at each school, meetings with partners of the schools and elected officials representing the schools. Staff also facilitated opportunities for members of the Board of School Commissioners to visit each school recommended for closure. Based on feedback from each principal, community meetings at schools were held at a variety of times of day – morning, afternoon, and evening – and in a variety of formats: in-person, virtual, hybrid, and with interpretation where needed.

These meetings, held between November 11, 2021 and January 20, 2022, were designed to allow families, staff, and community members to provide feedback and ask questions of City Schools staff regarding the recommendation for their school closure, relocation, and/or the surplusing of school buildings.

In addition to the community meetings and the public hearings, school-based steering committees were created at each school proposed for closure and each building proposed for surplus. Each of the steering committees met at least twice and were charged with providing written comments to the Board of School Commissioners, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and staff regarding the proposed closure or relocation of the steering committee's school. Members of the steering committees will continue to be engaged in the schools' transitions in the coming months.

A formal, state-mandated public hearing on the recommendations was held on December 2, 2021, and a special Board session to hear public feedback was held on December 15, 2021. As City Schools continues to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, both meetings were held virtually with the link to join posted on the City Schools website and emailed to families, staff, and partners at affected schools; both were broadcast on City Schools' cable television station (Education Channel 77, available through the Comcast cable service in Baltimore City), and streamed live on the Internet.

Prior to the community meetings at each school, City Schools released a report with its recommendations. Copies were provided to members of the Board and uploaded to the City Schools website with a link to the report on each individual school's web page. The Mayor of the City of Baltimore, along with city and state elected officials representing the districts of each affected school, were contacted about the recommendations. A printed copy of the report was provided to affected schools to be available for review by the public and links to the report were shared by email and at community meetings for affected school communities. Copies of the report were also available upon request from City Schools' Office of New Initiatives.

The Board also accepted written comment or data on the proposed closures and surpluses until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 7, 2022, for the votes that occurred on January 11, 2022, and Friday, January 21, 2022 for the votes that occurred on Friday, January 25. Stakeholders were advised to send their comments to the Board via postal or electronic mail.

Notice

To inform the community about the annual review process and to encourage feedback on its recommendations, City Schools employed a variety of communication methods. As noted above, the report, including initial recommendations, was presented to the Board at its meeting on November 9, 2021 and was also posted on City Schools' website and linked on individual school webpages. The Board meeting itself was televised (on Education Channel 77) and streamed online.

Formal notices providing detailed information about the December 2 public hearing and December 15 special Board session were advertised in the November 10, 2021, editions of two local newspapers, *The Baltimore Sun* and *The Daily Record*. The notice also included information about submitting written comment.

Copies of the formal notice and letters notifying families of the proposed school closures or surpluses, along with information about school-based meetings and opportunity to provide oral and written feedback, were emailed to families at affected schools more than two weeks prior to the December 2 public hearing and linked on City Schools' website. The notice was also available in the written recommendations report, which was made available online and at affected schools, as noted above. Finally, automated telephone calls were made, and text messages were sent to families at all schools included in the recommendations to notify them of the special session and public hearing; email messages were sent to families for whom City Schools had working email addresses; information was provided via recorded message on City Schools' automated telephone directory system; and notice was shared with steering committee members.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were presented by City Schools' staff to the Board at its public meeting on November 11, 2021, as part of the Annual Review of Schools.

School	Recommendation
Dr. Bernard Harris Elementary School #250	Close at the end of the 2021-22 school year; surplus building in summer 2022
Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School #11	Close at the end of the 2020-21 school year; surplus building in summer 2021
Steuart Hill Academic Academy #4	Close at the end of the 2021-22 school year; surplus building in summer 2022
New Era Academy #422	Revised Recommendation: Close at the end of the 2022-23 school year; retain the building ⁴
George W. F. McMechen High School Building #177	Surplus building in summer 2022

Board Vote

⁴ This recommendation has been modified since originally presented in November 2021. The timeline for the recommendation was revised in December 2021 so that the school closure would take effect at the end of school year 2022-23, rather than at the end of school year 2021-22 as originally presented.

On January 11, 2022, beginning at 5:00 p.m., the Board held a public meeting at which it voted on the annual review recommendations. As City Schools continues to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, all Board meetings are held virtually at this time. In accordance with standard procedures, this meeting was televised on Education Channel 77 and was streamed online in real time.

Code of Maryland Regulations

As required by COMAR the Board considered these factors when voting on whether the recommended schools should be closed and/or the recommended buildings should be surplus to the city:

- Student enrollment trends
- Age or condition of school buildings
- Transportation
- Educational programs
- Racial composition of student body
- Financial considerations
- Student relocation
- Impact on community in geographic attendance area for school proposed to be closed and school or schools to which students would relocate

The Vote

Nine of the nine voting Board members attended the January 11, 2022 meeting. The Board votes on the recommendations are as follows.

School	Recommendation	Outcome	Board Vote
Dr. Bernard Harris Elementary School #250	Close at the end of the 2021-22 school year; surplus building in summer 2022	Vote postponed to the January 25, 2022 Board meeting	n/a
Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School #11	Close at the end of the 2020-21 school year; surplus building in summer 2021	Vote postponed to the January 25, 2022 Board meeting	n/a
Steuart Hill Academic Academy #4	Close at the end of the 2021-22 school year; surplus building in summer 2022	Vote postponed to the January 25, 2022 Board meeting	n/a
New Era Academy #422	Original Recommendation: Close at the end of the 2021-22 school year; retain building Revised Recommendation: Close at the end of the	Vote postponed to the January 25, 2022 Board meeting	n/a

	2022-23 school year; retain building		
George W.F. McMechen High School #177	Surplus building in summer 2022	Approve	In favor: 9 Opposed: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 0

Specific details regarding the recommendations, the Board’s decisions, and supporting rationale follow.

George W.F. McMechen building #177

4411 Garrison Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21215

Summary

- The George W.F. McMechen High School building is located in northwest Baltimore and currently houses George W.F. McMechen High School, a separate public day school serving students in grades 9-12.
- In 2020, the Board of School Commissioners approved the closure of George W. F. McMechen High school when construction on the new 21st century space for Claremont High School at the Patterson High School campus was complete and the facility was ready to receive students. Students from McMechen who still need an LRE-F placement will be enrolled in either the Baer School or Claremont High School based on individual need.
- The new 21st century space for Claremont High School will be ready for students in summer 2021, and after this, the George McMechen building will no longer be needed.

Recommendation

- Surplus the George McMechen building to the city of Baltimore in summer 2022 after it is no longer needed for educational purposes.

Opportunities/ Potential Impact

- Surplus the George W. F. McMechen facility which will no longer house a school program reduces excess district building capacity, thereby increasing the districtwide utilization rate and lowering maintenance costs.
- George W.F. McMechen was a prominent African American lawyer in Baltimore and was a prominent advocate for African American civil rights. Given the importance of this school name and desire to maintain the history of schools, staff will explore ways to honor the history and legacy of the McMechen program and name with the receiving schools and within City Schools’ portfolio of schools.

Reasons for Surplus

- Districtwide enrollment in separate public day schools has been declining as district capacity has increased to meet students’ needs at their home schools. The needs of the

McMechen students can be met at William S. Baer School or Claremont School, separate public day schools that serve populations similar to McMechen.

- Of the three buildings housing programs for separate public day school programs, the McMechen building is in the poorest condition. Its utilization has made it ineligible for Capital Improvement Project funding to address numerous concerns, and it is an open space building, with very few enclosed classrooms, and very few windows resulting in limited natural light.

Board Action

- On January 11, 2022, the Board voted in favor of the recommendation to surplus the George W.F. McMechen building in summer 2022 after it is no longer needed by the district for educational purposes. The Board's decision gave consideration to the impact of the closing on the following factors*:
 - Student enrollment trends
 - Age or condition of school buildings
 - Transportation
 - Educational programs
 - Racial composition of student body
 - Financial considerations
 - Student relocation
 - Impact on community in geographical attendance area for school proposed to be closed and schools to which students would relocate

**Factors such as educational programs affected, racial composition, available receiving school options, and student relocation considerations were considered when the Board voted in January 2020 to approve the closure of the George W.F. McMechen program when construction related to and for the Claremont facility is complete.*

Educational Programs Affected

- Of the **30** staff members at George W.F. McMechen High School, **15** are in positions for delivery of instruction.
- There are **36** students with disabilities at the school, ranging in age from 14 to 21 years old. All students receive special education and related services for greater than 50% of the day. As a separate public day school, the program does not house programs for students without disabilities. *
- Educational programs affected, student demographic data, and receiving school options were factored into the Board vote in January 2020 to approve the closure of the George W.F. McMechen program when construction related to and for the Claremont facility is complete. The details above are provided for context.

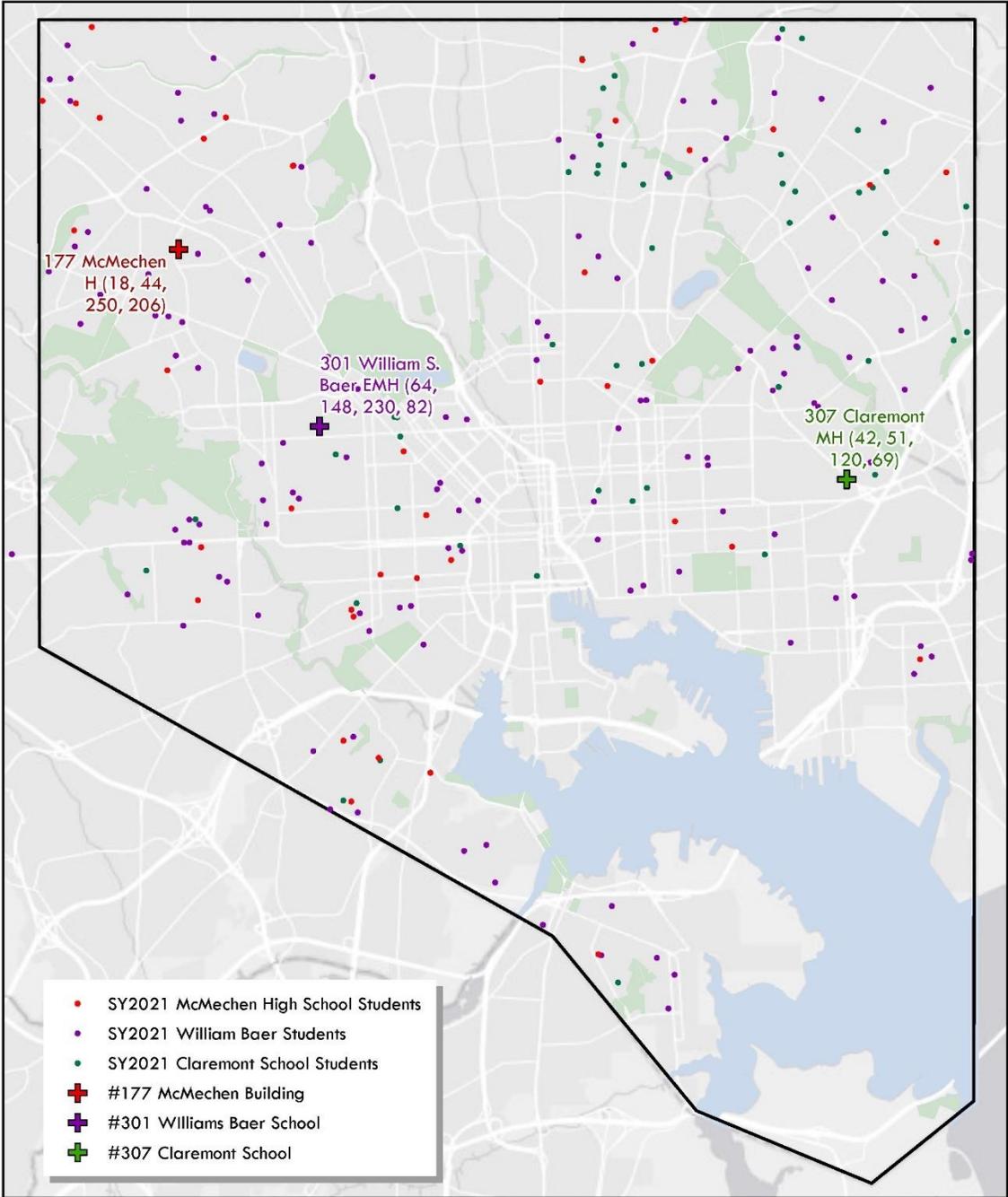
**Sources: Unofficial September 30 Child Count as of October 19, 2021. These numbers are expected to change as a result of the MSDE data-cleansing process; final data anticipated by January 2022.*

Student Relocation

- Students still requiring an LRE-F placement under their IEPs will be enrolled in either the Baer School or Claremont School based on individual need.

- Student relocation and transportation implications were factored into the Board vote in January 2020 to approve the closure of the George W.F. McMechen program when construction related to and for the Claremont facility is complete.

Proposed Surplus of 177 McMechen Building



N
 0 0.5 1 2 Miles
 Date: 9/30/2021

BALTIMORE CITY
 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Facility Information

Type: Separate public day school		State-rated capacity: 250
Grades served: 9 -12		Building utilization rate: 18% (SY 20-21)
Address: 4411 Garrison Blvd, 21215 Planning area: NW-B		
Date constructed: 1953 (O); 1977 (A)		
Site size: 6.8 acres		
Building area: 100,728 sq. ft.		

Facilities Condition Assessment

Summarized in the table below are the conditions of the major building systems and components that were assessed as part of a 4-year Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) conducted by EMG August 2016 through January 2020 of each educational facility owned by City Schools. The FCA is best used as a snapshot, from this four-year period, for the purpose of capturing the condition of the major systems and components for each facility operated by City Schools. On an ongoing basis FCAs are compared against routine monitoring and day-to-day maintenance evaluations, known plant performance issues and capital funding availability to determine the extent and effectiveness of previous facility improvements. For more information on the condition ratings and definitions, please visit baltimorecityschools.org/equipment-conditions.

Building Name	Site	Structure	Roof	Vertical Envelope	Interiors	HVAC	Plumbing	Electrical	Elevators	Fire
McMechen H	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair

Financial Considerations

- While it is being used for educational purposes, City Schools is responsible for the cost of utilities and maintenance associated with the building. Once the George W.F. McMechen building has been returned to the city of Baltimore for disposition, the district will eliminate its expenses associated with maintaining and operating the facility.

Community Feedback and Input, and District Response

- Members of the Garrison Hill community (the community that surrounds the school) had many questions and concerns about the process for how the city would determine the future use of the building. The community expressed a strong interest in being involved in the engagement around this and the discussions that will determine the future use of the building. Staff from the Baltimore City Department of Planning attended the steering committee meeting to answer questions and provide information on this process. Staff from

Baltimore City Planning collected the contact information of community members present at the steering committee meeting to ensure they are included in communication that will go out when the process starts.

- The Garrison Hill community expressed concerns over the security of the building while it is vacant. City Schools staff shared that in the months after the school moves out prior to the building being turned over to the city, while the building is still in the district's possession, it will be monitored by City Schools' facilities and maintenance team and School Police. Baltimore City Department of Planning staff shared that when the building is in the city's possession, there is a designated contract security team that patrols the building on a regular schedule.
- Community members expressed concern for the wellbeing of McMechen students in transitioning to either Claremont or Baer. District office staff shared that they are already working with the McMechen school community and the leaders of all three schools on this transition and will continue to work with each family to ensure the school they are placed in best fits their students' educational needs. Opportunities for families to meet the principal and staff and visit the buildings of their receiving school will be made later this spring and over the summer.

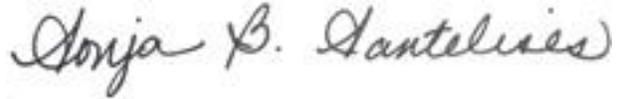
Summary of Board's Final Decision

- Based on the factors set forth herein, consideration of the CEO's recommendations, written and oral testimony of stakeholders, the annual review recommendations report, and the contents of the official record that includes various other documents, reports, and comments, the George W.F. McMechen building will be surplus to the city of Baltimore in summer 2022 after it is no longer needed for educational purposes.

Right to Appeal

An appeal may be taken to the Maryland State Board of Education within 30 calendar days of this written decision of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. The Board issued this decision on February 8, 2022. The appeal should be sent to Office of the Attorney General, Maryland State Department of Education, Attn: Jackie La Fiandra/State Board Appeals, 200 St. Paul Place, 19th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland, 21202.

February 8, 2022



Sonja Brookins Santelises, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer, Baltimore
City Public School System, and
Secretary, Baltimore City Board of
School

February 8, 2022

Date



Christian Gant, Esq.
Board Executive, Baltimore City
Board of School Commissioners