

July 10, 2017

Honorable Carlos Menchaca
New York City Council
250 Broadway Suite 1728
New York, NY 10007

Re: Proposed PS 557, Community School District No. 15, Brooklyn, New York

Dear Council Member Menchaca:

We strongly urge you to oppose the current proposal for PS 557. Classrooms and historic properties must not be asked to compete against one another for space in our city.

The former 68th Police Precinct Station House and Stable are listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and are together a designated individual New York City landmark—one of only three in the Sunset Park neighborhood. The School Construction Authority's (SCA) plan for the proposed PS 557 calls for demolishing the whole of the historic stable, as well as a significant portion of the station house. While we acknowledge the importance of gaining new school seats in Community School District 15, we do not believe the SCA has sufficiently considered alternate sites or the historic significance of the chosen site.

We stand in ardent opposition to any plan that involves the demolition of these rare protected resources. We write to express several concerns with the proposed PS 557:

Destruction of Protected Historic Resources

The former 68th Police Precinct Station House and Stable were designed by George Ingram in 1886. As noted in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle after its construction, the architecture was deliberately imposing and monumental, to better convey the seriousness and authority of the building's purpose. The station house and stable are significant for their Romanesque Revival architecture as well as their role in the history of both the New York City Police Department and the municipality of Brooklyn. Their status as individual landmarks and their listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places attest to the significance of both structures. The Historic and Cultural Resources chapter of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) does not sufficiently address the historic significance of these resources. Particularly in a neighborhood with so few protected resources, the destruction of the station house and stable would constitute a significant negative impact on the historic and community character of Sunset Park.

Failure to Investigate Alternate Sites

In addition, the DEIS does not indicate that alternate school sites have been adequately investigated. The June 1, 2016 Notice of Filing (NOF) stated that the SCA was required to conduct an alternative sites analysis for eight other potential locations for a school facility in Community School District No. 15. At the time of the issuance of the NOF, two sites (250-266 46th Street and 291-301 24th Street) remained under consideration by SCA and were undergoing "various studies" to determine if they were appropriate and could accommodate a small public school facility. SCA never provided a response to inquiries regarding these sites, and neither the DEIS nor any supporting documentation addresses their status. Furthermore, neither the DEIS nor supporting documentation includes information about other sites in the area that were under consideration for a school site. Therefore, we vigorously recommend that you oppose the continuation of the process at the proposed site until SCA provides full evaluation of 250-266 46th Street and 291-301 24th Street, as well as explanation of why other potential sites were eliminated

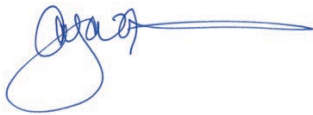
from consideration. As all of these sites would have to be acquired by the City, additional weight must be given to the meaning of spending public monies to purchase a privately-owned NYC landmark in order to demolish it. It is, on the face of it, a distressing statement on the public value of historic properties, especially when other, non-historic properties are possible alternatives.

Insufficiently Detailed Design

The former 68th Police Precinct Station House and Stable are precious historic and architectural resources. The DEIS does not sufficiently address how the new school building would engage with the architecture and design of the former 68th Police Precinct buildings and the Sunset Park neighborhood. The DEIS should be revised to include interior and exterior conceptual renderings showing how the existing historic structure would be incorporated into the new school design. In addition, the Urban Design and Visual Resources and Neighborhood Character sections of the DEIS must evaluate in more detail how the new school building would be consistent with the design and character of the neighborhood. The SCA should enter into consultation with the Landmarks Preservation Commission in order to better preserve and protect the historic fabric in any proposed designs.

Given that the DEIS does not sufficiently address or acknowledge the historic significance of the former 68th Police Precinct Station House and Stable; that it does not illustrate a thorough consideration of alternatives to destroying these protected resources; and that the design proposal is not detailed enough to show how the historic structures would be preserved nor how the new school building would correspond with the neighborhood's character, we implore you to oppose this proposal for PS 557.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Goldstein
President
The Municipal Art Society of New York



Peg Breen
President
The New York Landmarks Conservancy



Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
The Historic Districts Council