

Sunnyside Woodside Middle School Project Rebuttal to NYCDOE letter of June 25, 2015

We appreciate the NYCDOE's reply to Congressman Crowley, State Senator Gianaris, Assemblywomen Markey & Nolan and Councilman VanBramer's letter of May 20, 2015 in which they expressed concern of an impending middle school overcrowding crisis in the Sunnyside Woodside area. The DOE's feels there will not be an overcrowding crisis because IS 125 is getting an addition, it will have the 5th grade truncated, and will receive fewer students because of rezoning in Jackson Heights that will pull in students from PS 152. who would have previously attended IS 125.

We have reason to be concerned with the methods they are using to project enrollment numbers. Here are some of our concerns:

- The DOE relies on something called "The Blue Book" to estimate enrollment numbers. According to WNYC the Blue Book methods are highly debated and, in response to years of criticism, are currently undergoing review. Those reviews are not completed though so the DOE is using the contested methods to project the number of students IS 125 will be able to hold.
 - <http://www.wnyc.org/story/city-make-changes-how-it-accounts-space-schools/>
- Using the Blue Book the DOE was not able to predict or prevent overcrowding in (to list the ones we know about) IS 125, PS 11, Forest Hills and currently PS 78 in Long Island City
- According to a WNYC story dated March 3, 2015 the city announced at a City Council meeting plans to create approximately 33,000 new seats through fiscal year 2019, but projected a need for 49,000 seats by then. So they are planning to create a "fire" that they will need to reallocate funds to put out.
 - <http://www.wnyc.org/story/nearly-half-nyc-students-overcrowded-schools/>
- At a SCA presentation to the CEC District 30 meeting in December of 2014 the presenter showed in her Powerpoint presentation a current need for 456 middle school seats in the Sunnyside/Woodside area. This need is a result of the SCA failing to predict accurate numbers.
- Finally, we do not feel the DOE took the development of our neighborhood in to account when projecting enrollment numbers. Specifically:
 - the two new elementary schools and one addition that have been built, and are currently being built, in the neighborhood
 - the new building being built on Barnett Avenue that will have 220 units,
 - that Queens Boulevard is being rezoned to allow development of residential buildings
 - the number of new families moving in to properties being vacated by people whose children have grown up

For these reasons we feel trusting the DOE's projections comes down to a question of faith. If they are right there will be no problem. If we are right there will be an overcrowding crisis that, by the nature of the system, will take many years to fix. It will then have been too late to help the students who are in elementary school now.

Our answer is to build a middle school on the Department of Transportation storage site on 37th Avenue just off 48th street. It is equidistant from R & 7 train stops. buses run on 48th street. It's primary function seems to be to house unused lampposts. Given the nature of development in the area we feel it is just a matter of time before developers find a way to get that land and build a residential tower similar to the one going up just on the other side of the tracks on Barnett Avenue. Prevent school overcrowding throughout western Queens, provide infrastructure for the ongoing development, and help us build a middle school here.

Sincerely,

Debra & Sean McGowan
Sunnyside Woodside Middle School Project (MSP)