



Community Engagement Meeting Feedback & FAQ

The New Middle and
High School at
Sequoyah



Schools Represented

With over 130 people in attendance for the meeting, **seven** DeKalb County School District schools were represented in the online survey. Sequoyah Middle School had the highest representation, followed by Cross Keys High School, Dunwoody High School, Tucker High School, Cary Reynolds Elementary School, Oakcliff Elementary School and Tapestry Charter School.

Also present were a large turnout of engaged neighbors unaffiliated with any school directly.

What do we want to honor in the design?

The majority of responses were centered around history: past, present, and future. This includes nods to brutalist Portman architecture and Doraville's GM Plant turned Assembly Yards development.

The second most common response centered around highlighting and celebrating the diversity of the student population from a melting pot of Hispanic, African, and Asian backgrounds.



What do you think unites the school community?

This word cloud represents the most common phrases in the responses to this question. There were also responses highlighting the students, teachers, and parents that make up the community. A shared commitment to neighborhood projects that improve the area was also a notable contribution, as is the acknowledgement that while there are diverse cultures, a shared socioeconomic reality and commonality brings people together.



The schools will be the greatest at...?

The most common responses and phrases centered around engendering a love and desire for education, providing a safe space for students, rallying the community around students, preparing students for the future, and serving as a community hub that promotes activism and political involvement.

SECTION
PERSPECTIVE



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

During and after the meeting we asked you to submit any and all constructive questions, comments, and concerns. We have taken that feedback and have addressed those most frequently asked. If you do not see your concern addressed, please feel free to email us at dcsdbuilds@dekalbschoolsga.org.

You have failed this community for so many years. Why should this school be any different?

The complexity and scope of the project have required us to engage in thorough research, analysis, and consultation with various stakeholders. Additionally, our commitment to ensuring the project's success and its positive impact on the community has led us to consider diverse perspectives, address potential challenges, and refine our approach. We understand the eagerness to experience the benefits of the project, but a project of this scope and sensitivity does not happen overnight. Rest assured, we are actively working to expedite where appropriate in the short term while maintaining a focus on the project's long-term success.

The project planning process has taken so long that our family won't benefit. We either had to opt out of the system or send our kids 10 miles to another school. Why should we care about this project at all and why does it take so long for there to be meaningful changes to communities that have been asking for it for ages?

Even if one's family may not directly benefit from the new school due to the extended timeline for construction, it is crucial for citizens to recognize the broader community-wide impact. A new school contributes significantly to the overall educational infrastructure, fostering a positive learning environment for future generations. Improved educational facilities often attract talented educators, enhance educational programs, and elevate the overall academic standards in the community. Furthermore, a thriving school system can enhance property values and community appeal, making it an attractive place to live for new families. Supporting the construction of a new school reflects a commitment to the collective well-being of the community, ensuring that future generations have access to high-quality education, which, in turn, contributes to the overall vitality and growth of the entire community.

I have concerns about the traffic these new schools will bring. Specifically, noise, traffic flow, and how parking will be handled. How will it work with different start and end times for the middle and high school? How will it work for multiple events during the same time at both schools? Will high school parking be only for seniors with everyone else parking on the street?

Addressing these issues is a top priority for our planning team. We are currently conducting thorough traffic impact assessments to ensure minimal disruption to the surrounding areas. The traffic flow, parking arrangements, and coordination of start and end times for the middle and high schools are critical considerations in our planning process. Additionally, we are actively exploring solutions to accommodate multiple events simultaneously at both schools. As we progress, community input will play a vital role in refining these plans. Rest assured, we are

committed to developing comprehensive and sustainable strategies that prioritize the convenience of residents while ensuring the successful integration of the new schools into the community. We will present any and all recommendations from the traffic study for offsite improvement to Doraville and DeKalb County.

Why, how, and when will the school fields, and other parts of the property, be illuminated? A lot of homes are around this site are concerned with light and noise pollution from games, practices, and general safety lighting.

The current plans for the school fields do not include lighting, as they are primarily designated as practice fields to be used during daylight hours and weekends. The decision to omit lighting is a strategic measure to address concerns related to light and noise pollution, to prevent overlap between field use and traditional times of day when residents are home. However, the infrastructure for future lighting has been incorporated into the plans, allowing for potential inclusion at a later date. Any decision to implement lighting will be subject to further evaluation, community input, and funding considerations, possibly through another Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) if deemed necessary for safety or expanded usability. This approach ensures a careful balance between addressing community concerns and maintaining the flexibility to adapt to evolving needs in the future.

How will these schools affect the Peachtree Creek Greenway Project that this project backs on to? Is the design team aware of this? If so, will the creek pathways be a part of the plan? Has runoff from paved area into the creek been considered?

We want to assure you that our design team is fully aware of the significance of the Peachtree Creek Greenway and is actively collaborating with environmental experts to ensure a harmonious coexistence. Our plan incorporates the preservation and integration of the creek pathways within the schools' grounds, recognizing the importance of maintaining the natural environment. Runoff management is a key consideration, and we are implementing sustainable practices, such as permeable surfaces and stormwater management systems, to minimize any adverse effects on the creek. We are committed to fostering a positive relationship with the Peachtree Creek Greenway Project, and we appreciate your vigilance in bringing these concerns to our attention. If you have specific suggestions or further insights, we welcome your input as we work towards a mutually beneficial solution.

Doraville has a proud history of community, economic growth, and diversity. How will this be honored in the architectural and visual design?

We deeply respect Doraville's rich history of community, economic growth, and diversity, and these values are paramount in our architectural and visual design considerations. Our design approach is rooted in preserving the city's unique identity while embracing its future growth. We are committed to incorporating architectural elements that pay homage to Doraville's heritage and celebrate its diverse cultural fabric. The design will reflect the community's spirit by blending modern functionality with the city's historical character, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. We also aim to engage with local stakeholders to ensure their input shapes the visual aesthetics, ensuring that the new development seamlessly integrates with Doraville's proud legacy and vibrant future.

What safety and security measures are going to be in place for both students in the school and neighbors who live in the immediate area?

Ensuring the safety and security of both students within the school and our neighbors in the immediate area is of utmost importance to us. Our comprehensive safety plan encompasses various measures, including controlled access points, surveillance systems, and on-site security personnel. We are collaborating closely with local law enforcement to establish effective emergency response protocols and community outreach initiatives. Lighting and landscaping designs are being strategically implemented to enhance visibility and discourage unauthorized access. We are also committed to fostering open communication with neighbors to address any specific concerns and to maintain a safe and secure environment that benefits the entire community. Regular safety drills and community engagement sessions will further contribute to a collaborative and vigilant approach to security. The well-being and safety of students in the classroom and DeKalb citizens in the communities surrounding our schools are of high importance, and we welcome ongoing feedback to continually improve our safety measures.

Will there be an academic excellence program here, such as the Advance Placement Program (AP) or International Baccalaureate Program (IB)? Or a magnet program for business, law, or other white-collar professions?

DeKalb County School District understands the importance of providing diverse educational opportunities for all students. Our commitment to academic excellence is inclusive, and we are actively exploring the implementation of programs such as the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) to offer enriched curriculum options. Additionally, we recognize the significance of preparing students for success across various professions - no matter the setting of their future career. Our goal is to ensure that students from all walks of life have access to high-quality education and the resources needed to pursue their academic and professional ambitions. We look forward to engaging with the community to tailor our academic offerings to meet the specific needs and aspirations of the students in this neighborhood.

The mascot of Sequoyah Middle as a Native / Indigenous warrior is racist and has no place in 2024 in a community and school district that prides themselves on diversity, inclusion, and progressive ideas. Will this continue to be the mascot for the new schools?

Thank you for expressing your concerns about the current mascot at Sequoyah Middle School. With a project of this size, there is a naming committee that is formed to see if current or existing nomenclature is still a good fit, or if a name change that better aligns with the community is warranted. A dedicated naming committee is actively engaged in this project, and their goal is to ensure that the chosen mascot aligns with the community's values and represents inclusivity. For more detailed information on the committee's work and the considerations being taken into account, please reach out to the Sequoyah Middle School Principal, who can provide further insight. We value your input and encourage your continued involvement in shaping the identity of our schools in a manner that respects and reflects our diverse community.

Are these new schools being built to match the projected future student populations? Will there be redistricting that affects all of Doraville and Cross Keys as well?

The construction of the new schools is being meticulously planned to align with projected future student populations. Our design incorporates flexibility to adapt to changing educational needs and any potential shifts in the population. While redistricting is a consideration to optimize resources and balance student enrollments, any such decisions would be made in consultation with the community and with the utmost transparency. Our goal is to create learning environments that not only meet the current needs of students but are adaptable to accommodate any potential future changes in student demographics or population dynamics.

Where will students learn during construction? Won't the noise be disruptive to learning and extracurricular activities?

Rest assured, the construction plan has been carefully devised to minimize disruption to students' learning and extracurricular activities. The middle school will be the initial focus of construction, allowing current students to remain in their existing location until the new middle school building is completed. Only after the seamless transition of middle school students to the new facility will the existing middle school be demolished to make way for the construction of the high school. This phased approach aims to ensure that students experience minimal interference during the learning process and extracurricular engagements. We have successfully accomplished this on major projects at McNair MS, Indian Creek ES, Pleasantdale ES, Henderson MS, Redan HS, and Obama ES in the past several years. We are committed to maintaining a conducive environment for education throughout the construction process and appreciate your understanding as we work towards providing state-of-the-art facilities for our students.

Why wasn't any consideration made for the neighborhood behind the school that now have 5 story buildings behind their property?

DeKalb County School District acknowledges your concern about the impact of the new schools on the neighborhood. The topography of the site plays a crucial role in our design considerations, and we want to assure you that careful planning has been undertaken to minimize any imposing street presence. The natural contours of the land will be leveraged to create a school layout that is respectful of the surrounding neighborhood. By strategically positioning the buildings, we aim to mitigate the visual impact on the properties in the neighborhood. We understand the importance of maintaining the character of the neighborhood, and our design approach prioritizes harmony with the existing landscape to create a school environment that integrates seamlessly with the community. We appreciate your input and remain committed to addressing community concerns throughout the planning and construction process.

Are all the fields necessary? I think you are putting too much on one piece of property. Ball fields need to be further away from our homes. How many middle schools and high schools have this many fields?

The decision to include multiple fields is a result of careful planning to optimize the use of limited space while accommodating a variety of sports activities. It's important to note that the middle school and high school will share these fields, promoting efficient use of resources. Additionally, the fields are designed to be multipurpose, with the baseball field doubling as a softball field and the football field serving as a soccer field. This approach maximizes flexibility and minimizes the need for excessive space. We are committed to being good neighbors, and the shared, multipurpose design aims to balance the needs of the schools with the concerns of the surrounding community. We are open to further discussion to ensure a positive and harmonious coexistence with the neighborhood.

There are unique spaces for students in these plans, but does a current curriculum exist so that students can actually take advantage of them? There was mention of green space learning and a test kitchen, but do we have the curriculum to teach students in these spaces?

As part of our comprehensive approach to educational planning, we are actively collaborating with the Curriculum and Instruction Department to develop and implement innovative programs that align with these unique spaces.

The green space learning areas and the test kitchen, for instance, are envisioned to enhance hands-on, experiential learning opportunities. We are committed to designing a curriculum that capitalizes on these specialized environments, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and practical skills acquisition for our students. Continuous collaboration with educators and community stakeholders will guide the refinement and implementation of a curriculum that maximizes the potential of these unique learning spaces.

Where will the dump trucks and construction equipment be during this process? Will they be placed on one road, or are we expected to deal with them on both Aztec and Stewart for four years?

We understand and share your concern about the potential impact of construction on the local roads. During the construction process, we are committed to minimizing disruption to the community as much as possible. Our construction management plan includes measures to consolidate equipment and minimize the use of both Aztec and Stewart roads for the convenience and safety of residents. We are working closely with local authorities to implement traffic management strategies and to ensure that any inconveniences are mitigated to the best extent possible. All construction equipment will be on site and will not be stored on streets. Additionally, regular communication channels will be established to keep the community informed about construction activities and any adjustments to traffic patterns. Your understanding and patience are highly appreciated as we work to bring positive changes to the community.

Is the Construction Advisory Committee (CAC) been involved with this project so far? If so, how often is the CAC meeting with the architects and is the CAC's feedback being implemented? If not, and how can the CAC be involved in the future?

The Construction Advisory Committee (CAC) was not formed for this project due to a lack of respondents, and instead, a decision was made to prioritize seeking direct input from all community members through public meetings rather than relying on a small group of representatives. While the CAC has not been involved in the project thus far, the emphasis on open public meetings ensures that the broader community has the opportunity to provide feedback and contribute to the decision-making process. This approach ensures a more inclusive and representative engagement with the community, allowing diverse perspectives to shape the project's development. We value the collaborative spirit of the community and appreciate your interest in ensuring that the project reflects the collective vision and needs of all stakeholders.

What is the capacity for the schools? Does the design include room for expansion? If so, to what size?

The capacity of the schools is a crucial consideration in our design process, and we are meticulously planning to ensure that the facilities meet both current and future needs. Current population projections led to a design that has a capacity of 1,200 for the middle school and 1,600 for the high school. The design includes provisions for expansion, allowing for flexibility in accommodating potential increases in student enrollment over time. The specific size of the expansion will be determined based on a thorough analysis of demographic trends, population growth projections, and input from educational experts. This approach aligns with our commitment to creating sustainable and adaptable learning environments that can evolve with the changing needs of the community. As we progress, we will continue to engage with stakeholders, including the community, to refine our plans and ensure that the schools effectively serve the present and future needs of students.

Will projects like this be duplicated throughout DeKalb County or only in Doraville?

While the current project's design and footprint is site specific for the Sequoyah cluster, the potential for similar projects throughout DeKalb County will depend on various factors, including future community needs, population growth, and educational infrastructure requirements. DCSD will likely evaluate and prioritize construction projects based on a comprehensive assessment of each community's needs. The decision to replicate projects elsewhere will involve careful consideration of demographic trends, available resources, and community input. As the county continues to evolve, collaboration between the school district and local communities will play a key role in determining future construction initiatives that best serve the educational needs of all residents.

How many seats are in the auditorium?

The auditorium within the new school facility is designed to accommodate 600 seats. This size is carefully planned to provide ample seating for various school events, performances, and community gatherings. The spacious auditorium aims to create an inclusive and engaging environment where students can showcase their talents, and the community can come together for enriching experiences. We believe that this capacity strikes a balance, allowing for a vibrant and participatory atmosphere while ensuring the comfort and enjoyment of all attendees.

How was the decision made as to where and to who this meeting was publicized? What does the DCSD consider "community" for the school cluster? I only see families of existing students. Did you speak to the neighbors at all during this process?

The decision regarding the publicization of this meeting aimed to reach a broad spectrum of the community, and we utilized various communication channels, such as school messages, flyers, and social media, to advertise the event. The term "community" for the school cluster encompasses not only families of existing students but also neighbors, local businesses, and other stakeholders who contribute to the collective well-being of the area. That said, there is clearly a need to engage with neighbors throughout the planning process that meets them where they are, including outreach through community meetings and other online platforms. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions as to where we can achieve better reach.
