

Parents United in Support of International Leadership Charter School: Our Community, Our Schools, Our Choice

March 17, 2023

Dear Community Member and Neighbors,

We write today to respond and correct misinformation or misconceptions the “*Stop the Charter School*” campaign has put forward regarding the construction of our new middle school. The International Leadership Charter High School is a high performing college-preparatory community-grown charter school serving college-aspiring students and families in Community School District 10 for 17 years and has received recognition from U.S. News and World Report since 2013.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/new-york/districts/new-york-city-public-schools/international-leadership-charter-school-13474>

The International Leadership CHS has impacted the lives of nearly 300 scholars and their families, each year and is committed to addressing the need for increasing college enrollment of Bronx students. Our mission provides children of immigrants and first-generation families from Latinx, African American, African, and Caribbean communities. Over 75% of the students are considered low-income or working class, and more than 80% are the first in their families to attend college.

In addition, members of the school’s leadership team, parents, Board of Trustees are Bronx-natives living, working, and investing in the future of this community. The developer constructing the middle school is a local business owner and a community resident. We are proud that a new middle school for the Kingsbridge community will soon open with a commitment to serving all students. For the record we respond below to the inaccurate and erroneous claims that is being disseminated throughout the neighborhood. Thank you for your continued support as we work to create a school that will serve the needs of our community for generations to come.

On January 3, 2023, parent board members, representatives of the charter school’s leadership team, our architects, owner’s representative Mr. Alex Weiss, Mr. Chen were in attendance at a “neighbors” meeting. The meeting participants included members of the NY Teachers Coop at Tibbett Towers on West 232nd Street, and Mr. Danny O’Shaughnessy property owner. This meeting was held over zoom, hosted by Assemblyman Dinowitz’s Office meeting where there were approximately 40 participants in attendance and provided responses to the below concerns. We document our responses below.

Community Educational Need

“The project sponsors have failed to show that there is an educational need being met by building yet another school in this neighborhood.”

Our response: The Bronx is the borough with the largest number of non-white residents, (1.3 million) and where numerous patterns of inequity play out simultaneously. They include health outcome disparities, food and housing insecurity, high joblessness, quality broadband access, gaps in educational achievement and overall economic security and mobility options to name a few. The child poverty rate in zip code 10463 is 31% (equity.nyc.gov). The New York State Education Department has designated Community School District 10 as a Targeted School District, meaning this school district struggles to prepare student subgroups on some or all success indicators. This neighborhood is in Community School District 10, our school’s catchment area. Our middle school plan offers parents of color a choice and alternative for their children to engage in a high quality, safe learning environment. While the middle school is on a separate campus, it is part of the same charter.

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Financial Concerns: *“The arrival of more students, traffic, pollution, and other concerns will negatively affect the quality of living in this community and the property value of our residences.”*

Communities with great schools see property values increase. There is not an example in New York City of property values decreasing with the addition of great educational options for residents. It is regressive and shameful at worst, to believe that anyone in this community would claim that constructing a middle school for the future scholars from this community devalues property. We’re talking about educating the same families who patronize local businesses, pay rent, taxes and who have historically lifted the Borough for its children.

Traffic

“The proposed school plans do not provide for parking space or designated safe drop off and pick up location for the students.”

Our response: As a community-grown organization, we are committed to serving the students of Kingsbridge. Most students will be traveling within the community and will not require busing, nor will they need to be driven to the school by parents. We are also taking measures to minimize traffic by having staff park offsite and scheduling pick up and drop off times that don’t coincide with other schools in the neighborhood. Finally, we are planning for school staff to effectively oversee drop off and pick up in the mornings and afternoons.

Environmental Impact

“The land hosts the Tibbetts Brook underneath which causes severe flooding on the streets and residences. There are no garbage cans or pick up stations on the block raising sanitation concerns.”

Our response: We care deeply about our impact on the environment. That is why the developer’s engineers evaluated all site conditions during design, and ensured the school is fully compliant with all zoning and building code requirements. We plan to take steps to limit our environmental impact by maintaining a trash-free school by implementing the same processes used at our high school and employing the same standard of cleanliness that our janitorial and maintenance services provide.

Facility and Safety

“The school fails to offer sufficient on-site facilities to comply with New York State Education Department requirements.”

Our response: Our Board of Trustees and authorizer SUNY Charter Schools Institute, (CSI), have approved our middle school expansion. The new middle school will be a state-of-the-art facility with dedicated spaces for physical education, the arts, and general instruction. Like all public schools, the school building is designed with the safety of students in mind.

Sincerely,

Parents United for the International Leadership Charter Schools

Cc: Board of Trustees

Dr. Elaine Ruiz Lopez

SUNY CSI