



# PLATTSBURGH CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Jay Lebrun

Superintendent of Schools

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December 9, 2019

Matthew Miller  
Director of Community Development  
City of Plattsburgh  
41 City Hall Place  
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Mr. Miller:

This correspondence will serve as the Plattsburgh City School District's official response to the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) for the Downtown Area Improvement Projects, as prepared by Chazen Engineering, Land Surveying & Landscape Architecture Co.. We would like for this correspondence to be made part of the official record of the approval proceedings for that document, and to be referenced at the public hearing scheduled for December 9, 2019.

The DGEIS features a great deal of information, and the district offers no position on most of the topics covered therein. One subject, however – the Estimated School-Age Children in Public Schools (and the related costs associated therewith) – is of great interest and concern. In sum:

- The estimate is wholly contrary to all information which the district has thus far been provided by the City of Plattsburgh. Mayor Read has consistently asserted that the developers would be targeting affluent single individuals and retired couples, **and that no school-age children were projected to live in this development.** This assertion is now contradicted by the DGEIS.
- The narrative which follows Table 45 suggests that, because the districts' student population has decreased over the past two decades, the projected increase of 2.3 students per grade "is not anticipated to have a significant impact on facilities". This assumption is flawed. In contrast to decades past, schools currently feature much-expanded special education and student-support programming – which is highly space-intensive. So, despite a decreased student population since 2000, I assure you that our buildings are full.

#### MISSION

*Our mission is to educate each student of the Plattsburgh City School District by creating challenging, supportive, and interactive learning that advances intellectual, physical, social, and cultural development.*

- The assumption that 30 additional students will be evenly spread across all grade levels is equally-flawed. Though there is no way to predict such, it is certain that the degree of enrollment increase would vary across our grade levels and schools, and it is possible that while certain grade levels may see no increase, others might increase by 5 or 8 or 10 students. Increases of this magnitude at certain grade levels would very likely necessitate the creation of an additional class section, and may present physical space constraints.
- Of greatest concern is the impression created by the DGEIS – whether intended or not – that the addition of 30 students would not have any significant budget impact. To be fair, the report’s narrative stated that the development “...is not anticipated to have a significant impact **on facilities**”, and did not specifically attest to non-impact on budgets and programming. But to be clear, the addition of 30 students is projected to have a significant budgetary impact. Specifically, **the local costs (ie. after State aid is removed) to taxpayers for an influx of students of this magnitude is projected to be \$335,400 per year.** This figure blends the State-verified local education costs for elementary and secondary, special education and regular education students, reflecting the district’s current populations for each. The calculation which yielded this figure is straightforward, and it would be my pleasure to share such with you. Again, of great importance to any conversation about the DRI/PRIME Plattsburgh proposed development is that an increase in student enrollment **will most certainly result in budgetary increases.** And, as the developer is petitioning for a significant payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) abatement, these increased costs, with the developer paying an effective tax rate far below that of other taxpayers, may well have a negative impact on educational programming.

The district continues to support economic development in the City of Plattsburgh, and offers no concern about the proposed DRI plan, *per se*. Rather, the district objects to such an extensive abatement of taxation, as this will concentrate the burden on existing taxpayers. Moreover, we are very concerned that the information which we have been provided previously – that no new students are expected from this development – now appears to be false. Finally, it should always be understood that an increase in student enrollment may or may not necessitate an expansion of the district’s facilities, but will absolutely entail an increase in expense... any suggestion otherwise is irresponsible and unfair to the district’s taxpaying constituents.

With thanks, and on behalf of the Board of Education,



Jay Lebrun  
Superintendent of Schools

Copy: Plattsburgh Common Council, Clinton County Legislature, Press Republican

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