

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) NAME: The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School

BOARD CHAIR NAME: Wendy Pugh

SUBMISSION DATE: July 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Facility Amendment Request

SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Campus name(s): The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School

Year(s) opened: SY2020-2021

Grades served: 6-12

Year the school will undergo its next charter review or renewal: SY2029-2030

Proposal summary: The Sojourner Truth PCS is maintaining the campus at 1800 Perry St NE for its middle school, and completing renovation of the new campus at 3420 16th St NE for its high school. Because the 3420 16th St NE campus will likely not be available for occupancy until early to mid September, the school hopes to utilize 2917 8th St NE as a temporary facility for its high school students.

Year the school plans to implement the proposed changes: SY2025-2026

When did the school's board approve the proposed changes? Please attach minutes from the meeting and vote results.

Changes were approved on July 22, 2025. Meeting minutes and vote results attached.

FACILITY

1. Please check the box that best describes the school's proposed change.

- ☐ The LEA or a campus within the LEA is relocating from its current facility to a new facility.
- ☒ The LEA or a campus within the LEA is staying in its current facility and expanding into an additional facility (i.e., some students will attend the current facility while some will attend the proposed facility).

- ☐ The LEA seeks to open a new campus to be housed in a new facility. (Also complete the Expansion and/or Replication Amendment Application.)

2. In the table below, list the facility/facilities the school operates (i.e., the facility/facilities identified in the school's charter agreement). For each entry, report the facility name, the campus(es) and grades served within, and the address.

Current Facility/Facilities		
Facility Name	Campus Name(s); Grade(s) Served	Address
1800 Perry St NE; "Truth Middle School"	The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School (6-12)	1800 Perry St NE
3420 16th St NE; "Truth High School"	The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School (9-12)	3420 16th St NE

3. In the table below, list the facility/facilities the school seeks to operate (i.e., the facility/facilities the school will continue operating along with the facility the school proposes operating). For each entry, report the facility name, the campus(es) and grades served within, and the address.

Current Facility/Facilities		
Facility Name	Campus Name(s); Grade(s) Served	Address
1800 Perry St NE; "Truth Middle School"	The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School (6-8)	1800 Perry St NE
3420 16th St NE; "Truth High School"	The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School (9-12)	3420 16th St NE
2917 8th St NE; "Temporary Truth High School"	The Sojourner Truth Public Charter School (9-12)	2917 8th St NE

4. Will the school lease or purchase the proposed facility? If the school has already purchased or leased the facility, when did the school acquire it?

Truth intends to lease the proposed facility at 2917 8th St NE.

5. How will the new location impact current students? How will the school encourage student re-enrollment? How will the school support students in need of transportation to the new location?

The proposed, temporary location is in the same general neighborhood as Truth's new and permanent site, and both sites are equidistant to the Brookland metro station. The aim is for the proposed site to only be used by students for the first 2-3 weeks of school, while the D.C. Department of Buildings conducts inspections and approves our permanent new high school building (at 3420 16th St NE) for use. The proposed, temporary building will only serve our high school students, and our middle school students will remain at their current location (1800 Perry St NE). To support students in need of transportation, Truth plans to offer shuttle bus service from both the Fort Totten Metro Station and also from our other two campuses (1800 Perry St NE and 3420 16th St NE) for high school students that need it.

6. Will there be newly created seats for additional students? If so, discuss student recruitment efforts in the new school community.

This proposal does not include any newly created seats for additional students.

7. What is the maximum occupancy at the new location? If the maximum occupancy load for staff and students is less than the total number of staff and students who will occupy the facility at any point in the future, please explain how you will address this issue.

The proposed, temporary location is already approved via a certificate of occupancy for use as a charter school with food service and a maximum occupancy of 947. This significantly exceeds the number of students and staff (180 and 30, respectively) that Sojourner Truth intends to have in the space.

8. Does the proposed space require renovation? If so, describe the renovations the new location will need, either to serve as a school or to be accessible for students with disabilities.

No renovation is required, as the building was used by a school last year and is still in excellent condition for school use in the upcoming year. It is ADA compliant and accessible to students with disabilities.

9. Describe the proposed facility's neighborhood (i.e., is it residential or commercial, is it metro accessible). What value will the school add to the proposed neighborhood?

The proposed neighborhood is very close to the location of Sojourner Truth's long-term space. It is a largely residential neighborhood, and it is within walking distance of both the Brookland Metro and the Rhode Island Metro. Truth only intends to be in the proposed space for 2-3 weeks with students, but hopes to add value to the neighborhood by leveraging high school students and our Montessori "Enterprise Program" for the overall benefit of the neighborhood and surrounding neighbors. Students will be given regular opportunities for service hours focused on neighborhood beautification (such as for trash cleanups and flower plantings).

10. List the traditional and public charter schools near the new location, identifying schools that educate the same grade span your school serves/will serve. Describe how the school's mission and academic performance compared to these schools. What impact will the school's relocation have on enrollment at neighboring schools?

Same grade span:

- Luke C. Moore High School (DCPS) - 9-12 - 0.5 miles
- Coolidge High School (DCPS) - 3.9 miles
- McKinley Tech High School (DCPS) - 1.4 miles
- KIPP DC College Prep (PCS) - 1.8 miles

Other grade spans:

- John Burrows Elementary School (DCPS) - PK3-5 - 1.2 miles
- Perry Street Prep Public Charter School (PCS) - PK3-8 - 2.0 miles
- Noyes Education Campus (DCPS) - PK3-8 - 0.5 miles
- Brookland Middle School (DCPS) - 6-8 - 1.0 miles
- DC Prep (PCS) - 0.3 miles
- Capital Village (PCS) - 0.3 miles

11. When did the school hold an open board of trustees meeting to discuss the proposed change(s)?

The possible need for a temporary facility while construction occurs at our long-term high school campus has been a been a topic of discussion at each board meeting over the last 6

months. We have discussed various short-term facility contingency plans at the following meetings:

- December 7, 2024
- February 8, 2025
- April 5, 2025
- June 14, 2025

It was the meeting on June 14, 2025 when this particular site (2917 8th St NE) was first discussed as a possibility. A meeting was held on February 17, 2024 to specifically discuss and approve the pursuit and purchase of 3420 16th St NE.

12. Describe how the school has engaged its internal community in its decision to relocate or expand into the proposed location. Submit documentation of the school's communications with its staff and families regarding the proposed space. Identify the internal community's concerns and how the school is responding to their needs.

Our possible need for temporary swing space has been a topic of discussion at regular Truth Community Meetings (with families and staff) over the past school year (see attached PDF with slides from Community Meeting and examples of written messaging shared via email and Truth's family communication portal). Concerns have centered primarily around the location of any swing space and ensuring that it is as close as possible to the long-term high school campus at 3420 16th St NE, and that shuttle transportation be used to support students who commute via the Fort Totten metro each day. Truth feels good about finding a suitable short-term location so geographically close, and the school also plans to utilize the shuttle to support transportation.

13. Describe how the school has engaged the community surrounding the proposed location. Please attach documentation of communications with nearby principals, neighbors, ANC representatives, Councilmembers, and other community groups, notifying them of the school's plans.

- A. When did the school inform the ANC representatives of its facility plans?
Has the school already presented its facility plans during an ANC meeting?
If not, when will it do so?**

ANC 5B representatives have been aware of Truth's potential need for short-term swing space since February of 2025. ANC 5F representatives were made aware on July 21, 2025.

B. Summarize the external community's concerns, if any, and describe the school's response with specificity.

There have not yet been any concerns raised from the external community. Given the short-term nature of the proposed occupancy, and also the facility's recent use as a school, significant concerns are not anticipated. Over the week of July 28, 2025, all neighbors within a single block radius will be given direct contact info (cell phone and email) to Executive Director Justin Lessek, and encouraged to voice any concerns. The proposed facility includes a parking lot, and Sojourner Truth does not anticipate significant impact on neighborhood parking.

The Sojourner Truth team looks forward to replying to any concerns promptly.

14. Complete and submit DC PCSB's 5-Year Operating Budget template in accordance with its instructions.

Attached.

Our New Building!





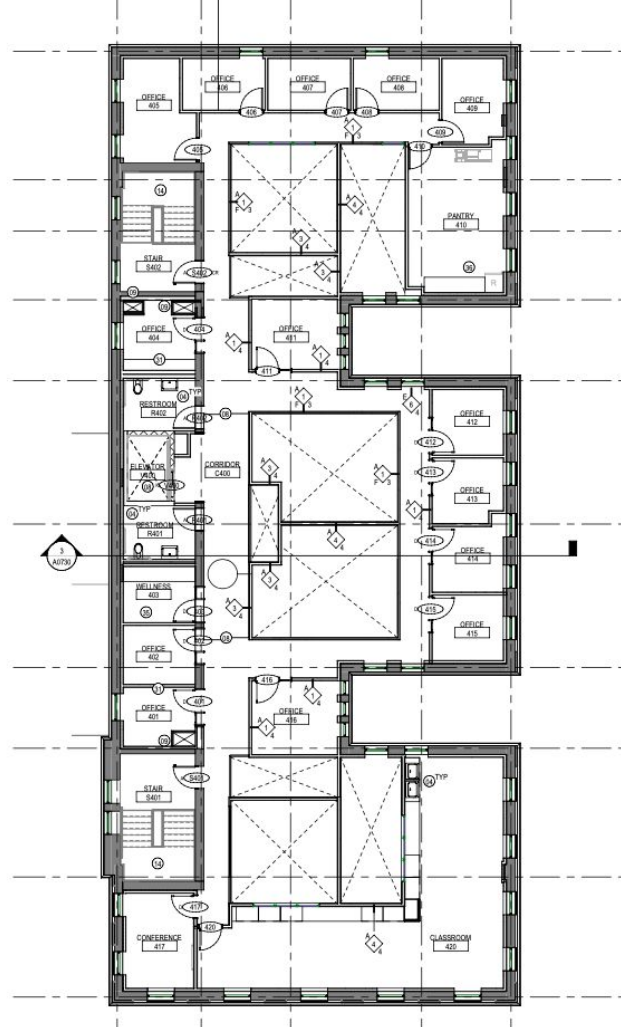
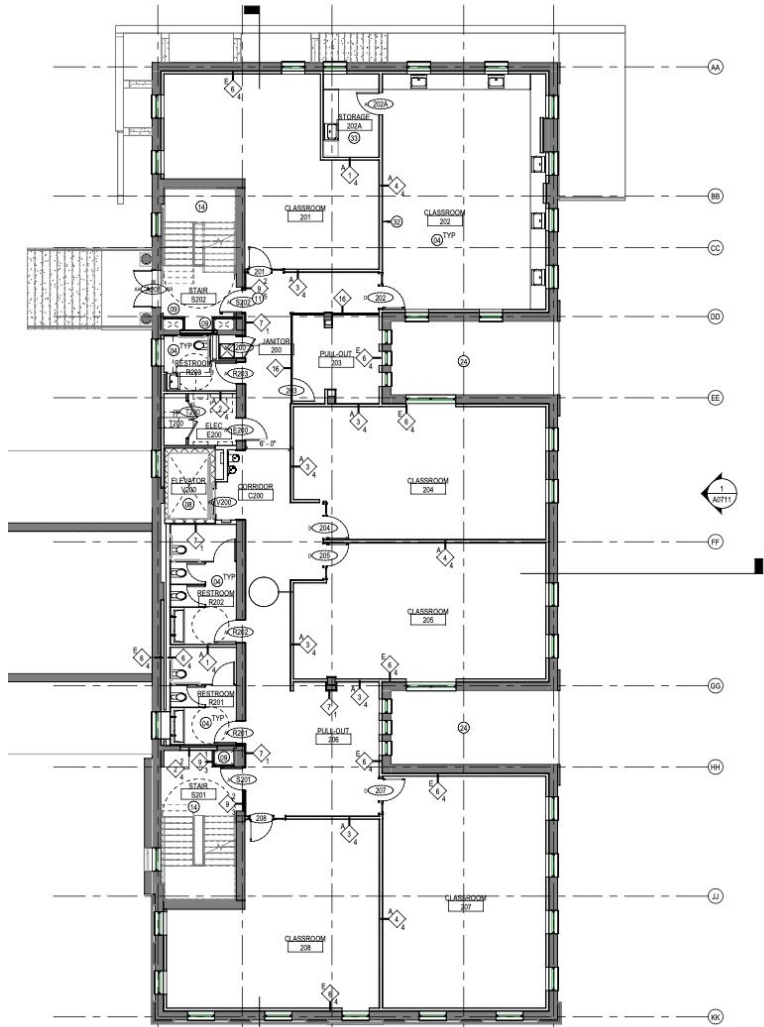


The Latest News...

- Construction progress
 - Roofing work close to 100% completion
 - Underground piping and elevator pit complete, elevator shaft almost complete
 - Steel and structural work
 - Masonry on exterior continuing
 - Wall framing ongoing
- Timing is tight
 - "*Schedule recovery plan*" has a completion date for mid-August
 - Worst case scenario currently has a delivery in October







The Latest News...

- Gilbane anticipates the school portion of the building being completed by mid-August, but final inspections from DOB taking up to 3 additional weeks
- **Our Plan:**
 - If the building is not ready for PD in mid-August, HS may start by spending a few weeks at 2917 8th St NE (Hope Tolson PCS Campus)
 - If the delay were to be only 1-2 weeks, the HS ILT might consider other ideas as well (i.e. *simply shifting the start of school back by one week, doing an off-site orientation and community-building week, etc*)



Justin Lessek <jlessek@truthpcs.org>

Hello from Sojourner Truth PCS

Justin Lessek <jlessek@truthpcs.org>

Mon, Jul 21, 2025 at 3:28 PM

To: 5F02@anc.dc.gov

Cc: 5F04@anc.dc.gov

Dear Commissioner Sahni,

My name is Justin Lessek, and I'm the Founding Executive Director at [Sojourner Truth Public Charter School](#). We are the District's first and only public Montessori middle and high school, and we currently have about 200 middle school students in the historic Taft Building along Perry St NE, and this school year we are opening our new high school building with about 170 students at 3420 16th St NE.

Our construction schedule for the high school is about 3 weeks behind where we would like it to be, and so we are anticipating possibly needing some very temporary school space. We have reached out to the owners at 2917 8th St NE, which is now unoccupied following the unfortunate closing of Hope-Tolson Public Charter School, to express inquiries about whether we may be able to lease the space for the first 2-3 weeks of the school year.

As the commission of 5F02, I wanted to reach out to see if you had any particular concerns about Sojourner Truth pursuing an arrangement like this, or perhaps any related thoughts or ideas. If in fact this is something that does work out for a short-term lease, we certainly want to be good partners in the neighborhood, so please let me know what you think we might be able to do to make that happen.

Best,
Justin Lessek
773-318-5156

Sojourner Truth Montessori Public Charter School
1800 Perry Street NE, Washington, DC 20018



Justin Lessek <jlessek@truthpcs.org>

High School building update: 7/21/2025

Justin Lessek <jlessek@truthpcs.org>

Mon, Jul 21, 2025 at 8:36 AM

Bcc: Kristen Whitaker <kwhitaker@truthpcs.org>, Nicole Gibbs <ngibbs@truthpcs.org>, Adam Corbin <acorbin@truthpcs.org>, Nacho Nwana <nnwana@truthpcs.org>, Lorenzo Christy <lchristy@truthpcs.org>, Jade Talley <jtalley@truthpcs.org>, Greg Patton <gpattson@truthpcs.org>, Kelly Lindsay <klindsay@truthpcs.org>, Jordan Young <jyoung@truthpcs.org>, Winston Whitten <wwhitten@truthpcs.org>, Thomas Massanier <tmassanier@truthpcs.org>, Roy Adams <radams@truthpcs.org>, Brijon Lashley <blashley@truthpcs.org>, Ana Yanez <ayanez@truthpcs.org>, Sagari Rao <srao@truthpcs.org>, Leadership Team <lt@truthpcs.org>, Lindsey Papion <lpapion@truthpcs.org>, Tykeshia Oates <toates@truthpcs.org>, Gregory Eubanks <geubanks@truthpcs.org>, Evelyn Clark <eclark@truthpcs.org>, Yolonda Lampkin <ylampkin@truthpcs.org>, Andre Brown <abrown@truthpcs.org>, Marcus Isaiah <misaiah@truthpcs.org>, Brandon Marshall <bmarshall@truthpcs.org>, Miguel Gandarela <mgandarela@truthpcs.org>, Iyana Martin <imartin@truthpcs.org>, Ebone Myers <emyers@truthpcs.org>, Sue Tun <stun@truthpcs.org>, Lela Hackley <lhackley@truthpcs.org>, Shantaé Elliott <sellott@truthpcs.org>, Debbie Childs <dchilds@truthpcs.org>, Chinon Burns <cburns@truthpcs.org>, Deja Baskerville <dbaskerville@truthpcs.org>

Dear High School (and Electives) Team,

We're excited to share that construction of the new high school facility is progressing rapidly. The primary focus right now is on completing the main school building portion. The "connector" section (including the long-term entrance) will follow within the next couple of months, and the gym will be added some time after that.

While the timeline remains tight, we are optimistic that the building will be completed prior to the first day of school. Formal occupancy, however, is dependent on the Department of Buildings' inspection process, which will likely push things back by a couple of weeks.

To ensure a smooth start to the year, we are planning conservatively and have two back-up options in place. The most likely scenario is using a nearby school site for both pre-service PD (for HS staff) and potentially the first 1–2 weeks of school if needed. An alternate, less likely option would involve shifting our start date back by one week and then beginning with one virtual week before starting in-person learning.

Our goal remains to start the year together and in-person, so we are prioritizing the nearby space option. We expect to hear from the Department of Buildings soon regarding inspections, and will share a finalized plan by the first week of August.

A similar update will be going out to parents later today or tomorrow, but I wanted to make sure to share with staff first.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out directly with any questions. I hope you have a great second month of summer, and I will look forward to seeing everyone in August for what I know will be a wonderful SY25-26!

Justin

Sojourner Truth Montessori Public Charter School
1800 Perry Street NE, Washington, DC 20018