

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the City Council Committee on Education to hold public hearings to investigate strategies and offer recommendations for the adaptive reuse of school buildings that will become shuttered as a result of recent school closures, mergers and relocations and urging the Administration to include Councilmembers in all efforts to work with the School District of Philadelphia, City agencies, communities, and developers in repurposing those buildings.

WHEREAS, The School Reform Commission has voted to close 23 schools in the School District of Philadelphia for the 2013-2014 school year, with the likelihood that more school closures are imminent; and

WHEREAS, The shuttering of such a large number of schools in a short period of time presents a challenge to the School District with respect to finding new uses for those buildings; and

WHEREAS, It is important that studies for adaptive reuses be performed in a timely manner to avoid blight in communities and public safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, According to Harris Steinberg, FAIA, of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design, the School District of Philadelphia is not alone in confronting this problem, and numerous school closings will be occurring in cities across the nation, including Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, Washington D.C. and Cincinnati; and

WHEREAS, A study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design revealed that only 25 percent of the closed schools are located in strong real estate markets with the remaining 75 percent located in transitional or weak markets; and

WHEREAS, The Mayor has directed Deputy Mayor Alan Greenberger to organize an effort, with the School District and appropriate City agencies, to develop a plan for the repurposing of shuttered school buildings; and

WHEREAS, In view of the number of school closings, their dispersal throughout the City and the glut of newly vacated buildings, the effects of school closures will be borne by all residents in the City; and

WHEREAS, Before any decision is made about an individual school, residents and community members in the affected neighborhoods should be consulted; and

WHEREAS, Council wishes to conduct public hearings to determine the effects of school closings on the neighborhoods of the City, hear recommendations for the reuse of shuttered school buildings and ensure that these buildings do not become public safety hazards; and

WHEREAS, Because of the impact the shuttering of schools will have on the City, its neighborhoods and residents, it is imperative that City Council be represented at the table in any and all discussions pertaining to the reuse of vacant school buildings; now therefore

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the City Council Committee on Education is hereby authorized to hold public hearings to investigate strategies and offer recommendations for the adaptive reuse of school buildings that will become shuttered as a result of recent school closures, mergers and relocations.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That Council calls upon the Administration to include Councilmembers in all efforts to work with the School District of Philadelphia, City agencies and communities in repurposing those buildings.