

March 2016

School Construction: Mayor Adds \$1.4 Billion, More Than 11,700 New Seats to Revised Five-Year Capital Plan

In January, the School Construction Authority released an amendment to the five-year capital plan for fiscal years 2015 through 2019 that adds \$1.4 billion in new capital spending and brings the planned five-year spending total to \$14.9 billion. With a 10.4 percent increase over the plan released last May (and adopted in June), the latest amendment adds considerable funds to build or lease space for new schools and improve conditions in existing schools.

Among the communities gaining the most new seats under the revised plan are Community School Districts 30 in Queens and 13 and 15 in Brooklyn. District 19 in Brooklyn, which includes East New York, will get an additional 1,000 seat school in conjunction with the proposed rezoning of the neighborhood.

Projects in the capital plan are split into three main categories: capacity, capital investment, and mandated programs. Overall, almost \$820 million was added to capacity (a 17.0 percent increase) and more than \$600 million was added to capital investment (a rise of 12.3 percent). Total spending for mandated programs edged down by \$32 million (-0.9 percent).

Within the capacity category, increases for new capacity (\$956 million or 27.7 percent higher) and the pre-kindergarten initiative (\$150 million, a 28.8 percent increase) are partly offset by a steep \$288 million (82.3 percent) decline in the facility replacement program.

Within the category of capital investment, more than 60 percent of the new funding is added for projects dedicated to improving the interior or exterior components of existing school buildings. Despite the increase in total capital investment funding, there are cuts in funding for upgrades

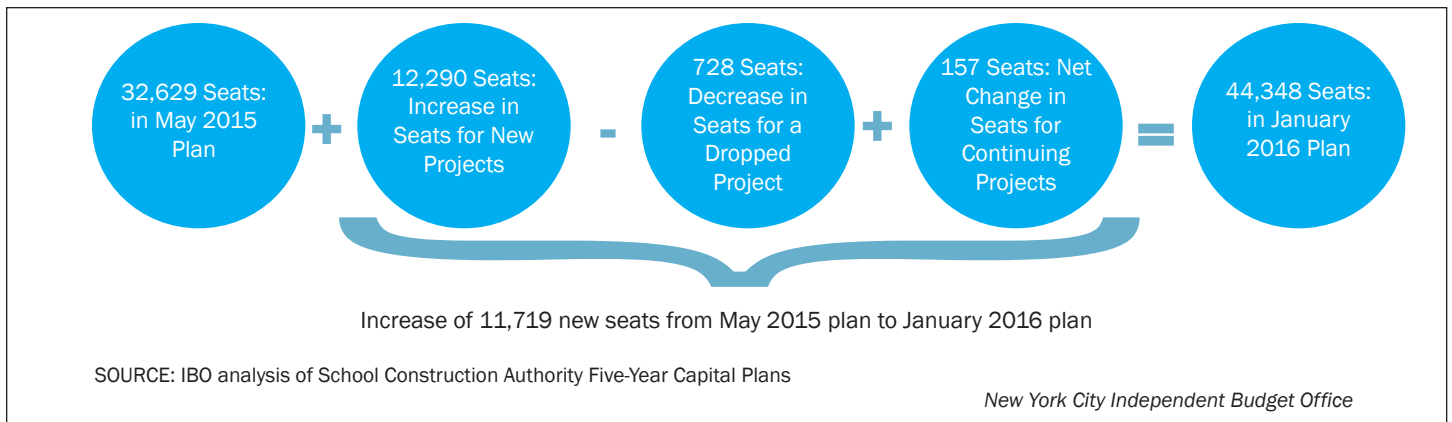
to gyms, auditoriums, and libraries; nearly all funding for library upgrades was eliminated. Almost \$170 million of the new funding was allocated by elected officials for capital improvement projects in schools in their districts or boroughs, bringing the total for those projects up to \$488 million over the five years.

New Capacity. With the additional \$956 million dedicated to new capacity, there is a net increase of 11,719 seats in the five-year plan. There were 32,629 seats in the May 2015 plan, and that increased by 35.9 percent, for a new total of 44,348 in the January 2016 plan.

The net increase in seats can be broken down into three parts: projects added to the January 2016 plan, projects dropped from the January plan, and changes to continuing projects from the May 2015 plan. All of the 12,290 seats added in the January plan are designated for elementary and middle school use—there are a total of 41,201 such seats in the plan (92.9 percent of all new seats). The number of high school seats remains at 3,147 in both plans; though one 728-seat project was dropped, its seats were shifted to other high school projects. Finally, there was a modest net increase of 157 seats for continuing projects contained in both the May and January plans.

Not all seats identified in the plan are scheduled to begin construction by the end of the five years; some are only scheduled for design during the 2015-2019 period, with construction and funding to pay for the work expected to occur in the next five-year plan (2020-2024). The number of seats funded for design only in the current five-year plan increased from 806 (2.5 percent of seats) in the May plan to 2,641 (6.0 percent of seats) in January. In the May 2015





plan there was one design-only project—in Manhattan’s district 2 (Chelsea/Midtown West). Three other projects have now been pushed back to design-only in this plan. One is in the Bronx’s district 12 (Tremont/West Farms); one is in Brooklyn’s district 14 (Williamsburg/Greenpoint); and one is in Queens’ district 30 (Astoria/Steinway). In the May plan, these three projects were expected to begin design in 2016; the start of design for all three is now pushed back to 2018. In addition to those seats that will begin construction in the next plan, there are also 2,641 seats (another 6.0 percent) in the January plan that are expected to begin construction in June 2019—the final month of the current five-year plan. In the May plan, there were 1,563 such seats (4.8 percent).

New Elementary and Middle School Seats by District. The four districts in Queens and Brooklyn that will gain the most seats in the new January plan are: districts 30, 15, 13, and 19. District 30—covering northwestern Queens including East Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, Woodside, Sunnyside, Long Island City, Ravenswood, Astoria, and Steinway—will get an additional 2,600 seats, bringing the total number of new seats to more than 4,500. District 15 in Brooklyn, which includes Sunset Park, Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Gowanus, and Red Hook, will get almost 1,650 more new seats bringing the total to more than 3,800. The number of new seats for District 13 in Brooklyn, covering northern Park Slope, Prospect Heights, DUMBO, the Navy Yard, and Fort Greene, has grown by more than 1,500 seats and now totals almost 2,600. Finally, district 19, covering Cypress Hills and East New York in Brooklyn, is now expected to get an additional 1,000 seat school as part of the Mayor’s East New York Community Plan.¹

Districts 30 and 15 are also among the districts with the most total seats in the plan. Only districts 20 in Brooklyn (covering Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Borough Park, Kensington, and Bensonhurst) and 24 in Queens (covering North Corona, South Corona, Lefrak City, Elmhurst,

Maspeth, Woodside, Middle Village, Glendale, and Ridgewood) are expected to get more seats—4,869 each.

Six other districts gained additional seats in the January plan. They are: the Kingsbridge, Norwood, and Bedford Park section of district 10 in the Bronx; the Bay Ridge section of district 20 in southwest Brooklyn; 3 districts in central and northern Queens—the North Corona, South Corona, Lefrak City, and Elmhurst section of district 24, the Beechhurst, College Point, and Whitestone section of district 25, and the Rego Park, Forest Hills, Kew Gardens, and Jamaica section of district 28; and the North Shore section of district 31 in Staten Island. Each district will gain an additional 824-seat project.

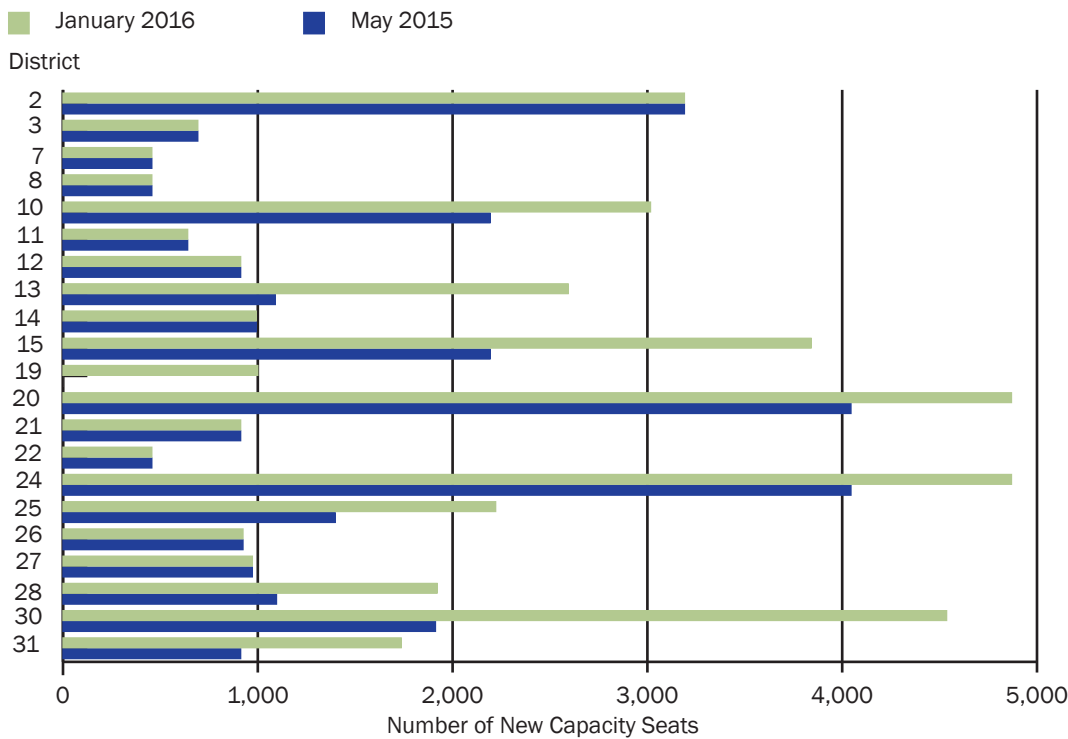
Districts Facing Severe Overcrowding Conditions.

In general, the districts with the largest gain in new elementary and middle school seats or for which the most seats are planned in the January plan are also the districts that face the most severe overcrowding. Two exceptions are district 26 in eastern Queens and district 22 in south Brooklyn, which are slated for relatively few new seats despite considerable overcrowding.

Using the 2014-2015 *Enrollment, Capacity & Utilization Report* (the “Blue Book”), IBO calculated the number of seats needed to alleviate overcrowding, which we define as the number of additional seats a building would require to accommodate all of its students and still maintain a utilization rate below 102.5 percent.² On this basis, the districts needing the greatest number of seats are: district 20 (almost 9,700 seats); district 24 (more than 8,600 seats); district 26 (more than 6,900 seats); district 25 (more than 6,100 seats); district 10 (almost 5,800 seats); district 28 (almost 5,600 seats); district 31 (almost 5,600 seats); and district 22 (almost 5,100 seats).

Among these eight districts with the greatest need, districts 26 and 22 have far fewer seats planned than are

Number of New Elementary and Middle School Seats by District



SOURCE: IBO analysis of School Construction Authority Five-Year Capital Plans

NOTE: The difference between the two bars is equal to the number of seats added in the January 2016 plan.

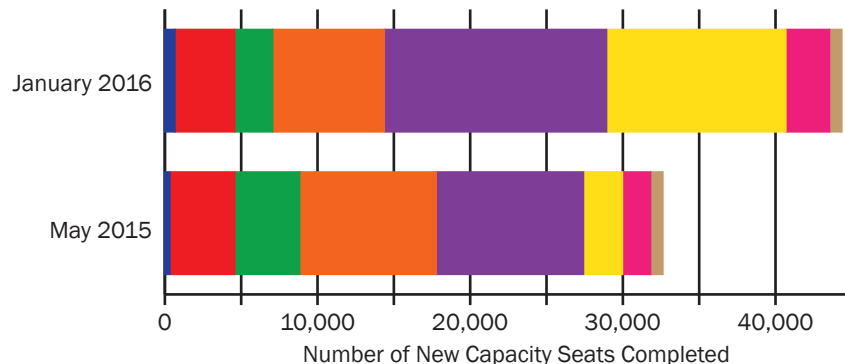
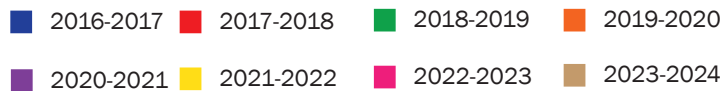
New York City Independent Budget Office

needed to alleviate current overcrowding. In district 26 in Queens, which covers Oakland Gardens, Fresh Meadows, Bayside, and Auburndale, it is worth noting that the School Construction Authority had tried to apportion some of the 2,802 new high school seats planned for Queens to a project that was to be sited in district 26. However, that project, which had been in the May plan, was cancelled due

to objections from Bayside residents to a new high school that was proposed at the site of the Bayside Jewish Center.³ District 22 in Brooklyn, covering Flatlands, Midwood, and Mill Basin, also faces a considerable shortage that will remain largely unmet.

Timeline for When New Seats are Expected. Seats are expected to be completed a little slower in the January plan

Timeline for Expected New Capacity Seats by School Year: Comparing May 2015 and January 2016 Plans



SOURCE: IBO analysis of School Construction Authority Five-Year Capital Plans

NOTE: Chart shows the school year for which seats will be completed and ready to come online.

New York City Independent Budget Office

compared with the May plan. If all target dates are met, however, the new plan catches up and actually surpasses the number of seats expected to be ready in the May plan by the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. By then, almost 29,000 of the January plan's new seats (65.3 percent) will have become available. An additional 11,700 seats will be added in time for the following school year (2021-2022), meaning over 91 percent of the capital plan's new seats would be completed. The last of the new seats will be completed in time for 2023-2024 school year.

For the projects newly added in the January plan, those seats will be completed in time for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The majority of those seats (almost 60 percent) are to be completed by the

beginning of the 2021-2022 school year—accounting for more than 62 percent of all new seats in that year. Another third are to be completed by 2020-2021, about 28 percent of all new seats in that year. Finally, 7 percent of the newly added seats will be ready in time for the 2019-2020 school year, 12.5 percent of all new seats in that year.

Prepared by Sarita Subramanian

Endnotes

¹[East New York Community Planning](#)

²Please refer to IBO's [testimony](#) at last year's City Council hearing on overcrowding for more details on our calculations.

³Edmonds, Lynn. "[School Plans Cancelled at Bayside Jewish Center.](#)" Queens Tribune: November 25, 2015.

Share on



Receive notification of IBO's free reports by
[E-mail](#) [Text](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [RSS](#)