

PRINCIPAL POINTS STATEMENT

**FRIENDS OF QUALITY EDUCATION, INC.
79 CAVEN POINT AVENUE
(FORMERLY 20 AND 65 COMMERCIAL STREET)
Block 24301, Lot 1.01
Block 23704, Lot 23**

This Principal Points Statement is submitted today, December 22, 2022, to the Jersey City Planning Board (the “Board”) by Friends of Quality Education, Inc. (“FQE”), together with a site plan and most other documents¹ requested by the Planning Board in connection with its desire to conduct a Section 31 Review of plans for the construction of public school facilities for BelovED Community Charter School, Inc., and Empowerment Academy Charter School, Inc. (collectively, “the Schools”). The facilities will be developed for the Schools by FQE at 79 Caven Point Avenue (formerly 20 and 65 Commercial Street), which is identified as Block 24301, Lot 1.03 (formerly Block 24301, Lot 1.01, and Block 23704, Lot 23), on the official Tax Map of the City of Jersey City (the “Property”). The Property is located within the Civic/Residential Buildings District of the Canal Crossing Redevelopment Plan area.

FQE will also be constructing an offsite improvement on a parcel of land identified as Block 24301, Lot 1.02, on the Jersey City Tax Map: a segment of the Morris Canal Greenway (the “Greenway”). This parcel of land is adjacent to the Property but is owned by the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency (“JCRA”).

The Property is presently unimproved except for a small paved parking lot next to Caven Point Avenue, some fencing, and some unpaved vehicle pathways. The charter public school campus to be constructed (the “Campus”) will feature approximately 275,000 sf of instructional facilities; an adjoining parking garage/deck; an adjoining bus maintenance facility; a bus parking area; an eastern driveway open to the public; and a western service loop off of the eastern driveway that will provide: 1) access to the bus parking area and bus drop off and pick up areas on the back side of the instructional buildings; 2) access to the parking garage/deck for school staff or school/event visitors on the back side of the instructional buildings; 3) a second means of egress from the Campus for school buses and staff vehicles; and 4) a second means of access to and egress from both the Campus and JCRA-owned property that is south of Bayview Avenue and is not, at present, accessible via public roads.

The aforementioned instructional facilities and adjoining facilities will include:

¹ There are two requested documents that are not being submitted today. The City’s Traffic Engineer has requested a traffic study that will be submitted upon study completion in January. The JCMUA has requested that a Stormwater Management Plan be submitted, but has formally waived the submission being made at this time because the JCMUA has studies being undertaken for it in January to inform its filing of an amendment to its Stormwater Permit for the overall Redevelopment Area. When these studies are completed and the JCMUA has finalized its Stormwater Management Plan for the area, it will provide FQE specifications relating to any stormwater management facilities FQE should include on the Property for the project to comply with the JCMUA’s Stormwater Permit for the Area.

- One Elementary School (69,508 sf) for 720 students serving a K-3 Primary Academy and a Grade 3-5 Upper Elementary Academy;
- One Middle School (35,054sf) for 360 students;
- Two High Schools (89,016 sf in total) for a combined 960 students
- A Commons Area (82,362 sf) that houses spaces shared by the Schools (e.g., gymnasiums, cafeterias, a theater and music practice rooms);
- A Parking Garage/Deck (140,257 sf) beneath and adjacent to the Commons Area that will eliminate off-property parking by school staff and visitors;
- A 34,000 sf Playing Field and a Children's Playground on the roof of Commons Area; and
- Beautifully Landscaped Plazas.

These will be high quality school facilities designed to support the top quality instruction our Jersey City children deserve. For instance, each of the two high schools will have:

- fully-outfitted Chemistry, Biology/Earth Sciences and Physics Labs;
- a Technology Lab;
- a Maker Space for the study of robotics, electronics, CAD-based design and 3-D printing, etc.;
- an Art Room with a potter's wheel and kiln;
- a large College and Career Counseling Suite; and
- general social-emotional/life counseling offices.

Meanwhile, the co-located high schools will share:

- a triple-sized gymnasium and its supporting weight room and athletic training room;
- an acoustically first rate 500-seat auditorium designed for theatrical and musical study and performances, with back stage and control rooms;
- large music classrooms and Instrumental Practice Rooms;
- a digital production studio; and
- a roof-deck synthetic field for physical education and sports practice.

The Greenway property owned by the JCRA is also presently unimproved. This offsite improvement by FQE of JCRA property will, subject to City guidance and approval, feature walking and bicycle paths, landscaping, lighting, a retaining wall and fencing. FQE will coordinate its construction of the Greenway with development by the JCRA, the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority, or their agents of a storm water management system, public sewer lines and public utilities beneath the Greenway.

Public school facilities are not subject to local zoning regulations, and the plans being presented with this document are being submitted in connection with a Section 31 Review, not for Planning Board approval. We do note, however, that the Campus falls entirely within a portion of the Canal Crossing Redevelopment Area for which school facilities are an allowable use.

We also note that the Schools have endeavored to conform their plans to Redevelopment Plan requirements whenever possible. However, some Redevelopment Area requirements are applicable to new residential development, which is predominantly what will be taking place in the Area, but are not applicable to public schools. Others speak to buildings lining city streets (which is the case for every other building in the Redevelopment Area), but do not speak to the interior of a campus where the closest structure to a city street is 63 feet away and visually screened by trees and shrubs.

That all said, the following are items for which variances would be sought were the facilities not public schools:

- The Building Design Requirements on pages 10-12 of the Redevelopment Plan appear oriented to housing development, not to public school facilities.
 - Item 5 requires that at least 2 different architects from 2 different firms be utilized to design the exterior of the buildings on an individual development block. This is appropriate for a block comprised of numerous discrete residential buildings, but not for a block occupied by a single, large public school facility. To create a cohesive Campus, these school facilities were designed by a single firm: KSS Architects of Princeton, NJ.
 - Item 6 requires that brick be used as the face material of redevelopment area buildings, which is appropriate for the townhomes that will predominate in the redevelopment area, but not for this Campus's large building. The base of the Campus's school building will be brick, but fiber-cement board will be the main material higher up on the front facades, and metal panels will be used on the back facades.
- The Campus's parking garage/deck (which will largely be screened by the instructional buildings being in front of it and trees and shrubbery on its northern side) will provide 54 more parking spaces than the maximum for civic buildings in the Redevelopment Plan. We believe the increased on-site parking we are providing will benefit the school, surrounding neighborhoods and Jersey City. Our staff size is larger than at many public schools because we bring in almost all of our students by bus. This reduces traffic on city streets but increases the need for bus driver and aide parking while the buses are in use. Moreover, the site is intended to become a community and county resource where sports tournaments, theatrical or musical productions, and large assemblies are held during non-school hours. We do not want staff members or site visitors parking in front of the facilities or outside of the Campus on city streets, taking up parking spaces in nearby neighborhoods that should be left for the residents.
- None of our trash receptacles will be viewable from any city street, from our own driveway, or from the Greenway. But they will not all be in buildings or the parking garage/deck. Some will be in special screened areas outside of our parking garage readily accessible to our garbage pickup vendor.
- The Campus will meet LEED Silver requirements but FQE will not apply for certification. The Schools add grade levels each year and it is important that the facilities be ready for occupancy in September 2025, so we cannot layer on applications and processes that have the potential to cause delays.
- Monument signs are prohibited under the Redevelopment Plan. But at this Campus, the school facilities will line a long internal driveway that extends south from Caven Point Avenue; they will not be on Caven Point Avenue itself. So while there will be signs on the buildings that identify the elementary school academies, the middle school, and the two high schools to people on campus, it is important that there be a monument sign (which will be flush with our fence) at the entrance to the Campus driveway identifying the

Campus as a whole and the two charter schools that are operating in Campus facilities.

- Some academy identifying signs (e.g., “BelovED Primary Academy” or “Empowerment Academy High School”) align with the second story of the main structure, but all of these signs are internal to the campus. None are viewable from city streets.
- We will only have one sign per use, but the aggregate of all signs will exceed the 50 square foot maximum.
- The Redevelopment Plan requires that utility transformers be located underground or within a building, which is an appropriate requirement for buildings that line a city street and where the utility lines enter the buildings from the front. Our building is removed from public streets and the utility line bringing power to the campus will come in underground from Caven Point Avenue to an aboveground transformer that is far from Caven Point Avenue, on the side and towards the rear of the large school building, and visually screened both from Caven Point Avenue and from the campus driveway in front of the building by trees and shrubbery.

The objective of the Canal Crossing Redevelopment Plan is to encourage: development with a mixture of uses, high quality building design and an intensity of development that will allow for a self-sufficient and vibrant new community serving as a model for healthy urban growth. The public school facilities being constructed by FQE are critical to the realization of this objective – and to the future of Jersey City as a whole.

Jersey City is experiencing rapid and intense redevelopment from one end to the other. Indeed, four redevelopment project close to the property will by themselves result in over 21,000 new residential units being constructed: 7,000 in the [Canal Crossing Redevelopment Area](#) itself; 3,000 in a single corner of the expansive [Route 440/Culver Avenue Redevelopment Area](#); 3,000 in the [Westview Redevelopment Area](#); and 8,000 as part of the massive [Bayfront Redevelopment Area](#).

To serve Jersey City’s rapidly rising population and achieve “healthy urban growth,” thousands of additional public school seats need to be brought online – *and soon* – in a way that doesn’t break the back of local property taxpayers. This will be a challenge because the land available to build new public schools is becoming increasingly scarce and expensive, the cost of construction is soaring, and besides its obligations to the Jersey City Public Schools District, the State has 30 other former Abbott Districts for which it is responsible to build public schools.

BelovED and Empowerment Academy are modeling how this challenge can be met. They are:

- 1) Using the Property intensively so 2,040 new school seats can be brought online by 2025, and hundreds of additional public school seats can be brought online in the future in the area that will initially be used for school bus parking;
- 2) Co-locating their high schools so that the per-student-cost of high quality space can be slashed through “Commons” space sharing; and
- 3) Paying for their facility space out of their regular operating budgets, as the State requires of charter schools. (This is in contrast to the approach that the State takes for traditional public schools, where **on top** of taxpayer funding provided for school operations, the State asks taxpayers to come up with **extra** money to pay for school facilities.)

The BelovED and Empowerment Academy facilities to be developed on the Property will be the highest quality and most beautiful public schools in Jersey City; they will be brought online quickly, as is needed; and taxpayers will not be asked to **pay one extra nickel** for their construction.