



Questions and answers about . . .

Audubon Park K-8 Construction Delay (133-K8-N-6)

The opening of the new K-8 school in Audubon Park will be delayed until August 2018 after underground exploration found areas of organic material called “muck” that could be compressed under the weight of heavy structures and cause buildings to settle. The district still plans to move ahead with demolition on the site, but additional testing and a possible redesign of the site plan are the next steps.

Please see below for answers to some common questions:

Where did you find the muck? Deep under the baseball fields, on the north part of the property, under more than 40 feet of dirt.

What about the old sinkhole? The present design avoids that area, and OCPS does not plan to change that.

Why didn't OCPS do more test borings earlier? Preliminary borings were done in April 2015. These results came back without any reason for concern. However, additional borings were planned. Those couldn't be done until a site plan design was created and approved. The site plan identifies building locations, and therefore the final location of the borings. Also, OCPS had a Facilities Use Agreement with North Orlando Kiwanis Little League that expired 6/30/2015. Digging on the sports fields was not feasible until then.

Is there any way to open the school in 2017? No. Continued testing and possible redesign of the site, as well as deep foundations, can't be completed before construction activities would need to start for a 2017 opening. Even if we set deep foundations (drove piles into the site) using the current design, we would need more time.

Why wasn't the public informed of this at the December 100 percent design meeting? The engineers started their analysis of lab results immediately after receiving them Dec. 3. The final findings were not complete until Dec. 24. At the time of the meeting we were not certain of the final outcome. A “second opinion” engineer conducted a review of the data and analysis. The peer review report was received Jan. 13.

When were all of the exploration tests done?

On site 4/16/2015 – Preliminary report dated 5/5/2015

On site 9/11/2015 – report dated 9/24/2015

On site 10/22/2015 – report dated 11/2/2015

Laboratory tests completed 12/3/2015 – Final report dated 12/24/2015

Will the school be ready in 2018? Yes, we have a timeline that supports occupancy for the 2018-19 school year.

Can you guarantee the buildings will not settle? The new buildings will be sound. The type of development and the soil conditions on hand are not unusual for the area. The site has been continuously occupied until 18 months ago without settlement, and the baseball fields have been in use. It is notable that existing buildings that have stood on this site for decades do not exhibit any cracks. To be thorough, OCPS will do additional borings after demolition is complete.

Will there be another round of design meetings? Yes. If there is a new site plan design, it will be brought back to the community with the typical meetings.

What will happen to parking for the businesses on the property's north side? OCPS plans to move forward with improvements to the fence and pavement to create parallel parking in the alley as part of an agreement with the City of Orlando.

What is the timeline going forward? The plan is to complete demolition and additional diligence by April 2016, any redesign completed and approved by August 2016, and construction to begin in early 2017. The project would be completed in summer 2018.

Does this break the promise of the half-penny sales tax? No. OCPS promised the voters that we would be extremely protective of taxpayers' investment on every school we build. Ensuring that each site is ready is part of that promise.

What is the rezoning plan? The district plans to keep students who are zoned for the new school at their current school for an additional year, instead of changing schools in August 2017. The only exception would be Fern Creek students who are zoned for the new school. They will be assigned to Princeton Elementary. In August 2018, they will be zoned for the new Audubon K-8, but may apply for a grandfather transfer to remain at Princeton if they wish. The students who would remain at their home schools in 2017-18 include students at Audubon Park, Brookshire and Killarney elementary schools, as well as Howard, Lakemont, Lee and Maitland middle schools.

How will Audubon Park and Glenridge overcrowding be handled? OCPS does not plan to add portables at either Audubon Park or Glenridge during the 2017-18 school year. Instead, the use of the co-teaching model will be expanded at Audubon Park, and Glenridge will make greater use of classroom spaces that would otherwise be empty.

What will happen to staffing at Fern Creek? Employees at Fern Creek will be assigned Human Resources representatives who will help them find positions for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years. That could include positions at Princeton or at the K-8 school, but those decisions will be made on an individual basis. There is no shortage of job openings in OCPS – the district anticipates 1,500 vacancies next fall alone.

Are you looking at other properties? At this point, all tests indicate the site is buildable and OCPS is not considering that option at this point.