

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No.

WHEREAS, The Providence City Council has a duty to see that school construction projects place children first, ensuring that every new building strengthens learning and honors the trust of the community; and

WHEREAS, The planned merger of Gilbert Stuart and Alfred Lima into a new Pre-K through 8th Grade Dual Language Academy may offer an opportunity to reimagine learning on the Elmwood / Southside, expanding access to bilingual education while providing families with a high-quality facility that meets 21st-century learning needs; and

WHEREAS, At the same time, the Gilbert Stuart building holds deep historical and cultural meaning for the surrounding community, and the Council affirms that preserving its architectural legacy, wherever feasible, must remain a priority in any redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, Council President Pro Tempore Juan M. Pichardo, at the inception of this project dating back to 2023, requested that (1) the PPSD / City engage residents in a meaningful way the desires for the school into the planning process, and (2) that planning incorporate an analysis of the feasibility of preserving and incorporating elements of the existing architecture into the design of the new school; and

WHEREAS, It appears that all members of the school planning committee may not have been provided with these same items that we have requested to enable analysis, deliberation and decision-making to determine if the proposed course of action constitutes the best use of funds for this project, and hindering the ability of the public and City Council to closely follow the project, and provide informed and timely input; and

WHEREAS, Following an August 14, 2025 community meeting on the Southside, in which a commitment was made to provide the analysis by the three (3) architects firm supporting the determination that no portion of the existing school's architecture could be preserved and incorporated into the new school design, the Council and the community members to which it was promised, has not been received as of the drafting of this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, Council President Pro Tempore Juan M. Pichardo, by letter dated August 20, 2025, formally requested from the city Administration specific documents and clarifications relating to the planned demolition and reconstruction at the Gilbert Stuart School site, including but not limited to preservation cost analyses, demolition and abatement plans, project controls, comparative assessments, design schedules, and historic preservation approvals; and

WHEREAS, Despite these repeated requests, only a limited portion of the requested materials has been provided, and the Administration has instead relied primarily on verbal assurances rather than the clear written documentation required for Council oversight and public confidence; and

WHEREAS, Time is of the essence to receive this documentation to ensure sufficient time for oversight, input, and enable the City to receive the maximum reimbursement from the State allowable; and

WHEREAS, This lack of timely and incomplete responses has raised significant concerns among constituents, community stakeholders, and members of the Council regarding whether due diligence has been exercised and whether this project represents the best possible use of public funds; and

WHEREAS, The proposed plan of action by the Administration and project manager would demolish the existing structure before a final design is completed and accepted, and a reliable cost estimate is completed based on that proposed final design in order to ensure that the new design would fit within the budget available for this project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council calls upon the City Administration and its partners to promptly provide all outstanding documents and clarifications relating to the Gilbert Stuart/Alfred Lima School project to the City Council Office of Project Management and to all members of the School Building Committee in order to ensure meaningful review by both the Council and the community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Council calls upon the Administration to halt all demolition activities at the Gilbert Stuart site, with the exception of remediation of materials and pest control activities so long as they will not in any way damage the structural integrity of the building, until such review has taken place, so the project moves forward with public confidence and a clear commitment to delivering a school worthy of its students and the neighborhood; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That should the Administration believe that the halting of all demolition activities at the Gilbert Stuart site as described above could not be done without jeopardizing the maximum reimbursement rate from the State for this project, it shall immediately present evidence of this in a public hearing and to request an amendment to this order; such hearing must include evidence that the City is in compliance with all State laws and regulations regarding filing and notifications to all requisite State entities, including but not limited to RIDE, RI DOH, RI DEM, and the RI Historic Preservation & Heritage Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Council calls upon the Administration to provide the documentation and answers previously requested by President Pro Tempore Juan M. Pichardo as summarized in his letter dated August 20, 2025, to ensure sufficient time for oversight and input, and to not jeopardize the City's ability to receive the maximum reimbursement from the State allowable for this project, and upon passage, a copy of this resolution be sent to Mayor Brett Smiley, Courtney Hawkins, COO., Javier Montanez, Superintendent of PPSD, Zachary Scott, PPSD, Deputy Superintendent of Operations, Angelica Infant Green, RIDE Commissioner, Drew Echelson, RIDE Deputy Commissioner for systems transformation. Joseph DeSantis, director of program management, Downes construction. Providence school building committee.