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CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON MIDTOWN EAST'S NEW HOME TO PS 59 AND WHOLE FOODS

By Gabriela Resto-Montero



MIDTOWN EAST — Officials broke ground Friday at the new, \$500 million home to P.S. 59 and Whole Foods at 250 East 57th Street.

The 1.5 acre campus will house P.S. 59 and the High School of Art and Design when it opens in September 2012. A Whole Foods Market will take up 38,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor.

"In these tough financial times, it is absolutely critical that we look to the private sector to support our efforts at building new schools," Joel Klein, the schools chancellor, said in a statement.

The new facilities will allow P.S. 59 to provide 230 more student seats. (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, LLP)

Construction of the buildings is being financed through a public-private partnership between the Department of Education's Educational Construction Fund (ECF), which owns the land, and the World-Wide Group, a development company.

Under the agreement, World-Wide Group will pay for construction and lease the property from the Department of Education for 75 years.

The second phase of construction will add 78,000 additional square feet of retail space and 350 residential units to the site on the west side of Second Avenue.

When it opens, P.S. 59 will have seats for 730 students, up from the 500 it currently serves at its temporary location at 250 East 63rd Street. The High School of Art and Design will house 1,400.

Councilmember Dan Garodnick, State Senator Liz Krueger, Executive Vice President of the World-Wide Group David Lowenfeld, President of the World-Wide Group Victor Elmaleh, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, Councilmember Jessica Lappin, New York City Educational Fund President Jamie Smarr, Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and Assemblyman Jonathan Bing celebrated the groundbreaking of the P.S. 59 facility. (Courtesy John Marino)



Officials said the new school will help relieve some of the overcrowding in East Side schools.

In response to the high demand for seats, the Department of Education recently opened P.S. 267, which will temporarily be housed at the P.S. 158 school building on York Avenue.

P.S. 267 will move into the old P.S. 59 location on East 63rd Street once construction at the new campus is completed.

Parents at waitlisted schools on the East Side appealed to the Department to allow them to rank their preferences for alternate schools last week.