The Obama family on Tuesday appeared closer to settling into Washington, with the two girls touring area private schools and turning up at the White House to see their new home.

Michelle Obama has been in town since Sunday with daughters Malia, 10 and Sasha, 7. The threesome visited Georgetown Day School on Monday and Sidwell Friends on Tuesday — both schools Michelle Obama had checked out previously.

Michelle Obama’s mother, Marian Robinson, joined them for a private tour of the White House. Once the family moves in, the president-elect’s mother-in-law is expected to live there at least part of the time.

“The Obama have said that finding the right school for their girls is a top priority,” said the First Lady, neither Sidwell nor Georgetown Day is commenting.

“As with any potential applicant, we never discuss personal information,” said Ashley Hair, spokeswoman for Georgetown Day School. “The privacy of our community is vitally important to us.”

Ellis Turner, associate head of school at Sidwell, said, “We don’t discuss admissions inquiries or any of the students in our schools.”

Registering the Obama girls would be a major coup for whatever local private school they choose. By the time the Bush family got to Washington in 2000, their twin girls were off to college. Chelsea Clinton attended Sidwell Friends, and Amy Carter went to private school.

The Obama girls currently attend the University of Chicago Lab School, a private school.

In an interview earlier this week with CBS News’ “60 Minutes,” Michelle Obama sidestepped a question about whether they had considered public school for the girls.

“You know, we’re still in the process of figuring out that transition,” she said. “And what we have asked people to understand is that the decision that we will make will be based on the best interest of the girls. We haven’t made that decision yet. And you know, we want that to be a personal process.”

When the Obamas toured the White House last week, both parents were keen to see the rooms their daughters would sleep in.

The family’s living quarters on the second floor includes two adjacent bedrooms with large windows and a history of serving as the bedrooms of Amy Carter, Chelsea Clinton, Tricia Nixon, Susan Ford, Caroline Kennedy, John Kennedy Jr. and other presidential offspring.

“I couldn’t help but envisioning the girls running into their rooms and, you know, running down the hall and with a dog,” Michelle Obama said on CBS. “And, you know, you start picturing your life there. And our hope is that the White House will feel open and full of life and energy.”

President-elect Barack Obama added, “sleepovers.”

“Art our house is that the White House will feel open and full of life and energy.”

Michelle Obama waves to a crowd as she leaves a Chicago elementary school in Hyde Park with Sasha, left, and Malia, right, on Nov. 4.

First family should go public

Barack Obama was elected on the promise that he would change the way we do things in Washington. What are the first two things he does?

First, he hires usual suspects like Democratic gun slinger Rahm Emanuel to run his staff. No change there. And when he and his wife, Michelle, investigate schools for their two daughters, they might take the path of least resistance down the same old road toward private schools. Like the Clintons. No change there.

Why not consider sending Malia and Sasha to public schools? The thousands of parents who send their kids to D.C. public or charter schools are wondering — what are we, chopped liver? Committing child abuse? Not good enough.

Despite all the dire news about desperate schools and depraved children, the District of Columbia has some of the finest public and charter schools around. Our best elementary and middle schools would measure up well with top schools in Maryland and Virginia.

Though Mayor Adrian Fenty and schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee have pulled up in front of Georgetown Day School, the private school is considered more diverse than other elite schools in the city. Let me assure you, with a price tag of $28,000 a year, it is far from economically diverse.

Mrs. Obama and the two girls are expected to tour Sidwell Friends today; that’s where Chelsea Clinton spent her school years.

The parents and partisans of Maret, another elite school, were certainly out of sorts.

Rather than follow the Obamas uptown to Georgetown Day School, I checked out their neighborhood school, Francis-Stevens, on the city’s West End, betweenDupont Circle and Georgetown. It’s a fine city school, with a park around the corner, new playground equipment and a student body from across the city. It’s K-8, so Sasha, 7, and Malia, 10, could both attend.

I know the Obamas will have to worry about security, which makes Francis-Stevens a great choice. It’s a quick ride down Pennsylvania Avenue and up 24th Street to the school. Let’s say it’s not the great school right now; if the Obamas send their children there, don’t you think it would improve real quick?

The first family will have more good choices a bit uptown but not as far, or as exclusive, as the private schools.

Lafayette, Murch and Janney are top elementary schools. Alice Deal is a great choice for junior high. I know this from personal experience.

Deals I know, I know — choosing a school for your children, if you have the luxury of choice, is a very personal decision. And Michelle Obama wants the best for her daughters.

She can find the best in D.C. public schools and signal a true sense of change.