



The New West Philadelphia High School

Community Plan

February, 2006

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Prepared by

Concordia, LLC

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I. Executive Summary

Concordia, LLC and the Philadelphia Education Fund are pleased to present this school conceptual design and planning report, which is the result of a year-long community planning process. This report is, first and foremost, the result of efforts led by student advocates and community members concerned about the instructional content and physical design of their high school. At their request, and with the support of the William Penn Foundation, Concordia, LLC engaged community residents, students, parents, and teachers in a seven-month discussion to shape the new West Philadelphia High School.

Over the planning period, over 180 participants, including students, parents, educators, and community representatives, formed the Steering Committee, which created the recommendations presented in this report. While the prospect of new school facilities generated the opportunity to engage in planning, the goals of the planning process expanded beyond physical design. Guided by the Concordia Model, the Steering Committee analyzed the educational, physical, cultural, social, organizational, and economic needs and assets in the community, and learned about best practices in high school education. The planning process allowed the participants to become familiar with different successful school models and programs, as well as to help them visualize the multiple interactions between the new West Philadelphia High School and its community, and then to imagine possible new partnerships and mutual support enterprises.

Throughout the process, the Steering Committee shaped a common vision for the future of their high school. They envisioned a new West Philadelphia High School deeply connected with its community, respectful of its past, and committed to educational excellence. They saw a school composed of small learning communities coexisting in a campus setting that allows students to maintain expansive school programs while creating a more personalized, safe, and harmonious learning environment. They envisioned a school that encourages its students to learn through internships, and to exercise democracy by participating in its government.

The community's vision for the new West Philadelphia High School is presented in this report in a set of recommendations grouped under five categories, namely, Education Program, School Governance/Administration, Supportive Academic Opportunity, Community Connections, and Money-Saving Small Schools Strategies. This vision is complemented by recommendations regarding the site for the new school and school layouts, which were created at a community design charette. The West Philadelphia High School community, the Concordia team, and the Philadelphia Education Fund are proud to present the results of this unique and authentic community decision-making endeavor.

II. Introduction

The School

For the 2005-2006 school year West Philadelphia High School has a population of 1,070 students that is 97% African American¹. The school is situated on the border between the University City and the West Philadelphia neighborhoods. The majority of the West Philadelphia high school students live in the West Philadelphia community, which consists of a majority African American population. The School District of Philadelphia reports that 79% of the students at West Philadelphia High School come from low-income households.

Every year, Philadelphia students in grades, 3, 5, 8, and 11 take the Pennsylvania State System Assessment exam in mathematics and reading (PSSA). The results of this exam are used to create the school's profile, which reflects the school's performance as a percentage of students in the four Pennsylvania performance levels: "below basic," "basic," "proficient," and "advanced."²



The 2005 school year reading scores reported by the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) were 76.5% "below basic", 9.7% "basic," 11.9% "proficient," and less than 2% "advanced." The 2005 PSSA scores in mathematics reported by SDP were 74.9% "below basic," 14.5% "basic," 9.7% "proficient" and about 1% as "advanced."

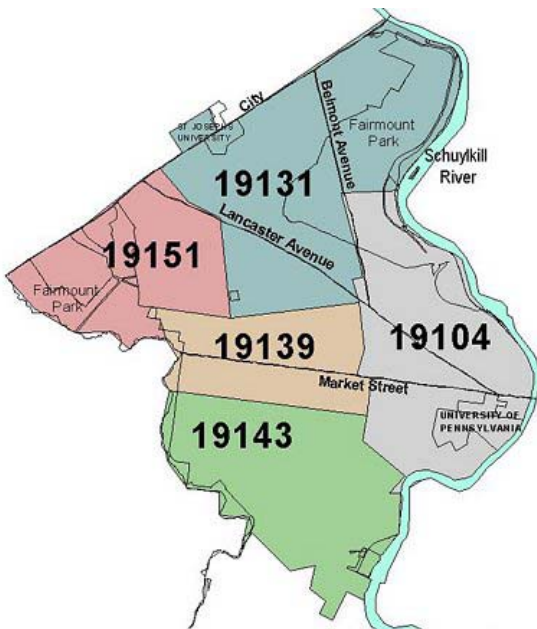
The 2005 test scores did show improvement in the four Pennsylvania performance levels from the 2004 school year. In reading, the percentage of students testing in "below basic" decreased by 3%, and "basic" scores decreased by 1.5%, while the number of students who tested at "proficient" increased by 3% and "advanced" by 1.5%. A comparison of the 2004 math scores to 2005 shows that the number of students recorded as "below basic" decreased by 14.2% and "basic" test scores increased by 6.3%. Also, the "proficient" test scores increased by 8.1%. The "advanced" category fell by 0.1%. The scores demonstrate that the number of children testing in "below basic" is decreasing while the "basic" to "proficient" categories are increasing.

Despite many individual student gains, the school struggles with attendance and graduation rates. The School District reported that the average daily attendance was less than 70% for the 2004 and 2005 school year. The Philadelphia Notebook, in its fall 2005 edition lists West Philadelphia High School as having “severe truancy,” with more than 25% of the schools’ students absent daily.

West Philadelphia High School has a high dropout rate, with <http://www.schools-data.com/> reporting a 38.6% graduation rate for the 2003-2004 school year, and Standard & Poor’s Evaluation Service reporting a 45.8% graduation rate for the 2004-2005 school years. This is a major concern and several organizations, such as Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth and Philadelphia Youth Network are paying more attention to “out of school youth,” and working hard to support potential dropouts while they are still in school, whereas others are connecting with those who have been out of school for several months.

West Philadelphia: A General Description

Beginning in the mid-1800s, the City of Philadelphia expanded west of the Schuylkill River. Over the next half-century the area was transformed from a congeries of wealthy estates and scattered villages into a suburban haven for affluent families seeking refuge from the noise and congestion of the industrial city. By 1900 the Spruce Hill, Garden Court, Cedar Park, and Parkside neighborhoods were distinguished by blocks of spacious Victorian houses and commercial enterprises that catered to a wealthy and upper middle class clientele.



The ethnic and social class composition of the area would change after 1908 and the opening of the Market Street Elevated. The new transportation system, which afforded convenient access from West Philadelphia’s sparsely populated outlying neighborhoods to Center City, spurred the development of lower middle and working class housing tracts in the Haddington, Cobbs Creek, and Overbrook sections. Increasingly, the blocks west of 52nd Street were marked by enclaves of Jewish, Irish, Italian, and Armenian settlements; African Americans settled in small clusters throughout the area. Row houses were the dominant architectural features.

West Philadelphia High School (WPHS), the City’s first secondary school west of the Schuylkill, opened in 1912 with a student population in excess of 5,500. Such was the press on the new high school (which originally stood as two separate buildings for boys and girls) that the City

was compelled to open Overbrook High School in 1926; a third high school, Bartram, followed in 1935.

The migration of African Americans from South Philadelphia began in earnest during and immediately following World War II. As social historians and urban sociologists have noted, Philadelphia's manufacturing base, which was the major "pull" factor of the migration, was in sharp decline as early as the 1950s; widespread unemployment in subsequent decades combined with other factors (e.g., discriminatory federal, state, and city housing policies) to create pockets of isolated, concentrated poverty in West Philadelphia. The difficulties experienced by some of these neighborhoods, coupled with the longstanding neglect of West Philadelphia High School and similarly situated schools, are evident in the statistics we report below.

These problems are solvable. West Philadelphia is incredibly rich in higher educational and medical institutions, commercial enterprises, community associations, communities of faith, and arts and cultural organizations. The district is home to the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, the University of the Sciences, and the Community College of Philadelphia. West Philadelphia is particularly noted for its six hospitals, including the University of Pennsylvania's Health System (the Penn Medical and Nursing schools; the nation's first teaching hospital, several affiliated clinics, and the Dental School and its clinics). It is also home to the University City Science Center, organized in the 1960s as the nation's first urban industrial research park, now a technology transfer center.

Among West Philadelphia's other resources are nine public libraries, several large parks (notably Clark Park and Cobbs Creek Park), a number of smaller and vest-pocket parks, two City health centers, three police districts and four police mini-stations, and seven fire stations. There are thirty-five public schools and thirteen parochial schools, as well as several major social service centers and community development corporations. The West Philadelphia Partnership, housed at 40th and Market streets, is an umbrella organization for community economic development, with historic ties to the district's public schools. The University of Pennsylvania figures prominently in school-improvement initiatives in West Philadelphia through the agency of the Center for Community Partnerships/West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC) coalition; and through the new University-assisted Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander School.

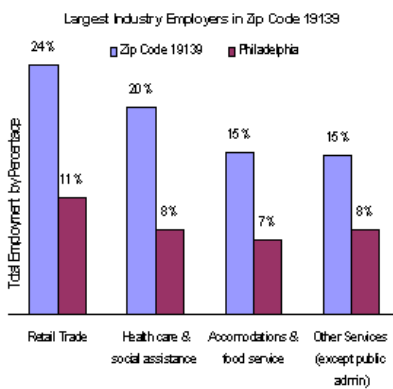
West Philadelphia Demographics and the New West Philadelphia High School

The catchment area for the new high school does not encompass all of West Philadelphia, but rather is restricted to the Walnut Hill, Garden Court, Cedar Park and Spruce Hill neighborhoods, as well as small sections of Cobbs Creek, Haddington and Southwest Philadelphia. The school is located in the 19139 zip code, while the remaining communities are in 19143.



West Philadelphia includes a 71.8% Non Hispanic Black population. In the 19139 zip code, 92.2% are Non-Hispanic Black and in the adjacent neighborhoods (19143) 89.5% are Non Hispanic Black. The total population for West Philadelphia is 219,713, which includes the above zip codes (19143, 19139, 19151, 19131, 19104), with just under 50,000 in the 19139 zip code.

The median household income for West Philadelphia is \$20,918, with 19139 averaging \$18,394 and 19143 at \$22,617. The unemployment rate is 11.2 for West Philadelphia, 15.1 for 19139 and 12.6 for 19143. The percentage of households living in poverty is 24.4 for West Philadelphia, 27.2 for 19139 and 24.5 for 19143. The average household size for 19139 is 3.23, which is the same for West Philadelphia³. A chart showing the employment sectors for 19139 appears to the left.



The data also show that 69.8% of the residents in West Philadelphia 18 years or older completed high school, while the percentage is 58.9% in zip code 19139 and 66.1% in zip code 19143.

The median home value for 19139 is \$24,500, with a homeownership rate of 56.3. For West Philadelphia, the median housing value is \$32,149 with a little over 50% homeownership rate.

III. Process Overview

The Students Initiate the Process

In 2003 it was announced that West Philadelphia High School would get a new building as part of the School District's capital improvement plan. When students from the West Chapter of the Philadelphia Student Union heard this, they decided to use it as an opportunity to get more than just a shiny new building. They hoped it would be a chance to improve the way education happens in the school as well.

These students began doing research about effective high school models and began making connections with parents, teachers, and community groups. They visited schools in Chicago, Oakland, New York, and Providence. They were very impressed with how large failing urban high schools had been broken into small schools with incredible results and decided to draft a proposal to rebuild West Philadelphia High School into a set of smaller schools housing no more than 400 students each.

The students realized that they wanted to ensure that the community was involved in the school design process. Through their research they learned about the work of Concordia, an architectural consulting firm, and invited that organization to present to a group of students, parents, teachers, and community leaders. This group was impressed by the Concordia presentation, so they convinced the William Penn Foundation to fund them and asked the School District to include them in the West Philadelphia High School Design process. In a public action organized jointly with Youth United for Change in early 2005 the PSU West chapter secured support from the School District for the Concordia-facilitated community planning process.

The students have put a lot of hard work and time into the small schools campaign/design, and particularly into the configuration of the new West Philadelphia High School. The students expect to be a part of all the important decisions the District is making to create small schools.

The Concordia Facilitated Planning Process

The Concordia-facilitated planning process began in the spring of 2005, when Concordia interviewed residents and organizational leaders to gather information about West Philadelphia. The initial efforts concentrated in organizing the Recruiting Team—a group of students, parents, neighborhood leaders, and school staff that would help to recruit stakeholders within the West Philadelphia High School catchment area. Students, parents, alumni, staff from community development corporations (CDCs), members of business associations, participants in community and civic groups, and members of faith-based institutions became involved in the planning process. School neighbors, after school program officers, politicians, and members of higher

educational institutions also joined the discussion. Together they formed the West Philadelphia High School planning process Steering Committee.

Over the past 18 years, Concordia has developed a holistic community development process to promote the comprehensive planning and design of community facilities and programs. This process is based on an approach to community planning that is called the Concordia Model. The Concordia Model approaches communities through six frameworks, which are physical,



cultural, economic, educational, social, and cultural. The process employs various methods of community organizing to engage a significant representative group of community members in a planning and design process. By utilizing a framework that addresses the community’s physical, cultural, social, economic, organizational and educational resources, the planning process encourages joint use of public facilities and other integrated and economical solutions for short and long-term community needs. Through the community planning process facilitated by Concordia, the Steering Committee was able to identify the strengths of their community and think of creative ways to support its schools.

The Youth Forum

On November 10, 2005, students from West Philadelphia High School hosted a Youth Forum to inform students about the community planning process for the new West Philadelphia High School and to request their ideas about the new school's curriculum and design. With the support of Concordia and the Philadelphia Student Union, the students created the agenda, and managed and facilitated the Forum.

In a series of six planning meetings, the students created a forum to engage students in school planning. The program consisted of an information session followed by work sessions. Two small focus groups were formed: "Learning Theory: Do You Remember a Time When You Enjoyed Learning?" and "Design Your Ideal School". (A detailed description of the work sessions is included in the Appendix.)

Following the breakout sessions, students completed a survey about the transition of West Philadelphia High School to a small school. They listed the types of programs they would like to see at their school. (A copy of the survey is also included in the Appendix.)

As a result of the Youth Forum, several students felt encouraged to participate in the Steering Committee meetings. The students' recommendations created at the Forum were presented to the Steering committee at Meeting #7.



IV. A Vision for West Philadelphia High School

The vision statement for the new West Philadelphia High School was the result of a visioning exercise carried out at Meeting #5. As a part of this exercise, each Steering Committee member created a description of the ideal West Philadelphia High School. These individual visions were taken by Co-facilitators and members of the Communications Task Force who compiled them into the common vision shown below.

The Vision for the New West Philadelphia High School aims to capture the intentions, hopes, and spirit of the Steering Committee, and to serve as both a promotion tool and roadmap for future planning. The community vision was presented to the Steering Committee on Meeting #7.

We, the students, parents, staff, and community of West Philadelphia High School have a vision for our new school to be a model in education. We envision that the new West Philadelphia High School will be a dynamic “small” school that will provide its students with a diverse academic, technical, and vocational curriculum. The school will enhance the education of students from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds and will equip them with a sound education that will be the impetus for them to excel in their future endeavors, whether in institutes of higher learning or in the workforce. The keys to our school’s success will be interactive learning, a small community feel, and active engagement of parents, students, and the community in the school.

Our vision is for a warm and inviting campus setting with two to four architecturally dynamic two-story buildings: each housing no more than 400 students, surrounded by green-spaces with grass and trees. The buildings are state-of-the-art facilities with comfortable classrooms that are well staffed with teachers who are highly qualified in their subject area(s). The campus also houses a library, gymnasium, and cafeteria.

Each building will be theme-based. The themes are broadly defined—for example, Health and Allied Sciences (West Philadelphia’s major industry is healthcare), Business/Industrial Arts, Automotive and Engineering, and Communications and Technology. Thematic studies provide opportunities for problem solving which requires the integration of academic knowledge as well as hands on learning.

We further envision that the new West Philadelphia High School will be infused with out-of-school experiences that take advantage of partnerships

IV. A Vision for West Philadelphia High School

with West Philadelphia's colleges and universities, hospitals, businesses, and community organizations. Students are actively engaged in hands-on learning through internships, and by organizing projects to solve real problems in the community. This means that the school is overflowing with cultural activities and students are becoming active in the community.

The small size of each school creates a community feel. Because of this community-like school climate, every staff member knows every student, therefore alleviating violence and disruption. Students also receive individual attention about academics. Having several small schools on a shared campus also allows for the benefits of a large school by have the schools share sports teams, specialist teachers, the library, and the gymnasium.

A school council including students, parents, school staff, and community leaders governs the campus. Each building has its own principal who is both a teacher and instructional leader with excellent management and communication skills. Parents and students are actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the school.

The new West Philadelphia High School will be a school that provides excellent education to all its students, provides professional stimuli for its teachers, and provides the community with a site for community services, meetings and cultural activities, for the betterment of all. Students will become life-long learners and active community members.

V. Steering Committee Recommendations

The following section contains the final recommendations approved by the West Philadelphia High School Steering Committee and refined by the Sustainability Circle. The recommendations are organized into five categories: Education Program, School Governance/Administration, Supportive Academic Opportunity, Community Connections and Money-Saving Small Schools Strategies. These categories encompass a breath of issues and ideas generated from the subcommittees after studying the cultural, organizational, physical, economic, educational, and social needs and assets of the West Philadelphia High School and its neighborhood.

Education Program

Providing access to excellent education to all the West Philadelphia youth was a core principle in the community planning process. This first group of recommendations relates to the actions, programs, and facilities that the Steering Committee considers necessary to provide the opportunity for every student to thrive. The recommendations are grouped under five interrelated categories: Academic, Internships, Facilities, Non Academic Programs, Vocational/CTE. These recommendations are based on the Steering Committee's conviction that providing excellent education means providing meaningful programs that capture the student's interest, making the learning experience exciting. It also reflects the conviction that many non-academic factors have a powerful influence on learning. Providing the students with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, internship opportunities, and non-academic learning programs will have a positive impact on learning and achievement.

Academic

1. Ensure that all young people graduate from high school with the skills needed to be successful in higher education or in the world. Create an engaging curriculum that provides experiential learning methods and considers alternative learning styles.
2. Provide foundational academic learning programs for students in all subjects. Establish mentorship and developmental programs to support the interest and needs of the student population.
3. Create programs and strategies with local businesses to support internships. Create internship opportunities, paid when possible, for students with local businesses; vocational training with local industries.
4. Develop alternative assessment methods in alignment with state standards
5. Infuse the curriculum with arts, music and theater.
6. Create environmental studies academic program.
7. Organize thematically based programs that provide opportunities for problem solving and integration of academic knowledge.

8. Provide academic college preparatory courses and support for test taking skills for SAT, PSSA, etc.
9. Locate funding for artist residency, drama, music, playwriting, visual and performing art classes, as well as a computer for each student.
10. Establish a fund to provide academic scholarships for enrichment and post-secondary education. Offer Advance Placement (AP) courses for students seeking to challenge their learning.
11. Hire highly qualified teachers committed to educating the students of West Philadelphia.
12. Provide state of the arts labs and library.
13. Integrate technology in all academic areas and assure that each student has access to a computer.
14. Use a curriculum that utilizes learning through organizing projects that solve neighborhood problems.

Internships

15. Create programs that prepare students for apprenticeships on the trades.

Facilities

16. Provide and maintain facilities to support all levels of sports and extracurricular activities for students. Offer a broad selection of extracurricular activities that meet the interests of students and enrich their educational experience.
17. Assure that the new facilities are designed with state of the art “green” technology capability to support all educational programs.
18. Assure that the new facilities provide for the best learning resources in the facility design, fixtures and furniture, and programmatic space.

Non-Academic Programs

19. Create a history program about West Philadelphia High School to increase student awareness of the history and heritage of West Philadelphia High School and the community.
20. Create cultural awareness programs that celebrate all cultures and ethnicities.
21. Provide sports and extracurricular activities.
22. Provide conflict resolution/ anti-violence programs and training.
23. Create four year “advisories” where students stay with the same advisory group throughout their high school years.

Vocational/CTE

24. Provide state of the art vocational training.

School Governance/Administration

Research has shown that student performance is highly impacted by the school's environment. Smaller school sizes, continuity in the school's administration, and the participation and support of multiple stakeholders in the school government are some of the measures that help create good learning environments. The following recommendations lay out the organization that the Steering Committee considers necessary to ensure a safe, orderly and stable environment for the new West Philadelphia high school.

Some of the Steering Committee's recommendations in this section require some relaxing of standard School District policy. The Steering Committee feels that they have a powerful vision for the new school and that some flexibility is needed to allow that vision to become reality. In particular, local school governance and flexibility in curriculum and staffing are important to the success of the school. Extensive research shows that these elements are essential to creating effective small schools. In addition, the Steering Committee feels strongly that, given the changing nature of the neighborhood, the school's catchment area needs to be looked at to ensure that the community that has historically attended the school continues to have access to it.

Small Schools

1. Create small schools of no more than 400 students per school with separate administrations on one campus where resources and programs can be shared, i.e., sports, extracurricular, etc.

School, Community and Governance

2. Establish a school Site Council to include students, parents, teachers, community members and the principal to govern, having local control of the budget and the hiring of the principal. Exact numbers for representatives on this committee needs to be determined.
3. The Principals and teachers, with input from the Site Council, will have control over curriculum and staffing with accountability to the District and State.
4. Provide continuity within the school administration and leadership, enlisting the support of the community to help sustain resources and community connections.

5. The principal cannot change the mission or programs of the school without approval of the Site Council.

School Climate

6. Create a safe and orderly learning environment that welcomes students, parents and the community.
7. Create a team climate among teachers, parents/guardians, service providers, and school staff to build a cooperative and supportive environment within each small school.
8. Ensure a climate that will support parents in helping their children to learn, and promote parent involvement

Demographic Profile

9. Ensure that the school population reflects the demographic profile of West Philadelphia as a whole. Steps should be taken to ensure that disadvantaged populations are not excluded.

Supportive Academic Opportunity

Students coming from low-income families, non-English speaking families, students with children, and students with special needs should be provided special support to help them stay in school. Furthermore, every student should have access to support when assessing options for the future. The following recommendations deal with the actions that are necessary to provide opportunities to challenged students to succeed, and to support students in planning for their academic and personal futures.

1. Provide excellent programs for special education students that include career and vocational training.
2. Provide academic support for college bound students.
3. Provide test taking skills prep programs for students.
4. Establish scholarships to enable students and teachers to have access to necessary learning tools and resources.
5. Create an ESL program to accommodate the needs of new immigrant student populations.
6. Establish programs or a center to recognize, respect, and support cultural and alternative lifestyles of students.
7. Establish a daycare center for enrolled student parents.

Community Connections

As noted previously, West Philadelphia has a high number of educational, economic, organizational, physical, social and cultural community resources. The following recommendations suggest ways in which these community assets can be used for the benefit of the school and vice-versa, placing education at the center of the West Philadelphia community. One of the unique features of the new West Philadelphia High School will be the way the school and community are integrated.

1. Build collaborative relationships and formal partnerships with local universities and higher education institutions to enable students to add to their course options.
2. Develop cooperative agreements with local colleges, universities, community organizations and groups (CBOs, faith based organizations, etc.) to give students access to their facilities, programs, and services.
3. Develop cooperative agreements to enable local agencies to provide community services and programs on the school site after hours, such as GED classes, language programs, Community Center or meeting activities.
4. Maintain a Community Directory to inform the community of the various programs and services offered by churches, mosques, CBOs and other community organizations.
5. Strengthen the West Philadelphia community by creating the West High Community Association, using the planning, design, construction and opening of the new schools as a catalyst.
6. Require business contract compliance to ensure access and fairness in awarding contracts for the new school.
7. Mandate the awarding of contracts to minority-owned small businesses in the catchment area, to promote local job creation, and business and workforce development.
8. Strengthen relationships between the Home & School Association, the school, and the community.

Money-Saving Small School Strategies

Building on the Steering Committee's vision of the new West Philadelphia High School as small learning academies, Concordia presented different small high schools models to the Steering Committee members at Meeting #6. The case studies were selected from compilations of best practices at small schools, namely, *Dollars and Sense II* and *Schools and Centers of Community: A Design Guide*. After listening to the presentations, the participants engaged in conversations about the strategies, analyzing the pros and cons of each strategy and selecting those they thought might be applicable to the new West Philadelphia High School. (A detailed description of the prioritized strategies is included in the Appendix. Copies of the best practices compilation documents are available from Concordia upon request.)



VI. School Themes

During the planning process, the Steering Committee created a vision of a new West Philadelphia High School formed by independent academies organized around different themes. Theme options for the academies were explored by the students participating in the Student Forum, who recommended the following themes, in order of priority:

1. Health and Fitness
2. Creative and Performing Arts
3. Business
4. Auto
5. Law

These options were presented to the community at Meeting #7. Although there was discussion and some additional themes were proposed, no final decision was made regarding the thematic organization of the new high school.⁵ The Sustainability Circle is now engaging in a process of determining school themes that includes surveying students, researching where jobs are available, and looking for strong partners. Recommendations will be presented to the School District on February 21st, 2006.

VII. School Sites

The Site Secection Process

The selection of a site for the location of the new West Philadelphia High School was one of the most important goals in the community planning process.

At the end of Meeting #4, the members of the Steering Committee were asked to volunteer to search for potential sites for the new school. The participants were given a list of the School District's site selection parameters to use as a reference for identifying appropriate sites. Then participants volunteered to search for sites, and six different site possibilities were submitted to Concordia before Meeting #5.

After receiving the proposals, Concordia added the 4601 Market St. site, which had been considered as a possibility by the Philadelphia School District, and assembled an information packet containing basic information on each one of the proposed sites. The information included site location, area, aerial picture, photographs, and a GIS map showing the site proximity to community assets and transportation.

At Meeting #5 the packages were distributed to the members of the Steering Committee for their review. Working in subcommittees, the participants were asked to look at the advantages, disadvantages, and opportunities of each one of the sites and to prioritize them. Following this activity, the conclusions were presented to the larger group by one delegate of each subcommittee. Three options were initially designated: 1. placing the school on the football field at 48th and Spruce streets, 2. locating it at 4601 Market St., subject to the condition that the Youth Detention center not be built nearby, and 3. keeping the school on the current site and either remodeling the building or replacing it with a new building. Due to the low attendance at Meeting #5, the participants decided to prioritize the sites at Meeting #6.

At the beginning of Meeting #6, West Philadelphia High School students presented their research on small schools as well as their preferences for the placement of the new school. This presentation was followed by a discussion session in which the participants expressed their concerns and preferences about the location of the new school. The participants' ideas are categorized as three main positions:

1. A portion of the participants, mostly students, proposed to have a new school building built either on the football field or on 4601 Market St. It was argued that remodeling the current building or building on the current site are not feasible options given that the students would have to be displaced during demolition and construction.

2. Holding a different perspective, some neighbors expressed their concern for the future of the current school building if the school is built on a different site. If the current building was sold and transformed into expensive condominiums, they argued, the property taxes in the neighborhood would rise and the socio-economic profile of the neighborhood would change.



3. A different group, mainly composed of West Philadelphia High School alumni, argued that the West Philadelphia High School is an institution with a rich history and tradition, and moving it from its current location would be detrimental to its image and hence, its future. Although they agreed that the school should remain on the same site, opinions on remodeling the existing building or building a new one were divided.

A common idea shared by the different groups was to divide the 800 student school into four independent learning academies organized in a campus setting. The academies would share some facilities and have independent instruction buildings.

After the discussion, the following options were identified and prioritized:

	Recommendation #	# of Votes
1	Build a new school on the current school site at 47 th and Walnut Streets and use the Spruce St. football field as a part of the campus	28
2	Build on the football field, keeping the current school site as a part of the campus	20
3	Build on the 4601 Market Street site, if the Detention Center is not built in the neighborhood	16
4	Renovate the current school building	13

VIII. School Configuration: Results of the Design Charette

Over a period of three hours, a group of West Philadelphia High School educators, administrators, students, and community representatives participated in a creative design charette. The purpose of the charette was to create different possible layouts for the new West Philadelphia High School. Participants were divided into six equally-sized mixed groups that focused on creating schools on different sites namely, the Spruce St. football field, the current high school site at 47th and Walnut Streets, and the 4601 Market St. site.

Before beginning the charette activity, each group reviewed the spaces with which they were to be working, the activity guidelines proposed by the School District, and the site recommendations made by the community. In preparation for this activity, Concordia created to-scale “game pieces” and “game boards” which represented all spaces allocated to the project by the District. (For example, if the District established that the new facility required three 800 sf special education labs, Concordia printed out three 800 sf rectangles representing the labs at a scale of 1/8" = 1' 0".) Each of the six groups received the three site plans, and all spaces necessary to create the entire school facility.

The plan layout activity consisted of an introduction, the formation of six groups, and a 90-minute activity. Each group achieved the goal of laying out a school facility through a process of consensus. Some groups achieved this goal by dividing the various tasks and conquering the facility, while other groups achieved the goal by creating a collective strategy and collectively designing their plan. Though Concordia facilitated the activity, Concordia played no role in the creation of the various plan layouts. After completion of the charette, each group identified a spokesperson who presented their group’s plan layout scenario to all participants. Each presentation led to discussion which explored the possibilities identified by the particular scenario.

Each group, in their layout activity, addressed room quantities and relationships. Various school layouts were created, and many important aspects of site layout were identified and explored. School configurations focused a great deal of attention on the relationship between common/shared spaces and learning environments. Many groups identified specific locations for Career and Technical Education (CTE) space. Overall school street access, community use, and security were addressed by all six groups.

At Meeting #7, the Steering Committee members reviewed the layouts created at the charrette and recommended additions and modifications. These changes will be addressed in a next planning stage. A detailed description of the layouts created at the charette and the recommendations of the Steering Committee in this regard are included in the Appendix.

IX. Next Steps and Sustainability

The Role of the Sustainability Circle

The Sustainability Circle is the group of process leaders who will oversee the implementation of the Steering Committee's recommendations and encourage ongoing community efforts as an outgrowth of the planning process. This group is made up of Communications Task Force members, Subcommittee Co-facilitators, and other volunteers.

The responsibilities of the Sustainability Circle include:

- Representing the Planning Project at public forums and distributing the Steering Committee's recommendations.
- Creating a continuous, optimally organized planning process.
- Publicizing and championing the work of the Steering Committee in the community.
- Creating and implementing a plan for sustainability.

After Meeting #5, Concordia started working with the West Philadelphia High School Sustainability Circle to develop a plan to finalize the Steering Committee's recommendations and to oversee their implementation. The group elected two co-chairs and scheduled a presentation of their Final Report to School District authorities on February 21, 2006.

After the presentation, the Sustainability Circle will continue to meet on a regular basis. They will remain the leadership group that will oversee the design and construction of the new school. The work of the Sustainability Circle will also include gathering the high school community's ideas about themes for the new school. For this purpose, the Sustainability Circle will conduct a school-wide survey, asking students and teachers to suggest themes for the new school. To these suggestions, they will also add the themes suggested at the Youth Forum and those created by the Steering Committee. The top five theme choices will be presented to the School District.

The Sustainability Circle has created a communication plan to update the community on the progress of implementation, incorporate its suggestions, and learn about the concerns of the larger West Philadelphia High School community as the process moves forward.

X. Appendix

- Community Profile
- Meeting Descriptions
- Planning Process Documents
 - Meeting Agendas
 - AAR reports
 - Youth Forum Materials
 - Site Selection Packages
 - Money-saving Small Schools Strategies
 - Layouts Created at the Design Charette
 - Dollars & Sense II
 - Schools as Centers of the Community
- West Philadelphia Community Maps
 - WPHS campus map and aerial view
 - West Philadelphia community Assets by Concordia framework
- Steering Committee Members
- Press

X. Appendix

Footnotes

¹ Data taken for the School District of Philadelphia

's website: https://sdp-webprod.phila.k12.pa.us/school_profiles/servlet/

² These performance levels were established by groups of Pennsylvania educators working collaboratively with Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) staff. For more information, please look at:

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?a=108&Q=114348&PM=1

³ Data collected for the 2000 Census and University of Pennsylvania

's Library West Philadelphia Information database.

⁴ Source westphillydata.library.upenn.edu

⁵ See Next Steps for additional information.