

Bryant School Reuse Community Meeting

Attendance: 35

Location: Border Star Montessori

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Comment: This is a very complex deal structure. Proceeding with historic designation or condemnation should wait until after you receive viable proposals.

- The district is proceeding with the eligibility process for historic designation, but we are not submitting an application for listing on the National Register. This initial historic eligibility assessment will enable the district to let interested parties know if the building is a likely candidate for designation prior to submitting a proposal. Applying for historical designation and condemnation would only commence after we receive viable proposals and continue engagement with the community.

How many units would be included in the existing building? How many would be needed in additional structures to make it viable for a developer? Would only a small portion be available to teachers to make it work?

- We have seen buildings (a little bit larger than Bryant) developed for teacher housing on their own without needing additional units, while other developers have chosen to construct additional units to make projects more economical. Part of the reason why we would like move forward with an RFP is for development teams to outline what they will need to make it viable. However, if a development team proposes additional higher density on the site, it doesn't mean as a community we would agree to that. Based off of initial assessments, the existing building could be converted into 27-40+ units depending upon unit mix.

You've shown three local examples that have been redeveloped for affordable housing. Have those buildings been sold and developed by private developers?

- The local examples shown are former school buildings that have been redeveloped into market-rate housing, not affordable housing. And yes, they have been sold to private developers.

If this project is a partnership, what is the financial risk to the district? Will the district get themselves in a money pit?

- We are looking for development partners to present terms that make the project viable. We want them to outline what they are putting in and what the long-term expectations are of the district. Although this has been done in other places, this would be new for KCPS but we want to issue an RFP so we can better understand what the development community is willing to do and what would be required of the district.

Does this project run afoul with the Fair Housing Act that prohibits restricting housing for a specific profession?

- HUD has advised the district that this type of project is not circumventing the Fair Housing Act. As cited in the examples, teacher housing has been allowed across the county.

Comment: If we are really interested in providing affordable housing for staff, we could do ten-fold the amount of housing at another site and it would be more financially viable. For example, the Bingham site is empty and Waldo would be a more desirable area for young adults.

- It doesn't have to be at the Bryant site, but this is one site we are exploring. We could also explore this idea at a site like Bingham.

Comment: I don't know of any profession, when you graduate you want to live in a dormitory. We should give them a housing voucher or increase their pay, so they can decide for themselves where they want to live.

- Based off our teacher survey, there is interest in a project like this.

Comment: This project is reliant upon philanthropic dollars that may never materialize or extend into the future. This is the first time you are doing this and you want to experiment at Bryant. You are getting into the housing business instead of education. Is there a way to stop this? It seems like this proposal is just rolling along. We don't want it. It doesn't make any sense. The numbers don't work if you need philanthropic dollars.

Comment: Our home is our most important asset we have and you are putting that at risk.

Have you gone back to survey again? The survey of teachers and the survey of us (community) was several years ago.

- The teacher survey regarding interest in teacher housing was completed two years ago. The survey of the community regarding reuse opportunities for Bryant was conducted during April-May 2024.

Westport High School has reopened with lots of apartments well under \$1,000 per month. That is a current project that is available now. This idea (teacher housing at Bryant) is so complex and so many years down the road, it doesn't help the problem now. We have a teacher attraction and retention issue now. Are we looking at other projects coming online right now to provide housing for staff?

- The HR team already has multiple partnerships with various development groups and property owners. There are discounts given at multiple sites, primarily in Midtown KC. This project will not solve all of the needs, but it is one potential piece.

How many teachers and staff are currently at KCPS?

- We have about 1,100 teachers and 2,200 total staff.

Comment: This project would house 20-40 staff members which is a relatively low percentage. One of my biggest concerns is, I live across the street and have watched the building continue to deteriorate.

Are you holding on to Bryant and this idea because it is one of the highest valued properties owned by the school district?

- This is a potential way to use a district asset to address a district need in an area where our teachers would love to live. Many of our teachers desire to live in Brookside but can't afford to do so.

Comment: I'm a neighbor and a teacher. I was really excited when I got the mailer. The school has been sitting vacant for so long. Why wouldn't we want to do this? Give these teachers a chance to live there. Why not?

Comment: The building has been closed for so long and the district has not done a good job caring for it. You are proposing low-income housing. Your own statistics show there is a divide between those who strongly support and those who strongly oppose. This project would take the charm out of this district. We've seen this at 63rd and Brookside. We have signs everywhere and blinking lights, it has taken away all of the community charm. I thought I was the only one that wasn't excited about this and I'm glad that I'm not. I'm not for it and let's call it what it is, low-income housing.

- KCPS has made great strides in increasing teacher pay over the last several years. Teachers do not qualify as low-income. Housing costs have increased significantly

in Kansas City. It is a challenge for teachers to afford market-rate rents. This is a way to reduce the housing burden for teachers.

Comment: Affordable housing is something your parents need, your children need, your neighbors need, our teachers need, our friends need. We are in a real crunch. We happen to live in a beautiful bubble here and I wish everyone could live like we do. Having an empty school building is not good, but I will not tolerate any demolition of a beautiful school building in our historic neighborhood. We need to focus on how we can use this building in a constructive way. We need housing. If it's senior housing, housing for educators, or whatever...it is needed. We should be discussing is the community benefit agreement and what would it look like. This could be an amazingly beautiful project. I think we should preserve as much green space as possible.

In other districts you have researched, have they ended up doing more than one teacher housing project?

- Yes, there are school districts that have completed multiple teacher housing projects. Most of them have started with one.

Which other KCPS employees could this encompass? Are we talking about kitchen staff, janitorial, paras, etc.?

- The district employs a wide range of individuals including cafeteria workers, janitorial staff, paraprofessionals, maintenance, security officers and more. The way the RFP is currently drafted to include teachers and other KCPS staff.

Would you do a lottery to determine who gets a spot?

- In other places, we have seen school districts and development partners work together to determine eligibility requirements. It is typically through a lottery but details like that get defined further into the process.

In the other teacher housing projects that you have researched, was there less of a gap between the teacher subsidized price point and the surrounding property values? It seems like a project like this might be more successful in a neighborhood where there is less of a gap.

- We would need to conduct more research into the gap between teacher rents and property values. In Jefferson Union School District (California), the teacher housing project is surrounded by extremely high-value homes (1, 2, 3 million dollar), but I don't have a specific analysis.

Comment: All three alternatives discussed at the previous meeting have the same amount of opposition, which is not uncommon for any development. All of our neighborhoods have opposed previous development proposals for Bryant. It's important to remember, Bryant is a small school, so it makes it difficult to use of other types of reuses and you don't want other land uses that are not compatible with a residential area. It has not been depleting home values sitting there vacant for 14 years and it's certainly not going to decrease values when it is occupied. I think there is a thin veil of who is going in here is some type of problem. One way to support the school district is to help them come up with innovative projects where we are not tearing down historic buildings, especially not tearing down with no idea what's going in its place. I think it's worth considering to see what kind of proposals that development teams come up with. I don't think it's a bad idea and at the last meeting there were a lot of other people that thought it was a great idea. It would bring a positive influx to the neighborhood.

How about just raise their salaries? That would be innovative.

- As we already discussed, the district has been working hard to raise teacher pay.

Comment: Every school district in the country is hurting for teachers. If you want your teachers to live somewhere else, they will teach somewhere else.