

Adam Fels' Presentation to Louisville City Council on September 4, 2007

Thank you, Chuck, and I want to say hello to everybody—I don't know everybody on City Council, but I think this project will probably provide us lots of time to talk together over the next year or two. So, those of you who I don't have a personal professional relationship with, please feel free to use this as a springboard for conversations about anything from the current construction project which will last upwards of twenty-four months, as well as anything that our school can do for the community—or things that you'd like us to know about. Again, my name is Adam Fels, and I am the principal of Louisville Middle School (LMS), and it's been my honor to be your principal down the street for the past three years—this is beginning my fourth year. Joining me in the background on my left side is Don Orr. Don is also a Boulder Valley School District employee, and Don is the head of the entire bond project meaning all of the bonds—not just one bond, but all the construction projects--Don will be overseeing. Because this bond is one of the largest, in fact, it is the third largest bond that the voters, all of us in this community, passed. I think we're all paying careful attention to these large money projects. This bond is a \$16 million project, and like I said, it will take twenty-four months and the reason that we were awarded by the voters this large bond is because LMS is in dire need of renovation, upgrade and remodeling. I think we all know that. The question of it is what's it going to look like, how long is it going to take, what is it going to do for the kids and the teachers of this community into the foreseeable future, and when I say 'foreseeable future', we're all thinking that this is the project that we want our grandkids to go to. We don't see these kinds of bonds coming through very often, and so we really need to really maximize these dollars. So because this bond is such a major project, the way we decided to proceed—the process is what I want to talk about tonight, and I think you all need to feel free to ask me questions about the process and then I'd like to invite the community, those listening on TV as well as those in the audience to attend a very detailed presentation, very much about the schematics, very much about the materials that are going to be used, about our plan to maintain a green school, the programming this will allow, etc. I could go on and on, of course, as your principal, but the time to do that is much more than we have tonight. That's a couple of hours just to talk about those things. The meeting that I'd like to formally invite members of council if you can attend as well as the audience, is unluckily on Tuesday, Sept 18th which is, I found out, a board night. So what I would suggest is after that event if the board would like to schedule a meeting to meet with me singly if your rules allow that, please feel free to make an appointment to come review the plan in one or two at anytime you'd like to after the 18th 'cause that's when I'll have all of the visual schematics prepared. I brought an example of a schematic. This is actually the school as it stands today with the current plan, and the reason I brought this example is to show everyone what we'll be showing on the 18th. Imagine fifteen of these showing a process from the first days of conceptualization through to what we currently believe the plan will look like starting on a timeline of where we're at today. So what my staff did was take the renderings of the architects and create a timeline for us. So there will also be a time for comments and questions on the 18th. So I also want to invite those people from the Historic Preservation Society and the Historic Commission to attend. This is an opportunity to really get input from the community before the drawings are stamped.

So how did we get where we are today and what were the thoughts that went into the design? The first thing that was important was to get a cross representative group of people, and when we looked at a design team that could get something done and yet represent the community, we decided to break it down by teachers, administrators, staff, and students. So here we have the makeup of the design team—the people that actually spent countless hours designing this project. We had four teachers, and the teachers that we chose were those directly impacted by the bond. Many of you know these teachers, and these were the arts and electives teachers because that's the part of the building in most need of repair and renovation. We also picked the principal because he wouldn't have it any other way. I demanded to be on it and had a lot of opinions about what it should look like, so I thought it would be better to be on it from the beginning rather than jumping in every few minutes. We also asked four of our citizens—these are citizens that included Don Brown, who is a parent and a council member, as well as parents who represent both some people in the Historic Preservation Committee, I think, and just general parents. So we tried to branch out and listen to all kinds of voices 'cause we definitely heard all kinds of opinions. The other four members were two clerical people—the clerical people really run a building, so they were the ones who could really support us in terms of flow, egress and ingress and making sure that the needs of the students are being taken care of, and finally, we asked two students to be a part of our design. I think those are the voices we often forget when we're talking about youth and those are the very people you need to have involved in

decisions about youth. And they did a splendid job—in fact, almost every idea they offered is now part of the permanent plan. Their brilliance was hard to overcome by us adults.

So what were the themes of our designs, what were the visions and the mission that we talked about to get us from a conception to a schematic?

Number one was school safety. In this day of heightened school security and with the knowledge that FasTracks and the corridor just east of us, which I think is on your agenda to talk about tonight, is part of the long range planning for Louisville. We really needed to change the way we do business in public school, and this offered us an opportunity to support school safety in a very different way. If you think about Main Street, Old Town Louisville fifty years ago and Main Street Louisville now, it's not the same place that it once was for kids that are 11, 12, 13 and 14 years old. So that was our primary concern. Number two was school programming today and school programming fifty years from now. What kinds of school spaces would we want our grandkids to be in, knowing how quickly change is occurring. And the only thing we know about change is that it's inevitable and it's happening at an ever rapid pace, so we really tried to think about adaptable spaces and green spaces—spaces that were good for humans to be in that offered light and movement of air and flow for students and teachers.

The third which is the thing that we're mostly rated on nowadays is student achievement. How will the new building impact and support student achievement and getting kids ready for high school?

The next piece which is an order is the adult needs—and you can hear that is down on the fourth on the list—so what were the teacher/staff needs and what did they think their needs would be into the future?

And finally, we really took a look at the community's needs. What did the community want from this building? And some of the things that we heard for instance on that—'cause I think that's what we're talking about tonight, is that this is really a gateway to Main Street, and that this building has represented what people see first when they come down the street, and it has a reminder of everything that is good about Old Town Louisville. And it's no accident that Louisville ranks in the top five, year after year in Money Magazine's list of communities to live in, in fact, once again as you all talked about in your meetings, we're number three, and we get an A+ on education. So, we know that education in that school means a lot to this community, and so we were really thoughtful about that.

Another community wish was that our auditorium remain in some form. Whether that was exactly as it is or different. One of the things we heard was that we need a venue for the community to hold events in Old Town Louisville, and that venue needed to be of a large enough size to accommodate current events such as plays from our community theater as well civic events. Middle schools generally are not thought of as having large auditoriums, in fact, they're not even thought of to have auditoriums. We're very fortunate to have one, so we spent a lot of time in our design considering how we were going to maintain a large or larger auditorium.

So I don't want to give everything away tonight, but I will take on questions regardless of how tough they might be.

Councilman Bob Muckle said he was excited to see the plans. He reiterated how he had several times discussed the gateway issue and the theater issue. He said that Fels had heard from him and members of the community before that we're interested in the historic façade of the building being a gateway that has been there since it was Louisville High School. This is still of interest to many of us.

Adam Fels' reply, "Thank you."