

A Flawed Process: How the Boulder Valley School District Failed the Voters of Louisville

“When involving people in decisionmaking, bring them into the process at the start, not after some decisions have already been made.”

--Recommendation from the Communication Audit (January 2004), conducted by the National School Public Relations Association for the Boulder Valley School District

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Prepared by Louisville citizens concerned about the proposed demolition of the historic 1939 portion of Louisville Middle School.

The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has failed the voters of Louisville. The end result, the demolition of the historic 1939 portion of Louisville Middle School (LMS), will be the tragic loss of an icon crucial to the character and culture of Louisville. That result was achieved by a series of processes that by design or neglect excluded the community's values and denied Louisville voters any meaningful participation in an extremely important issue. As explained below, the process failures included:

- Setting up an unnecessary and divisive conflict within the community of preservation vs. children/education;
- BVSD's use of deceptive language (i.e. "renovate" and "remodeling" in lieu of "demolition") to obtain support of Louisville voters for the bond issue, and to later minimize community reaction to the planned demolition of LMS;
- Failure of BVSD to give serious consideration to Louisville citizens' value for preservation of LMS;
- Generally creating an illusion of public participation without actually having it;
- Delegation of the crucial decision about whether to demolish the historic portion of LMS to a handpicked "Design Advisory Team" (DAT);
- Formation of a DAT which included only members with strong ties to the project or to BVSD, and which had no true community representation;
- Failure to give the DAT any tools or options to seriously consider preservation;
- Failure to give the DAT any timely cost analyses of preservation;
- Failure to give the Louisville community any reasonable notice that the design included demolition of the historic portion of LMS until after the design process had ended;
- A series of conclusory statements with little to no data or analysis to support them;
- Denial of any true community participation after the design had been adopted;
- Disregarding recommendations made to BVSD in a 2004 Communication Audit.
- A Board of Education that has refused to honor its role as a link between the community and BVSD, and that has also failed to consider constituents' concerns.

Why Louisville Cares About the LMS Structure

Louisville Middle School (LMS) is a gateway to Louisville's historic Main Street, is crucially important to the character of the community, and is the only historic school left in use in Louisville. It was built in 1939 as Louisville High School, a Works Progress Administration project that provided much-needed jobs to unemployed Louisville residents, and became a source of pride to the community. The school

