March 11, 2008

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION®

Mountains/Plains Office

Chris King, Ph.D., Superintendent
Boulder Valley School District

Dear Dr. King,

The National Trust for Historic Preservation was recently contacted by a Louisville citizens group concerned with the proposed demolition of the historic 1939 portion of Louisville Middle School. We understand that the Boulder Valley School District is seeking to address programmatic needs for the Louisville Middle School. We would like to offer our assistance toward finding creative solutions that would meet those needs, while also preserving this historic school for continued use as an educational institution.

In 2000, the National Trust listed "Historic Neighborhood Schools" nationwide on its list of America's 11-Most Endangered Historic Places. That same year we launched the *Historic Neighborhood Schools Initiative*, which provides strategies, case studies and information to help communities find ways to continue using historic schools.

Over the past eight years, through our *Historic Neighborhood Schools Initiative,* we have pulled together numerous case studies that demonstrate how rehabilitated and renovated historic schools can more than adequately meet state-of-the-art educational standards and programmatic needs, create environments that stimulate student achievement, cost less than demolition and replacement with a new building, and play an integral role in sustainability and Smart Growth policies through the reuse of an existing structure.

Here in Colorado there are a multitude of case studies that illustrate these points. Thirty-four active school buildings in Colorado have received State Historical Fund (SHF) grants for rehabilitation and renovation projects that helped facilitate their continued use.

The **Dora Moore School**, the oldest public school in Denver, built in 1889, is one of these grant recipients. It is an excellent example of how an historic school can be efficiently and economically rehabilitated for continued use**.** The building faced an estimated $1.8 million in structural repairs shortly after celebrating its centennial. The historic windows showed years of wear and had become inoperable, the roof and gutters leaked, and peeling paint trapped moisture in the masonry walls, causing them to crumble.

With strong support from the school administration, teachers, alumni and the community, the Denver Public School District overcame a tight budget and complex project by establishing a project team that worked with creative solutions and involved all parties throughout the design process. Two SHF grants totaling $200,850 were awarded to help restore the windows. Denver Public Schools (DPS) raised the majority of the remaining money, a good portion of which came from a bond issue. The combined financial and technical support of SHF and DPS, in concert with community support, allowed DPS to adopt a more proactive plan for preserving their historic buildings, which they had previously been unable to do because of a lack of maintenance funding in their budget. In addition, the project provided an educational opportunity for students to study, hands-on, history and historic preservation. Today, this school continues to play an integral role in the vitality of the Capitol Hill Neighborhood.

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Idaho's **Boise High School** provides another excellent case study. Constructed between 1906 and 1922, the old school was plagued by code and safety issues. Wiring was faulty, exits inadequate, classrooms overcrowded, and the facility no longer met educational program standards. Its landlocked campus was confined between the urban downtown area and the historic North End, Boise's oldest neighborhood. North End residents recognized the school's value in maintaining the integrity of their neighborhood and led the charge for its preservation in partnership with the school district. A Master Plan was developed that resulted in a restored historic school building, construction of an adjacent new, architecturally compatible building, and creative parking strategies.

Through our *Neighborhood Schools Initiative*, the National Trust has also developed a partnership with the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI). For many years, outdated facilities guidelines encouraged new construction and stymied the rehabilitation of existing, historic schools. That is why the National Trust partnered with CEFPI, the National Center for Preservation Training and Technology, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop and promote new CEFPI recommendations and guidelines for the rehabilitation and renovation of historic schools. We encourage you to review the two CEFPI publications: (1) "A Primer for the Renovation/Rehabilitation of Older and Historic Schools" and (2) "An Appraisal Guide for Older/Historic School Facilities." These can be ordered at www.cefpi.org/pubs or we can provide a set at your request.

In addition to the CEFPI publications, the National Trust can provide you with additional case studies of school buildings across the country that have been rehabilitated to meet contemporary programmatic needs. We also have a small grants program that could be a source for funding to conduct a thorough feasibility study to evaluate the possibility of saving the 1939 portion of Louisville Middle School for continued use. In addition, the State Historical Fund is a potential source of funding to cover actual rehabilitation and renovation expenses associated with work on historic schools.

We have been impressed by the high level of community support for the preservation and continued use of this Louisville landmark. We encourage the Boulder Valley School District to partner with this community to devise creative solutions for the continued use of this building as an educational institution. We respectfully ask that you and the Boulder Valley School Board reconsider the proposed demolition and fully evaluate alternatives, with community input, that would preserve this building for continued use as an educational institution for your New Century Graduates.

If there is additional information or assistance that we can offer, please do not hesitate to contact me or our Program Officer who has been involved in this issue, Jennifer Buddenborg, at 303-623-1504.

Sincerely,

Barbara Pahl

Barbara Pahl, Director

cc: Paul Weissmann, Colorado State Representative
Adam Fels, Principal, Louisville Middle School
Boulder Valley School District Board Members
Mary Allman-Koernig, Colorado Preservation, Inc.
Dan Corson, Colorado Historical Society
Mark Wolfe, State Historical Fund