

MEMORANDUM

To: School Building Committee
Community Center Design Committee
From: Doug Adams, Gary Anderson, Ken Bassett, Lucretia Giese, Ken Hurd, Judith Lawler,
Brooks Mostue, David O'Neil, Steven Perlmutter, Dana Robbat, Peter Sugar,
Date: February 12, 2018
Re: Selected Lincoln Design Community Thoughts

The following summarizes observations and suggestions raised by this group of Lincoln's design professionals in support of a project that successfully addresses the Town's school and community center needs. This group wishes to acknowledge and thank the design consultants and large group of Lincoln citizens whose hard work and thoughtful processes have created a fertile ground for constructive participation.

The intent of this summary is to further a constructive dialogue, assist with efficient and timely decision making, and resolve areas of potential conflict. The comments fall into two categories – general observations, and specific observations on three of the schematic school programming options.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS – SCHOOL OPTIONS

1. The number of plan option iterations has become confusing to many and makes discussions that compare options somewhat difficult.
Suggestion: To reduce confusion, please consider a more limited number of options with a new numbering system that continues to use cost from least to most expensive. Consider also assigning memorable names, like "ZigZag, Crossroads, Xray..." to the option numbers.
2. A commonly voiced concern is that a school building project in the \$90M range will run the risk of rejection by voters and/or jeopardize the enthusiasm for funding a community center.
Suggestion: Place a strong effort in the coming weeks on developing the best possible least cost option that provides educational enhancements at some level but remains in the vicinity of \$70M to \$80M cost range.
3. The options' emphasis appears to have been more strongly directed at solving the programmatic and educational requirements of the school building over the building's integration with the site. Site work will represent a major portion of the project costs. The cost aspects of the site seem to be more "allowances" than costs based on well-developed site plans, which we see as insufficient at this stage. All the schematic options presented so far feel underdeveloped in these and other areas:
 - a. Automobile and pedestrian circulation

- b. students, visitors, staff and faculty, service, community functions circulation
- c. student entrance
- d. community entrance (Town Meeting, lectures & presentations, concerts, etc.)
- e. bus drop-offs
- f. parking
- g. service roads
- h. tree removal impacts
- i. relationship between inside and outside

Suggestion: At this point, consider carefully the interplay between the building and the site's functional and aesthetic demands. Develop site and building designs simultaneously to an equal level of credibility whose costs may be properly estimated.

4. Several people felt that the Town has expressed a preference over time for a solution that surrounds the central green with what has been characterized as "low buildings fronted by a veil of trees". Integrating existing trees and careful, low-scale building massing could create a site-sensitive composition expressive of the Town character.

Suggestion: Consider carefully the placement of two story elements and their massing when/if fronting on the green.

5. Concern was expressed that realistic renderings showing materials and facade treatments are premature at this point and should be a later design phase where materials and architectural character are explored in a comprehensive manner taking into account a range of possible solutions. Detailed renderings can be a distraction from discussion of strategic planning issues.

Suggestion: Strongly consider not showing realistic drawings at this point of the project.

6. It was felt that the options would benefit from further clarity of the interplay among the Commons, its use(s), its symbolic and functional role as the "heart" of the school, its relationship to the building entry, its relationship to the center green, the administration area, and the building's security needs. The general feeling is that the various Commons location alternatives should identify and prioritize exterior views and access potential.

Suggestion: Strengthen the justification for the Commons with clear descriptions of:

- a. what happens in the Commons throughout the school day and during community use (if any)
- b. solutions that allow the Commons to open toward the central green – rather than the rear of the site – while minimizing obstruction by the administrative wing;
- c. the pros and cons of the relationship of the Commons to student/faculty/visitor entry(s) and community entry(s);
- d. the optimum size of this space;
- e. research into how others have made use of such a space.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS – SMITH WING

7. Considerable interest remains in preserving the Smith wing, as evidenced by many comments such as:

- a. the extremely high quality construction of the Smith gym floor and structure and overall height cannot be cost-effectively duplicated today;
- b. the presence of the stage in the existing Smith gym enhances its use for multiple activities
- c. the general belief that conserving the embodied energy contained in an existing building by salvaging and repurposing it is perhaps the most sustainable action any building project can do. It reduces landfill, conserves resources, and can reduce site development costs.
- d. the historic value of the architecture is important to many residents;
- e. the potential to reduce demolition costs and the site redevelopment costs associated therewith is attractive;
- f. the potential to reduce relocation and phasing costs via continued use (along with the pods) during construction of the school is attractive;
- g. preserving the significant portion of the Smith Wing also preserves the concept of a campus surrounded by buildings (as opposed to featuring a new object located in a large field)

Further, there is strong interest from this group in evaluating whether the Smith wing can be repurposed for the Community Center. We understand that the architect for the Community Center has begun to explore its reuse and possible connection in several of the options at the Hartwell location. This interest is evidenced by the above comments and:

- a. the Smith wing already has a community space image in the Town's mind via its familiarity to every voter;
- b. part of the Community Center program is for a large, enclosed activity space, perhaps similar to the existing Smith Gym.
- c. demolition and site work costs could be reduced significantly, particularly when combined with proposed infrastructure costs required if the Community Center were located at the Hartwell area;
- d. parking, walks, utilities, and other site development infrastructure and improvements are already in place;
- e. since as many as two of the pods are expected to be demolished for a community center, perhaps the resulting open space could instead become open recreational area.

Suggestion: Evaluate the feasibility of repurposing the Smith wing for use as the Town Community Center.

8. Concern was expressed that having independent design teams for the Community Center and the schools may result in a campus plan that is not optimally integrated.

Suggestion: Consider holding a joint design session ("charrette") as soon as possible among the school building and community center designers and committee members and – ideally – the finance committee. Two points should be emphasized:

- a. the potential reuse of the Smith Gym;
- b. more importantly, the essential need to coordinate and optimize the development of the site design being handled by the two different designers.

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS ON SCHEME B.6

1. Can a modified B6 scheme be explored that has a smaller footprint yet preserves the current media center/library? Perhaps that way, each committee/design team could estimate the cost of their portion of the work to see if the following goals could be achieved at less cost:
 - a. give the school administration a more compact footprint with the hubs while supporting the educational programmatic needs as set out by the School Committee and the administration
 - b. preserve the current sense of campus with buildings surrounding the playing fields
 - c. preserve the best elements of the Smith wing for the historic preservationists
 - d. increase the sustainability by preserving more of the existing structures
 - e. minimize duplicating costs of infrastructure (demolition vs. building new)
 - f. possibly increase opportunities for staging of construction without total disruption to the schools
 - g. possibly offer taxpayers a viable alternative that is financially more palatable and therefore achievable at the polls
2. The two story wing places a large volume on the central green. Consider relocating the two story wing to rear of site, preferably behind or within the current Media Center building, thus preserving the architectural rhythm of the three higher structures (Media Center, Auditorium, and two-story academic areas) joined by lower connecting elements in between and in front of them.
3. Can the Commons open more toward the central green? Ideally look outward in both directions?
4. The second gym seems to be an attached object. Can it somehow be more integrated into the other two story elements?
5. It is unclear how community access will work.
6. What is the genesis of the angles in the plan? What advantages do they provide?
7. Is there a way to take advantage of the existing high space of the Media area, such as creating loft-like classrooms or incorporating a lower school gym in this area?
8. Are there design modifications that will preserve/incorporate a greater number of the existing trees?

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS ON SCHEME A3.4

1. Can a connection be made between the Commons and the central green space?
2. Can the interior courtyard to the left of the Donaldson Auditorium be enclosed for program use?
3. Can the design clarify how parking will be addressed by the site plan?
4. Can the day-to-day arrival/departure flow be further developed and clarified?

5. The existing Media Center looks outward to the central green. Is there a way to preserve this feature of the space?

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS ON SCHEME A1.1 (with Program Enhancements of 2/5/2018)

1. Will the additional program space increase the cost of this option above the previous estimates? The concern is that there should be as wide a spread in costs among the three options and that these recent enhancements might bring them all too close together in cost.
2. If the link between Smith and the "Commons" is proposed as new construction, can the "Flex Space" be arranged to more optimally serve groups of classrooms?

(End of Memorandum)