

The Concord Middle School Building Committee Report

CMS Educational Vision Unveiled at Community Forum

The Concord Middle School Building Committee (CMSBC) held a community forum to provide updates on process, schedule and the educational planning for the proposed new middle school as well as to share the project team's analysis of the Sanborn site and to present possible options for concept design. Their goal was to inform, garner feedback and to answer any questions.

Concord Public School Superintendent Dr. Laurie Hunter and Concord Middle School Principal Justin Cameron presented regarding the vision for the educational program that will guide the architects as they design the new facility. The process to create the vision included public forums with students, parents and educators to inform the vision and priorities for a curriculum and what a middle school building should include in a 21st Century school. A constellation of eight crucial elements or core principles were identified that would shape decisions on specific building components that would incorporate these principles into the new school.

These principles are related and interconnected; they include:

- **Collaboration** furniture and spaces designed for the full range of experiences and modes to prepare students to be effective adults;
- **Flexibility** various room sizes with ability to combine or divide spaces to support all teaching modes and learning styles and planning ahead to facilitate future expansion and ease renovation;
- **Authenticity** real and warm materials such as natural wood and fabrics, and connection to nature;
- **Inclusivity** barrier-free design, zoning for after-hours and community use, an auditorium and cafeteria that can hold the entire school, effective and intuitive circulation for connection and good communication;
- **Engagement** spaces for hands-on innovation, creativity and joyful learning, a green building that can be a teaching tool, one special defining space or campus element;
- **Balance** a design that will foster the full spectrum: technology to craft, teacher-led to student-led, indoors to outdoors, independent to group;
- **Wellness** a sustainable, high performance school with care applied to comfort, acoustics, natural light and connection to the outdoors, a school for the whole person; and,
- **Choice** allow for teacher and student autonomy while balancing standards with latitude for individual pathways to success.

The vision process revealed a consensus to utilize a middle school model which utilizes a team approach with four content area teachers per team which promotes student to student relationships, student to teacher relationships, as well as interdisciplinary and collaborative learning through a project and problem based approach. This is opposed to a junior high model which operates like a high school where class assignments are based on schedules, grade levels are mixed at all times, and curriculum and instruction are insular and content based.

SMMA, the design team for the feasibility study and schematic design phase, presented five potential massing options for how the new middle school building would be organized and located on the site. The topography of the site features a plateau and sloped hill adjacent to a forested area. Several of the options utilized the slope and south facing forest views while all the options were focused on creating a facility that reflected the team teaching approach with flexible spaces.

Among other matters, members of the CMSBC were seeking input on open questions such as the overall size and building footprint, sustainability elements, as well as the size and type of gymnasium and auditorium. Attendees expressed interest in addressing student stress, sustainability, inclusivity, music, financial considerations, safety, and a design for the whole child.

Interested individuals can find a copy of the presentations made at the meeting on line at www.concordps.org/cms-building-project. For questions and comments, individuals can email the Committee at msbc@concordps.org or utilize the form on the aforementioned web page, <https://www.concordps.org/cms-building-project/email-the-cms-building-committee/>.

Upcoming Meetings:

Concord Middle School Building Committee: March 26, 7:30am at the Ripley Building

All meetings are open to the public and interested individuals are encouraged to attend.

Concord Middle School Building Committee Contact Information

Interested individuals can find all relevant materials regarding the Concord Middle School Building Committee including meeting dates, agendas and minutes as well as reports that led to the Town Meeting Warrant Article at www.concordps.org/cms-building-project. For questions and comments, individuals can email the Committee at msbc@concordps.org or utilize the form on the aforementioned web page, <https://www.concordps.org/cms-building-project/email-the-cms-building-committee/>.