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The Design Team's Notes on the Feasibility Process

The Team's Background, and the Elements of the Initial Feasibility Study:

In September 2014 the Wilkes-Barre Area School District asked a team of 4 design firms - 2 architectural firms and 2 engineering firms - to pool resources in order to craft a strategic planning response to a structural engineer's evaluation of Coughlin High School that identified serious deterioration of the interior courtyard's brick walls.

Later that fall the Board of Education for the WBASD requested that the joint design team complete the following 4 items:

1) A District-Wide Feasibility Study providing comprehensive assessment of the existing conditions at each of the school district's 13 buildings.
2) A Detailed Structural Evaluation of both Coughlin and Meyers high schools.
3) An analysis of 4 - eventually 5 - possible sites where a new school might be built.
4) A design for the renovation of the former Mackin Elementary School, to create swing space in order to house one-half of Coughlin's student population.

The 4 firms that were retained as part of the joint team had all performed work for the WBASD previously, but not all of the firms had ever worked together. These 4 design firms all have their main offices located within the WBASD, and as such all have a vested interest in realizing a successful process based on a sound and thorough analysis conducted within the highest standards of integrity and transparency. Lead by 5 main principals - 2 of whom are alumni of the District's high schools - the firms collectively have high quality experience in non-overlapping design disciplines, including: architecture, educational planning, civil and environmental engineering, structural engineering, mechanical engineering, and electrical engineering.

The presence of this joint team within the District means that architects and engineers can respond rapidly to any District need. Over 40 professionals in all have worked on this coordinated effort, led by principles with a long-term knowledge of this District and its buildings. The 4 registered architects and 6 professional engineers engaged in the study - and their support staff - have collectively over 150 years of experience in local projects of this nature. It has been a hallmark of this team to collaborate in constant peer-review of each other's conclusions, so as to provide expertise guided by an objective and intellectually honest review of the facts. The team's educational projects experience - ranging across public and private elementary and secondary projects as well as post-secondary university work - is significant, recent, and overlapping.

A) The Conditional Assessment of Coughlin and Meyers High Schools:

The District-Wide Feasibility Study submitted to the Pennsylvania Dept. of Education in December of 2014 developed a number of Options to address possible plans of action for remediating or replacing the two deteriorating secondary centers, Coughlin and Meyers. Running concurrently with the structural engineer's ongoing Detailed Structural Evaluation, cost estimates were developed for the renovation of the 2 high schools. This option is identified as Option 1 - Renovation (see the feasibility study, Construction Options tab, page 6.1). The following conclusions were the result of conditional assessment walk-throughs and observations by the architects, structural engineers, mechanical and electrical engineers, and masonry restoration experts:

1) Coughlin High School:

a) The Courtyard Walls:

In Option 1, the design team concluded in unanimous consensus opinion that Coughlin could not be feasibly renovated within any normal range of budgetary allocation for major masonry repairs and structural deficiencies.

The structural deterioration of the interior court at Coughlin is far beyond that of a standard masonry restoration effort. At this time, the courtyard's masonry bearing walls (12" thick brick walls) have been wet for so long inside the wall construction that the mortar no longer supports the integrity of the wall or the weight of the bricks as it should or as it did. Areas of mortar are losing their integrity in terms of mechanical and chemical bond - in a sense, the 'glue' that holds the walls together is softening, or crumbling.

In addition to all of the normal and usual repairs that could be expected in a 106-year old building, these structural concerns are really the conclusive circumstance in sealing the unwelcome fate of this grand historic building. It is important to understand that rebuilding the courtyard walls would mean temporarily supporting - or shoring-up - all of the floors while the entire courtyard perimeter wall on 4 sides is being disassembled and rebuilt. Many of the steel floor and roof beams that tie into the courtyard walls need repairing, reinforcing, or replacing. And in addition, all of the stone parapets at top of the outside walls around the entire building are weakening, as is the stone façade throughout the entire building exterior. The cost of all of these structural repairs alone is estimated to be on the order of $35M and upwards.

b) Educational Performance and Built-in Obsolescence:

Facing renovation costs of $35M before any other improvements were made to a building with a completely obsolete heating system and electrical system, it was the design team's conclusion that a very costly renovation of Coughlin's structure would leave the district without the financial wherewithal to properly improve the educational amenities of the school. Simply put, as time goes by Coughlin is becoming more and more awkward in its level of code compliance, meaning that in terms of the modern building code which updates every 3 years, Coughlin looks and feels nothing like a modern high school. It does not conform well to the needs of a modern educational curriculum; this is a condition in older buildings that real estate professionals refer to as 'functional obsolescence', and Coughlin, at 106 years of age, feels and is very functionally obsolete. It is true that the interiors could be partly reconfigured were the exterior not in such dire structural condition, and yet, the interior layout of a century-old school is not at all configured to modern educational needs -

it doesn't wrap itself around a modern curriculum with spaces that are flexible, nor with spaces that are specific to their need; it does not provide for special needs classrooms, modern science and math labs, a media center, or a gymnasium that are at a similar level of amenity and utility as that of contemporary high schools.

c) Seismic Reinforcing is Required:

As if all of this were not enough, the modern structural code identifies Northeastern Pennsylvania as being within an active seismic zone, meaning that structural reinforcing of multi-story buildings for the side-to-side shaking that occurs during an earthquake is now a requirement in new construction or major renovation. If this seems irrelevant, it is important to note that code enforcement officials all over Northeastern PA are acutely aware of the August 23, 2011 temblor event that noticeably shook buildings regionally and all the way up into New England. The consequence is that all of the major framing connections at Coughlin are required by code to be reinforced to resist dynamic and harmonic lateral forces - that is the side-to-side shaking, or oscillating, that happens during an earthquake. This cost is almost incalculable for Coughlin, because of the very nature of the unreinforced masonry wall structure and the deteriorating mortar.

Conclusion:

Given that the district's financial resources have limits, the design team could not in good conscience make a professional recommendation that the WBASD take on this very expensive restoration project only to be left with educational spaces that were sub-standard when compared to modern high schools. Of additional concern was the predictable reality of all large renovation projects to be subject to unforeseen conditions, and therefore to the unknown extra cost of change orders.

2) Meyers High School:

a) The Exterior Facades:

Initially the design team had expected to find a much more favorable situation at Meyers High School. Clearly there were obvious signs of water infiltration into the exterior walls at the roof edge - and so all roofing materials had been replaced in 2012 and the 4 foot high parapet walls around the top of the building had been removed due to serious bending and buckling. The solution at the time was to bring a new rubber membrane up and over the wall, so that now Meyers has a visible black rubber parapet treatment around the entire building.

The ongoing water infiltration had been invasive into the exterior wall cavities and into the sandwich of materials - brick, air space, hollow terra-cotta masonry units, and interior plaster - and eventually the water had soaked down into the many large pieces of white glazed terra-cotta that are in decorative bands, or over window openings, or over the large architrave span above the auditorium entrances. Many of these terra-cotta pieces are losing their white-glaze finish in an action called 'spalling', where the glaze literally 'pops-off' in chips; this is a sign that water is saturating the masonry unit from the inside, corroding the steel reinforcement and causing it to expand; this expansion of the steel pushes the surface concrete off of the cast-in-place concrete lintel, creating more vulnerability to water infiltration. This phenomenon has reached the point where the terra-cotta's deterioration is growing exponentially. In addition to the lintel deterioration, the brick mortar is also deteriorating throughout the building.

During the Detailed Structural Evaluation, the design team's structural engineers got up into the attic cavities with specialty masonry restoration experts who work up and down the east coast and on major historic renovation projects in Washington, DC and other historic metro areas. What they saw was unsettling. Water had infiltrated down inside the exterior walls - very much like at Coughlin - and eventually found its way onto the spans across the tops of the windows. These spans - called 'lintels' - are not made of one or two pieces of stone at Meyers as they were at the GAR high school, built only 5 years before Meyers in the city of Wilkes-Barre. Instead, they are a more modern, more engineered, and less expensive way of spanning openings; they use steel reinforcing rods and giant steel pins and staples to hold together several terra-cotta units. Terra-cotta was used extensively at the time before WWII because it is light and fire-proof as compared to stone. The disheartening discovery was that Meyers had an endemic and systemic deterioration of lintels and other components within the cavities of the exterior walls; the steel reinforcing is rusting severely due to rainwater laying on top of the lintels. Not only are these terra-cotta lintels above the windows failing, but the terra-cotta infill-panels - the back-up masonry walls behind the exterior brick - are in movement as a consequence of deterioration within the wall due to the deflection or sagging of the lintels above the windows.

On the exterior walls this can look like buckling of the brick veneer – i.e., bricks pushing out of the wall plane, and casting shadows, with the wall bowing, or looking bumpy, and not flat. This condition can be seen on the north side of the boiler building above the tunnel drive, and also on the west stadium wall in the area of the industrial arts rooms, as well as the north wall of the cafeteria towards Corlear Street. Cost estimates for restoration of the exterior masonry 'skin' at Meyers are at $10M and upwards.

b) Window Replacement:

In order to repair these hidden lintels above the windows, the windows themselves need to be removed for access. Because even the school's newer windows along Carey Avenue and Hanover Street at Meyers are now 40 years old, they need to be replaced once they are taken out; they no longer work properly, the frames and sash are loose and must be propped open or not opened at all, and they do not meet the current state energy code or building energy performance standards; they leak heat through the glass and increase energy costs in addition to poor operating performance. The necessary window replacement which must occur once they are removed is a major cost factor, estimated at another $10M.

c) Seismic Reinforcing Required:

In terms of the previously mentioned seismic situation, Meyers is more predictable than Coughlin because the fundamental structural system at Meyers is a consistent steel frame (think of 3-D chess or checkers,) unlike that of the hybrid frame-with-bearing-walls at Coughlin. This means that the method of developing stiff 'knuckles' in the 3-D frame - the 'moment connections' - is at least analytically possible; however, for a 3-story 270,000 square foot building, it is extremely expensive at an estimated cost of $27.5M and up. The city code officials have already told the design team that they will require a remediation compliant with the seismic code; no public entity can possibly take responsibility for - or exception to - this onerous but strict requirement in a public high school today, and no competent design professionals can or will either.

d) Costs of Exterior Stabilization and Restoration:

The sum total of the cost of issues directly related to structural deficiencies at Meyers is estimated at $47.5M and up. This is before any expenditure on replacing a heating system which is obsolete; and a primary electrical service and power distribution wiring system which are obsolete; and the substandard lighting; and the corroded plumbing valves and water supply; and the thickened sanitary lines. Before so much as any long-term architectural improvements are made to the building, whether flooring, ceilings, blackboards, lockers, display cases, handrails, restroom fixtures, media center equipment, audio-visual equipment, lab equipment and storage, furniture, public address, intercom, security, administrative and faculty prep areas, modern production, automation, and communication labs and performance and music spaces with modern technology and seating, dining facilities, new kitchen - before any of these, the estimated costs are at $85M and up. That is, before any educationally-related improvements at all.

e) Undersized Classrooms and Minimum 'Reimbursable' Classroom Sizes:

Lastly, even if it were possible to afford to renovate Meyers within the school district's available financing, the building would still not be able to absorb the population of 900 Coughlin students. It is simply not large enough. Additionally, to further complicate a situation where time is a pressing concern and where bureaucratic unknowns are burdensome, Meyers has an unfortunate Achilles heel: the classes are too small to meet the reimbursement criteria set by the PA Dept. of Education, by about 10%. The design team's planners have checked with PA PDE; state officials cannot remember an instance of granting a variance for classroom size for reimbursable projects. In truth, Meyers classrooms are 20% below the practical lower threshold for contemporary classrooms. This means that a renovation project at Meyers does not qualify for the Commonwealth's matching share of the expenses, typically in a range of 15-25% of the total cost.

Conclusion:

Meyers is a very large building with an advanced deterioration of the exterior facades; the cost of renovating the skin of the building does not depend on 'historical experts'; rather it depends on experienced technologists in structural and masonry restoration, such as was performed at the First National Bank on Wilkes-Barre's Public Square recently. This level of technical repair - on top of the renovation of all of the exhausted interior mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems - is simply beyond the financial means of this District. For the design team to make a recommendation to undertake the renovation of Meyers when such a high exposure to 'unforeseen conditions' exists was deemed professionally irresponsible if not negligent by the design team; a concern was that to encourage the restoration of an attractive historical exterior at the risk of not being able to afford an updated, modernized, and functional interior by today's standards would be an unfortunate result for students and faculty in the learning environment.

B) The 5 Building Sites – 2 owned, 3 not owned:

1) Site Analysis and Cost Estimates for Purchase and Development:

Concurrent with the preparation of the District-Wide Feasibility Study, the design team was tasked with developing a comparative analysis of 5 parcels of land in the greater Wilkes-Barre Area that might accommodate a new high school. Two were already owned by the district - Empire Street and

Solomon - and 3 would have to be acquired if they determined to be attractive and/or viable locations. These latter 3 sites are identified as the Murray, Biscontini, and Pagnotti sites. All are comprehensively addressed in the 2014 District-Wide Feasibility Study. The general conclusions were as follows:

a) Empire Street: this site was determined to be large enough for a consolidated high school; while the site was large enough for both a school and a field, there were concerns over poor soils due to its mining history as a spoil site; the site is not particularly neighborhood friendly due to its separation from the city by a long concrete culvert; it is located in, and surrounded by, an M-3 Manufacturing Zone.
Development Estimate: $ 7,500,000

b) Solomon: this site was determined to be large enough for a neighborhood high school only; the analysis looked at the land left over from the 1992 Elementary School / Middle School construction, land that is currently used for various playing fields. The site had known soils issues from the construction of the Solomon School, where specialized foundations had been required; but the most severe limitation may have been size of the available land and the ability to generate adequate parking areas. While the Solomon site was barely viable in terms of the size and shape, the existing fields would have been completely sacrificed and required relocation to another undetermined place. The team's appraisal was that in solving one problem another would be created, and that a very functional asset of the district would be compromised with a significant impact on the athletic amenities at the existing neighborhood K-8 facility.
Development Estimate: $ 3,000,000 Field Relocation Estimate: $ 3,000,000

c) Murray: this site was determined to be large enough for a neighborhood high school; while it is fairly centrally located within the District's population centers, the site's shape was narrow, irregular, and constrained; the site was located along a 4-lane road and not easily accessible by pedestrians, possibly needing bridges to access it; the site is bounded along its length by an active railroad line at grade which would require protection; the site would need an interior road traveling along its entire length, as Pennsylvania Avenue has no utility as a usable street.
Acquisition & Development Estimate: $15,425,000

d) Biscontini: this site was determined to be large enough for a consolidated school; located next to the Solomon K-8 School in Plains, this site is located in such a way as to develop a campus with Solomon in the more northerly end of the district's population center in Plains; at this time an existing business occupies the site currently; the site has a mining history and records are unclear as to the exact location of an abandoned mine shaft; the mine shaft would complicate planning should it fall in the wrong place; the site is bounded by an active railroad line.
Acquisition & Development Estimate: $ 11,875,000

e) Pagnotti: this site was determined to be large enough for a consolidated school; the site is close to the Cross Valley Expressway and out of the flood plain; however, the site is also a former mine spoil site with an unknown depth of refuse culm; there are no utilities on the site at this time; there are no roads on the site at this time; any newly built roads into the site will need to negotiate a steep grade change and will be expensive to construct with thicker than usual stone beds on unstable silts.
Acquisition & Development Estimate: $ 15,300,000

Conclusion:

The conditional and the cost analysis for these 4 sites revealed that they are environmentally degraded and also expensive to remediate. The consistency of the mining history seen here is not really out of the norm for the large tracts of land still open and available in and around the Wyoming Valley. Soils remediation costs in addition to land purchase costs added up to expenditures that represented too large of a percentage of the available financing. After receiving the financial team's reports during the spring of 2015, the WBASD directed the design team to focus on the two remaining parcels already owned by the District: the Coughlin site and the Meyers site.

2) The Feasibility Study and the 2 Neighborhood School Option: Biscontini & Murray:

During the course of the feasibility study there was discussion and support for the 2 neighborhood high school model on new sites. The greatest consideration was centered around the concept of a 'new Coughlin at Biscontini' and a 'new Meyers at Murray'. As the challenges presented by the Murray site became more accurately described and estimated, the concept changed, to a 'new North at Biscontini' and the possibility of a 'new South at Meyers'. This concept of 2 new neighborhood high schools, which replicated the model for the last century, was to leave GAR intact as a 3rd existing high school - the only one of the three which wasn't in dire need of repair.

Conclusion:

The concept lost viability when the financial feasibility picture came in to focus. An upper limit of $100M was identified as a maximum debt that could be serviced by the WBASD, so long as the operating costs were sustainable. Out of the $100M in available financing, $10M had been allocated to the Mackin renovation, with $90M remaining to address any possible new secondary centers; to this end, it became clear that a drive towards consolidation was necessary.

Because Coughlin and Meyers were the 2 schools in immediate crisis, because GAR has viability as a school building, and because there was a defined and limited financing available, it was decided to consider consolidation of Coughlin and Meyers into one facility with room for growth.

3) The Feasibility Study and the 1 Consolidated School Option: Biscontini & Pagnotti.

Conclusion:

Also during the course of the feasibility study there was ample discussion surrounding the idea of a fully consolidated high school. The total area of a fully consolidated school with comprehensive facilities and room for growth suggested the larger sites, specifically Biscontini and Pagnotti. When the District's budgetary goals were defined however, it became clear that the cost of land acquisition and land development was initially prohibitive to the consideration of a fully consolidated high school. In fact, available financing options would require that any consolidated school, even on school district owned land, would need to find ways to reduce the size of the school's space program.

C) The Financial Feasibility Study Report:

1) Maximum Debt Service, Available Construction Budget, & Sustainable Operating Costs:

In the Spring of 2015, the financial report of the District's bond underwriters was presented, including a determination of a maximum bonding capacity based on debt service. The understanding of these values provided clarity in terms of the overall budget available for construction. In addition to the issue of long-term capital improvements, the issue of operating costs was identified as an area where the current 3 high school model was not sustainable. It was explained that the WBASD is about to go into an operating deficit; this information made it clear that some type of consolidation - if not full consolidation - was imperative, and that any new proposal for secondary centers needed to take this information into account.

Conclusion:

The financial report made it clear that the concept of two neighborhood high schools would not be affordable as a capital expenditure, nor could it be sustainable operationally on an ongoing basis. After hearing the financial consultant's report, it became obvious that any viable solution had to assume at the very least a consolidation of Coughlin and Meyers, the two schools with failing physical plants.

D) The Focus on the District's Currently Owned Sites – Coughlin & Meyers:

1) Comparing the Relative Strengths of the Coughlin & Meyers Sites:

a) The 2015 Geotechnical Soils Report:

In May of 2015 a high-level geotechnical comparison of the geotechnical conditions beneath the Meyers and Coughlin sites was requested of and performed by Geo-Science Engineering Co, Inc. The District sought to receive a professional opinion from an experienced professional with specific knowledge of the structural characteristics of soils composition and soils behavior in the Wyoming Valley in particular, and Northeastern PA in general.

Mr. Scheller's comparison draws 2 fundamental distinctions between the soils conditions at the Coughlin and Meyers sites:

1) The river-bed soils under the Coughlin site are such that they create a coarse-grained crust of about 30 feet in depth. This glacially-formed crust provides an adequate bearing capacity to allow for construction of multi-story buildings with conventional 'shallow' foundation systems.

   In distinction, the river-bed sediment soils under the Meyers site are characterized as soft, and having soils strata, or layers, that are influenced by the Susquehanna River levels, in such a way that during high water events there can be upward pressure on the area; this was observed on the football field at Meyers when the turf billowed up several feet in September of 2011. The evaluation states that at the Meyers site "it may be necessary to construct a combination foundation using 'deep' foundation members or ground modification elements in conjunction with a structural slab."

While the geotechnical information available at this time cannot conclusively confirm the requirement for specialized foundations at the Meyers site, Geo-Science's strong opinion is that a conventional foundation system will not be appropriate for Meyers. The cost estimates from the design team's geotechnical and structural engineers of the specialized foundations identifies a possible foundation system cost as high as in the range of $5M-$7M, adding $20-30 per square foot of construction cost.

2) Mr. Scheller characterizes the extent of deep anthracite mining under the downtown area and the Coughlin site as virtually non-existent (one small corner possibly,) however deep mining did occur under the Meyers site. Although it appears that Meyers has settled a bit more in its 85 years than Coughlin has in its 105 years (the report identifies about 14 inches for Meyers and 1-2 for Coughlin,) there is no way to evaluate more precisely the potential for long term creep or settlement at this time without a full and comprehensive geotechnical analysis of the site. What is known is that the effects of long term creep, or 'plastic deformation' as stated in the Geo-Science letter, can actually transmit up through hundreds of feet of subsoils and create several feet of settlement such as has been documented in Kingston. While major movement has not happened at the Meyers site yet, the potential is there in a different way than it is at the Coughlin site.

3) The Meyers site will require extensive engineered fill, as well as the construction and/or repair of both new and existing retaining walls around the perimeter of the site, costs for which are estimated in the range of $3M or more.

Conclusion:

A geotechnical engineer's opinion is inherently conservative. Each potential liability in a location's soil bearing capacity and stability must be evaluated based on the facts and on empirical or even anecdotal data collected over time as to how the soils will behave. In this sense geotechnical engineering is a kind of risk assessment, relying heavily on the experience and knowledge of the professional geotechnical engineer. Guarantees are non-existent and fine points can be debated at length and often are, but in this case a highly regarded engineer's opinion clearly distinguishes between the two sites under evaluation, and the Coughlin site clearly provides the better chance of a more stable subsurface, and consequently a less expensive foundation system.

Structural engineers must design according to the data available, and the data available at this time cannot be ignored. The Coughlin site is more predictable, with fewer unknowns, and likely to be the less expensive site to develop by millions of dollars. Given limited financial resources, the design team is hard pressed to view the Meyers site as the more appropriate location for a school when there is a strong likelihood that dollars may be spent on invisible foundations rather than on tangible educational assets, barring other compelling aspects of the location.

2) Transportation Impact on Land Development:

In a separate effort from the design team's feasibility study, the District's busing contractor has performed a comparative analysis of the transportation impact to the District of consolidating the Coughlin and Meyers populations at either the Coughlin site or the Meyers site.

The design team's concern at the Meyers site regarding transportation issues was the impact of a PennDOT review of the existing bus drop-off location on Carey Avenue. The drop-off area in front of the auditorium is short and fits about 3 buses. It is expected that according to today's design standards, PennDOT will not allow the current situation to be 'grandfathered' forward. Carey Avenue is a two-lane road with one lane each way, and the current bus drop-off creates congestion right near the triangular traffic island at the 3-way intersection of Carey Avenue, Hanover Street, and Carlisle Street. Part of a new school design on the Meyers site would likely recommend that an interior road be developed connecting Old River Road to Carey Avenue along the path of the old 'tunnel driveway' and running along the north side of the field; this new interior road would likely be the best location for bus drop-off, and is estimated to add cost in the range of $1M.

Conclusion:

On the issue of accommodation of bus-drop off design at the 2 sites, the design team identified a concern with additional costs at the Meyers site related to the bus drop-off situation per PennDOT review.

On the issue of student transportation, in terms of cost, safety, and travel time, the Coughlin site was determined by the school busing director and the busing company to be more beneficial to the District's operating budget. According to their reports there was no compelling basis on which to view the Meyers site as more beneficial on busing issues.

4) Flood Elevations and Approaches to Construction:

The sidewalk elevation at Coughlin is 543.00 feet above sea-level; at Meyers it is 546.00 feet. The difference is minimal, though the Coughlin site is geo-technically less prone to hydrostatic pressure from the river as discussed earlier. While both sites depend on the levee for protection, there are certain measures that can be taken to construct a building that is more resistant to flood damage.

Minimizing or not having a basement can minimize exposure to the damage caused by short-term water containment by a basement pool; the only exception to the absence of any basement might be that of small, minimal areaways for connecting to street utilities - power, domestic water, natural gas, and sanitary. All mechanical equipment would be located on roofs or on partial intermediate mechanical floors within the building. First floor construction and materials would be as flood resistant as possible, with masonry walls and partitions wherever possible. The building's first floor could be elevated to loading dock level 4 feet above the sidewalk for at least a minimal level of flash flood protection.

While no site behind the Wyoming Valley levee system is floodproof, there are affordable and published strategies for flood-proof construction methods to design buildings in flood plains that are as resistant to major damage as is possible and practicable.

Concluding Recommendation:

After a review of the facts and the relative pros and cons of the existing sites, the new sites, the alignments for 1, 2 and 3 high schools, the soils reports, the budgetary constraints, and the transportation implications, the design team's analysis identified the Coughlin site as the least expensive of the viable locations.

The Coughlin site turned out to be in fact the most central of all of the sites evaluated – which we viewed as an asset from an administrative perspective, a cost perspective, and a total WBASD community pride perspective. This site is located so as to be the most easily served by emergency personnel; in the long-term, it is adjacent to the likely future entrance gateway to the city at Union Street; and it is close to Wilkes-Barre's 3 downtown institutions of post-secondary learning, the colleges and universities in the District which can positively influence the quality of the available secondary education as well as the diversity of a student's learning experiences.

At this time the design team is confident that the Coughlin location will - irrespective of its compelling cost savings - accommodate a school building that will offer the highest level of educational amenity and opportunity to the WBASD, its students, and its faculty for the future.

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