

## Douglass, Switzer Annex, West-Switzer Complex

Saturday, April 30, 2011

9:00am-12:00pm

33+ attendees

### **BREAKOUT SESSION (SB, FB)**

#### **Site Significance**

- Buildings became an eyesore after closing
- Exiting of community members- fracturing of community
- Strain on families whose kids were bussed out of area after school closed
- Feeling was that the school district didn't care about the west side and the Latino community
- Community felt hurt and betrayed by the district
- Nothing happened after immediate closing
- Community pride – locals barricaded themselves in the building. Viewed as heroes for standing up to school board
- Strong social capital throughout past decades, even if low-income
- Area never suffered a loss of population/families like other areas of the city – may demonstrate residential reuse potential
- Neighborhood desirability for long term use of the buildings
- Excited new school was being built in their neighborhood. Garcia turned out to be a magnet school. Selectivity into Garcia forces families to give up heritage to be accepted into school. (Forced to deny Latino background and designate kids as “white” to get into local school)
- Douglass had no after school programming
- Youth have place to hang out after school
- The wall at West was a WPA project that put the community back to work during the Depression
- 30-40 years too long not to address community

#### **Strengths**

- Douglass – district didn't completely abandon. Building is in good shape.
- Douglass – turnkey
- Douglass – installed cameras and lights for security
- Douglass and West – foundations appear to be in good shape
- West-Switzer Complex – historically significant and should be protected
- West-Switzer Complex – large building – may require partnerships which is good
- West-Switzer Complex – ideally situated for housing
- West-Switzer Complex – two gyms
- West-Switzer Complex – could be used for multiple uses to support existing charter schools
- West-Switzer Complex – plenty of space for arts ( auditorium, rehearsal space)

### Challenges (Interim solutions in blue)

- Douglass – Drug transactions (Partner with police (already exists). Increase patrol (routine patrols). Provide other choices for teens. District patrol team comes by every so often but could coordinate District patrol and KCPD)
- Douglass – Boys/young men hang out after school on Douglass gym steps (noise, possible illegal activity)
- Douglass – Graffiti potential on playground of Douglass if gate to playground opens (When gates open designate a neighborhood monitor to close at certain time)
- Douglass – Not time to fuss over which charter to allow in
- Douglass and West – Unoccupied building
- Douglass and West – Graffiti
- West-Switzer Complex – Frequent break-ins, fire and vandalism potential
- West-Switzer Complex – Longer we wait the history of community evaporates
- West-Switzer Complex – Repair roof and prevent further loss (Could include hiring area youth)
- West-Switzer Complex – May be too expensive to bring back
- District abandonment of buildings has proven to be costly and unfair to neighborhood
- Leasing of building terms
- Build relation with organizations
- Westside is geographically separated/destination neighborhood – makes some reuses infeasible

### Community Needs

- Douglass – Access to playground (community previously asked to have it fenced off so that it wouldn't be vandalized)
- System of schools - unity with Alta Vista and Garcia
- After school programs
- Neighborhood high school
- Higher grad rates/ higher test scores
- Place where Latino immigrant students and existing community feel more comfortable
- Local charter middle school needs more space
- Attracting/retaining new residents
- Keep families together and provide stability and consistency for kids/family
- Increase social relationships with neighbors
- Increase safety and familiarity between regions
- Residential growth
- Gentrification has forced out some low/mod income families. Need to provide additional housing to these groups
- Special events center for community
- Additional community garden space
- Art studio space that has water, light
- Jobs/job training for youth

- Neighborhood services:
  - Drug stores
  - Laundromat
  - Dry cleaning
  - Grocery store

**Reuse Options (that could address community needs)**

- Douglass – Expansion for Alta Vista
- Switzer Annex – Art Center: high number of working artists in Westside that need affordable space. Possibly divide building to include art studio
- West-Switzer Complex – Housing. Senior housing, may need more. Support for a mixed income project. Local townhomes show that mixed income can work.
- West-Switzer Complex – Use of some facilities (gym, auditorium, workshops) that could be used by the local charter school/community use
- Space for small businesses (concern that based on neighborhood location/cut-off from other areas of the city, local retail/services won't risk coming in and/or survive)
- Retails shops
- Small business incubator
- Art/performance center

**Parking Lot (Technical or other questions to address at the next meeting)**

- Concern about lease structure for buildings and short term leasing