

**Rockford Public Schools, District 205**  
**Facilities Master Plan 2025 – 2030**  
**Business Partner Workshop**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Career Tech Center**  
**Monday, February 26, 2024**

DLR Group members present:

Leanne Meyer-Smith, AIA, K-12 Education Leader/Principal  
Scott Pashia, AIA – Senior Project Manager  
Keri Vansant, AIA, Project Manager/Senior Associate  
Claire Lonsbury, AIA, Project Architect  
Kristin Stone, AIA, Project Architect

Business Partners & Community Members Present:

Earl Wilsey, Schmeling Construction  
Cyrus Oates, Oates Dental  
Scott Jerie, Jerhen Industries  
Kevin Finnestad, Jerhen Industries  
Gina Caronna, The Workforce Connection  
Bernice Jaques, The Workforce Connection  
Antwon Harris, Antwon Harris Group  
Kevin Holdmann, TAC Rockford  
Robert Shook, Woodward, Inc.  
Jamin Seippel, Collins Aerospace  
Bob Trojan, Rockford Linear Actuation  
Beth Carson, Saint Anthony College of Nursing  
Shelton Kay, Rockford Regional Health Council  
Wally Haas, Transform Rockford  
Mark Lindman, Featherstone Periodontics & Implant Dentistry  
Katrine Andreasen, Featherstone Periodontics & Implant Dentistry  
Jay Graham, GrahmSpencer  
Flossie Hoard, Community Member  
Dr. Ebony Wrenn, Moms In Motion, NFP  
Kevin Holdmann, TAC Rockford  
April Adams, Milestone Inc.  
Dick Rundall, Eliminate Racism 815  
David Reiter, Speedy Metals  
Tyler Bradford, Collins Aerospace  
Dominick Squicciarini, Rock Valley College

Melissa Hagerman, Rockford Career College & the Maker Center  
Scott Abbott, ComEd  
Maurice West, State Representative  
Kenneth Copeland, Alignment Rockford  
Jake Dachman, Pediatric Dentistry at Northern IL  
Anquetette Parham, Community Member  
Alex Moore, Rockford Endodontics

Rockford School District Staff Present:

Michael Phillips, Chief Operating Officer  
Greg Brown, Chief Financial Officer  
Bridget French, Executive Director of College and Career Readiness  
Scott Sevey, Director of Career/Technical Education  
Cathy Ellis, Director of Operations  
Chris Kinsman, Early Childhood Health Tech

Ms. White-Smith opened the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Agenda:

1. Overview of the process
2. Recap of Workshop 1
3. Potential Programs
4. Floor Plan Diagram
5. Tour of the Building

DLR Group introduced themselves and Ms. Vansant gave a brief overview of what was covered at the last Business Meeting to bring new attendees up to speed. *Refer to PowerPoint Presentation.*

Ms. Vansant: Next is a high-level view for completing this project. We are currently in the programming process – looking at education programs, fitting them into buildings, understanding how big they need to be, how many spaces are needed.

Then we go through design. The design process is in three phases: schematic design, design development, and construction documents. Schematic design helps us start off with laying out the particular pathway program needs, how things might need to shift and work programmatically in the building. Then we just dive in deeper to develop that design. What are the specifics you need in each of those rooms to make that particular program function well? Then construction documents is where we're really heads down in the process to make sure the documents that are bid, at the end of the day, work for construction professionals to recreate the spaces needed for these pathway programs. What they need as far as drawing and specifications. With this particular process, the goal is to have documents complete and

ready for bidding by the end of September. Then we will go into the bidding process and the construction process will go through to the end of next summer with a goal to move in the end of the next August (2025).

Why is this relevant? This is Gen Alpha, and this goes interchangeably with Gen Z, but specifically for those born after 2010. We are really planning for them. According to Computer Times there are 2.5 million members of Gen Alpha born each week. We need to plan for them as we know that the change and pace is very rapid. This excerpt (refer to DLR Group PowerPoint) was taken in 2017. It said that 85% of jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't been invented. We're already half-way there, or closer to the way there. We know that we have to be flexible in how we design spaces because the influx of technology, the influx of artificial intelligence, etc. are changing all the time. So how do we adapt and flex to ensure that we are meeting those students where they're at in education?

We know that through some studies in Career Path Education, that about 10% of, one in ten students, are really going on to that master's degree. About 20% are looking to get a bachelor's degree. But there is a really large chunk of students, 70%, that are looking into careers and life after high school where they are looking for a one-to-two-year certificate or degree program. It's really important to note, there for a while there was a push, everyone went to college, then we found a need for vocational college. Now we've come full circle. We have so many different pathways for students, depending on where they want to go, that we need to meet them where they're at.

These are profiles of potential students and different pathways that we have done in past workshops. What we've done is create these personas. Students heading to college and university, students joining the workforce, and students on unique pathways, whether that be entrepreneurs, freelance workers, they may even be doing gap-year service programs.

These are industries in Rockford that we know are shaping future careers from advanced manufacturing, aerospace, all the way to logistics & distribution. We know that there is a lot here that we want to capture and want to create a pipeline from the students . . . Now I'm going to turn it over to Leanne.

Ms. Meyer-Smith: So that is why you are here, because of the industry in Rockford. We want to make sure that the students have the opportunity to get ready to come and work for you. We want them to stay here and share their success. Last time, and some of you were here, we spent some time doing a SWOT analysis. I'm sure all of you have done them at one time or another, but SWOT is Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. We spent a lot of time in our table groups talking about that. I'm not going to read all of them to you, the District typically makes these presentations available. The top strengths, the themes that came out of that were connecting and growing the current pathways, Rockford Schools have pathway programs in their high schools now, but the issue is they can't always have them meet in the same bundle. It's hard to have a really great program at four high schools, especially when you get to the upper level. So that is where this building would come in, after maybe you've taken

an introductory class at another school possibly, this is where the most expensive, the highest technical equipment, the highest-level programming would be offered, in this center.

We talked about how that is a really great strength in this project, connections to industry, and community, and industry support. There was a lot of talk about how could industry come to this building and support the programs to make sure the teaching and learning is in line with what they need when these kids leave these doors.

Some of the weaknesses we talked about with this project, some of the themes that bubbled up a little bit were the logistics, the schedule with the kids, the location of this building relative to some of the high schools, and the timing, how will we get them back and forth. I can assure you it will be worked out, we've done other schools across the country, there are many methods and techniques, so that will be worked out. Also, one of the weaknesses, although it was also a strength, was business support. Sometimes we know that everyone is busy in their own industry, and they can't really give support to the school. And then we were talking about the pedagogy (method and practice of teaching) and curriculum connection with industry. We had a really robust discussion going on where, is what's going on in the classroom really what's happening in the industry when they get out? We want to make sure there is an alignment there.

Opportunities, there's a great opportunity for this building to showcase career technical education. Career technical education, while most people think of it as really technical like welding, construction, etc., all the hard things, really career technical education has expanded to medical, medical records, dental, vet tech, phlebotomy, business incubators, there could be kids that want to come and learn how to start a business, they've got an idea. So really career technical education is much broader than what we typically talk about. This will be a great opportunity to showcase this to the community. This will be a hub to connect all of the pathways, a lot of the resources can be shared, you can have the best, highest-level of educators at the classes here, and then a direct pipeline for all of you in industry.

Then here are the threats. We talked about maybe industry partners, industry educators, or high-level people will be working in the industry and won't be able to come here and teach or share their time. So, there was another robust discussion on how industry partners might be able to make that happen, once a month or rotate some staff it, a commitment to that. Again, the location, busses, travel time we talked about. Then there were some concerns expressed about blending students from four high schools together and equity access as well.

Mr. Squicciarini: I have a Rock Valley . . . and those that say you can't mix high schools, why?

Ms. Meyer-Smith: Those are things that were brought up. We're reporting what was said, that it could be a threat. We would think it would be great too, to blend students, but the table that brought that up thought it was a threat.

Mr. Squicciarini: We have had students from all the schools and have had full cooperation. So I challenge you to find out why that is a threat.

Ms. Meyer-Smith: Okay, we will. We can look that up because we recorded the tables and took pictures. Another activity that we did that Kristin is going to talk about is called I Wonder.

Ms. Stone: The second activity we asked you to answer was to finish the sentence I wonder, and to answer these questions. I wonder how can industry partners support RPS 205? I wonder how these CCEC programs help support industry partners? I wonder what are the skills and qualities that industries are looking for from students as they come out of high school, what are you looking for in new hires?

For the first one, how can industry partners support our high schools? I know that there is a lot of text here, but some of the highlights and things we heard multiple times were; we can be mentors, Rockford staff wants community coming in to get their feet wet in Rockford Public Schools and understand what is going on in the education world; also working on scholarships for students of business partners who can provide students with career opportunities or financial opportunities to participate; also collaboration with some industry partners with the schools district for the success of this facility and the students. One of the examples was, what if the three major hospital systems that are located in Rockford collaborate with each other and the school district to identify priorities that they want to see in this building to make it successful?

The second question, how can Rockford Public Schools' programs help our industry partners? The biggest one is internships for students, and this can go both ways. There could be some manufacturing done in this building that could help support your business, but also teach students how to work in the manufacturing field. Also ensuring the mentors have the opportunity to hire and recruit students directly from Rockford, and then students could stay in Rockford and help support the community.

The last question was the skills, I think we ran out of time, but a couple were curiosity being a key trait of a good entry-level employee and soft skills. Soft skills are super important. Some other comments that were written down, or that our team observed, was that industry and education need to live in each other's worlds, they need to speak the same language; need to address racial and equity gaps in order to be successful, as Leanne mentioned, transportation to and from to support the individual schools and making sure that all of these experiences are equitable for all students.

Ms. Meyer-Smith: Again, just diving in now and getting into the programs themselves. Tonight, we're trying to dig a little bit deeper and continue that conversation that you had the last time. The Rockford Public Schools system has pathways in place with the academies. You are kind of seated in those target areas. We have the Business area here, we have Production, we have Health, and we have the Service area. If you turn over the small piece of paper on your tables, these areas are written on there with potential programs under each category. *Refer to DLR Group PowerPoint.*

The red bars at the top are Dual Credit classes and the AP classes. For college readiness they tie into a lot of these programs, and they can be here too because this is a college and career education center. Also, there are some that know they are going to go to college, maybe they are going to be a dentist, they've already decided at some point they want some more hands-on. They can come here and take some of the programs, but also take their AP Biology class too. Because they are going on to college, but they also want that practical, they want that blend. So when you think of the CTE, it's also for that use too. This center is going to serve all of that. What you have on the table is the list. You can see in the black some of the programs that are already offered there that we'd like to develop and take them further down the pipeline. What is in red, on the left, are potential programs. These are programs that we see in our practice that could possibly be a goal or integrated here. If there is business or industry support for some of those, we want Rockford to hear from you that maybe some of those are something we should explore, or they are related to another area they already have and could easily bring in. These are ones, as I said, that we see across the country and seem to be growing; things like cyber security, medical records, PT/massage therapy. You can see that they relate to some of the areas, but we want to hear from all of you if any of these are important, or something that should be a priority as we talk about programs in this building.

I think you have all seen this building. *Refer to DLR Group PowerPoint for CCEC Google view and layout.* It's a great opportunity, a large site that we have to work with. But more importantly, in front of you is a large sheet where we've taken the floor plan of this building and we've looked at what is here already, as you know it was owned by the college and some CTE programs were here, like automotive, so obviously we'll continue to use the automotive area, and the welding area is back there. We tried to align some of the Rockford Public Schools' programs that they would like to see here with the physical pieces of the building that already have frames of things that support these. The medical area was in the center over there, obviously that is where we'll locate some of the medical and dental programs. This is kind of a conceptual diagram, just starting to locate programs. When you walk around, we'll have some small ones you can take with you and look at.

What we would like to do now, for the discussion at your tables, we'd like you to use that program list and the floor plan. Take a look at this, across the top it matches up the colors with some of the areas, production area, health care. Find the area your industry is interested in and look at that program list. You can write anywhere; we'll walk around and listen to your discussion. But tell us a little bit about your program, your industry, and how you see it developing here. What would we need to know? What would the students be doing? What are some of those soft skills? Look at where it's located, what it's next to. We'd really like to hear from you. What would the student's experience be if they were in one of these pathways here. Are these classes appropriate? Is there one you would like that we add? It's up to you, you can discuss whatever you want. We'll come around and help facilitate if you get stuck, make some suggestions. But really write down and tell us what we need to know as we set up this building.

Tables had discussions within their groups and tours began around 6:45 for those who wanted to see the building. Group did not come back together for adjournment.