Giving Pennsylvania’s Historic Schools a Second Life
Today’s Presenters

Vern L. McKissick III, AIA, ALEP
McKissick Properties
Overview of Issues Facing Historic Schools

Fred Wallace
Juniata Valley Bank
Financing Issues with Old Schools

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Franklin County Area Development Corporation
Community Leadership in Reusing Old Schools
Topics for Today

How do we evaluate a school's historic impact on a community?

How do we assess a school's potential for reuse?

Is a historically-focused strategy feasible?

What have we learned from today's example here at the Old Central High School?
Left Behind…

These buildings are defining elements of our communities
- strong architectural character
- not easily (or affordably) replicated

Strong emotional attachment
- can inspire
- can drown out our cautionary inner voice

So…
- Is this a school with strong connections?

or…
- Is this a school which has lost its connectivity and its neighborhood?
Carefully assess local economy!
- Census Data
- Local EDA's
- Contracted 3rd Party Market Studies

What funding sources are available?
- Private
- Public
- Charitable?

What Income can reasonably be predicted?
- Amortization
- Many non-profits – but with limited funding
Limited Incentives

- Pennsylvania credits are small
- Some federal (10%) credits eliminated
- Structural changes to the 20% federal credit

Historic Districts

- Many schools while historic are not located in historic districts
- Many schools gerrymandered out when established in the 70s & 80s
- Need to reinclude old schools into historic districts where they occur
Possibilities for Reuse

- Residential
  - Low Income
  - Elderly
- Commercial
- Retail
- Governmental
- Community Centers
  - Arts
- Industrial
- Educational
  - Higher Education, particularly Community Colleges

Large City School District Reuse Markets: 2005-2012

- Charter School: 42%
- Government/Nonprofit: 22%
- Residential: 10%
- Other Educational: 12%
- Other: 5%
- To Be Determined: 9%
Site Accessibility

Parking
- constructed when people still walked
- building expanded to cover site

ADA
- grand but non-accessible entrances

Traffic
- commercial or retail uses may require a different demographic

Site Liabilities
- playgrounds or fields may seem desirable but could be uninsurable
Building Quality & Age

1890s & 1900s

1920s

1930s

1940s

1950s

1950s

1960s

1970s
Code Implications

- pre 1929: Some pre-date codes
- 1929–2002: Labor & Industry Fire and Panic
- 1980–1990s: Mix of codes; BOCA, etc.
- Since 2006: IBC Code
- Newest versions have changed "Existing Building Code"
- Change of Use: can drive you to higher standards
- Carefully evaluate in the due diligence phase
- Align local review agencies and municipalities
  - Fire Marshals
  - Storm Water (in lieu of payments)
  - Code Enforcement
  - Code Review – Compensatory approaches versus strict adherence can render a project economically undoable
Internal Configuration Issues

- Classrooms: Often 550 SF to 850 SF spaces arranged along long hallways
- Valuable spaces
  - Long Span
    - Gymnasium
    - Auditorium
    - Cafeterias
  - Tall Spaces
    - Shops
    - Auditorium
    - Music
    - Library
- Tall spaces (pre-1940 ventilation)
  - One of the reasons we chose to demolish classrooms and keep large spaces
Structural Systems

Masonry Bearing

Ordinary Construction (wood/masonry)
- rural
- often one story

Cast-in-Place Concrete
- 1920s "fireproof" schools, especially industrial areas

Steel Frame with Curtain Wall or nonstructural infill systems
- Later post war

Older Buildings tend to be more heavily designed than newer buildings.
Mechanical Systems

- Central point - boiler plants - steam
- Heating only prior to early 1980's
- Unitary heating by room
- Inefficient
- Typically require full replacement
- Older buildings can have multiple shafts for central air distribution (pre–1920)
- Newer buildings often have multiple small shafts for relief air when used in conjunction with "unit ventilators"
Plumbing

- often damaged
- interior roof drains often source of water damage within walls
- lead solder
- ADA requirements for fixture type and mounting
Electrical Systems

- copper often stolen
- typically undersized
- full replacement often needed
Environmental Issues

- mold – typical of poor upkeep
- asbestos
  - finishes like tile
  - insulation for pipes
  - mastics for chalkboards
  - integral part of concrete
- stored chemicals
- underground storage tanks
Misconception that older buildings can not be "green"

- Embodied Energy
- Land Use Efficiency
- Rating Systems
  - LEED
  - Green Globes
  - CHPS
  - Common Sense
Political Challenges

- School Boards
  - Improper value assessments
  - Desire to recoup stranded debt from prior projects

- Byzantine Purchase Processes

- Improper Mothballing: Demolition by Neglect
  - West Shore School District's Lemoyne Middle
  - Harrisburg School District's William Penn High

- Legislative Favortism
  - Pending state legislation calling for first right of refusal to charter schools – could provoke premature demolitions to stave student exodus

- Public Misinformation
  - Portrayals as dangerous, structurally unsound and contaminated to facilitate a strategy of closing multiple schools
Financing Property Development

- **Private Funding**
  - less expensive

- **Mix of Public & Private Funding**
  - need enough additional funding to compensate for increased costs due to public bidding requirements

- **Public Funding**
  - very expensive
  - adds time to the project schedule
  - comes with strings attached, often at odds with market studies
Mr. Wallace started his career with the Juniata Valley Bank in September 2010 as a Vice President Relationship Manager.

Prior to joining JVB, Mr. Wallace served in several capacities as a commercial loan officer, regional sales manager and branch manager for various other financial institutions since 1980.

Mr. Wallace is a graduate of PBA School of Commercial Lending and received his B.S. Degree in Business and Communication from Elizabethtown College.
What are lenders looking for in "unusual" projects?

How do lenders look at viability?
- Role of market studies
- Appraisal challenges & difficulty in finding "comparable properties" for assessment value

What factors in lending affect the schedule?
So Why Bother?
Advantages

A Meaningful Impact
- Blight avoidance
- Connection with the community
- Walkable
- Sustainable
- Interesting architectural solutions

Profitable Opportunity
- Less expensive acquisition (usually)
- Unique (and in-demand) property when complete

Part of Economic Development Evolution
- Be a catalyst for revitalization of a community
- Pave the way for similar projects
Community Connections

Detailed Presentations
Community Hearings
and Local Community Organizations
- Chambersburg Rotary Club
- Falling Waters AARP
- Chambersburg Elm Street
- CADC
Mathew Christopher, noted photographer and author of “Abandoned America”

Hosted several photography workshops
Fall 2015 & Spring 2016
L. Mike Ross

President of the Franklin County Area Development Corporation.
Old Central High School Challenges

The Building
- Improper inattentive disposition by the school district
- Gaining control of the property
- Perception Issues

The Project
- Packaging the project to developers
- Competing with greenfield opportunities
- Property tax abatements
- Insuring flexible zoning
- Private funding opportunities to avoid 30+ increase in costs resulting from federal and state governmental funding
Old Central High School Challenges

CFDC, LLC, a joint partnership between the Chambersburg Area Development Corporation and the FCADC, invested $600,000 into the ongoing redevelopment of the former Central Junior High into the highly anticipated Rose Rent Lofts.
Former Erie Elementary School to Physician Assistant Studies Mercyhurst University
Former Brown Township Elementary School to Mount Nittany Health Center
The Old Chambersburg Central High School
Historic Photographs

Public Sale of School Bonds.
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18th, 1909.

Saturday, December 18th, 1909, the undersigned will offer at public sale in front of the Court House in Chambersburg, Pa., on the above date, $60,000 Chambersburg High School 6% Bonds. These bonds are dated January 1st, 1910. Interest at 6% per cent, payable the 1st of July and January of each year. Denomination $500. Ten mature annually, beginning January 1st, 1911, and ending January 1st, 1941. A safe investment. Legally approved by competent counsel. Sale to begin at 1:30 o'clock P. M., when terms will be made known by CHAMBERSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT.

C. A. STINNETT,
President.

Att.:

John A. Sturner, Secretary.
Historic Photographs
When the Site was Acquired...
When the Site was Acquired...
When the Site was Acquired...
When the Site was Acquired...
When the Site was Acquired...

1909

1929

1909

1929

1909

1929

1909

1929
Chambersburg’s “Twin” in Hazleton

Hazleton “Castle” Intermediate Elementary

- Built in 1926
- Same architect as 1930 addition
- Same interior construction and detailing

It was once one of Preservation PA's 10 most threatened buildings.
The Site

PHARMACY PARKING LOT
QUEEN STREET
HARRISON AVENUE
SOUTH 3RD STREET
BURKHART AVENUE

ORIGINAL 1909 HIGH SCHOOL
ROSE RENT RESIDENTIAL LOFTS
1930 ADDITION FOR JUNIOR HIGH
EDUCATION & COMMERCE TENANTS

SECURE RESIDENT PARKING
RESIDENTIAL ACCESS & TENANT VISITORS
HANDICAPPED ENTRANCE
GREEN ROOF / LEARNING GARDEN
LOWER LEVEL ENTRANCE
The Site: At Acquisition
The Site: As Planned
The Site: At Acquisition
The Site: As Planned
Rose Rent Lofts: Ground Floor Plans
Rose Rent Lofts: Ground Floor Loft Level

103, 104, 105, 106, 107

STAIR #2
Rose Rent Lofts: 2nd Floor Plans
Rose Rent Lofts: 2nd Floor Loft Level
Rose Rent Lofts: 3rd Floor Plans
Typical Unit
Phase III 2nd Floor Plan
Phase III 3rd Floor Plan
Phase III Section
Phase III Rendering
In Closing...
So if you’re ready…

Take the leap and check out:

https://www.loopnet.com/pennsylvania_schools-for-sale/

There are 41 listings
Available today!

Your destiny awaits.
We offer our many thanks to these community groups – but for whose involvement this project might never be realized:

- Downtown Chambersburg Inc
- Franklin County Commissioners
- Chambersburg Borough Council
- Chambersburg Area Development Corporation (CADC)
- Franklin County Area Development Corporation (FCADC)
- Franklin County Career and Technical Center
- Juniata Valley Bank
2019 PA STATEWIDE CONFERENCE ON HERITAGE
PRESERVATION SUMMER SCHOOL

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