

LITTLE RUSSELL REJUVENATION PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The rejuvenation of the former Little Russell Elementary School is part of the School District's Facility Plan that was developed over the past 6 years and was unanimously supported by the Board of Trustees on February 22, 2016 after a 14 Board work sessions and 4 public meetings. The public was invited and participated in all 18 of the meetings.



Community Process for Facilities

- **Community Informational Meetings:**
 - Wednesday, February 25, 2015 – 5:30-7:30 – CMR Auditorium
 - Monday, March 2, 2015 – 5:30-7:30 pm – Roosevelt gym
 - Tuesday, March 10, 2015 – 5:30-7:30 pm – Longfellow cafeteria
 - Wednesday, March 25, 2015 – 5:30-7:30 pm – GFH Auditorium
- **14 Board Work Sessions:**
 - Monday, November 4, 2013, 5:00-8:00 – GFHS South Campus
 - Tuesday, December 2, 2014, 5:00-7:00 – Aspen
 - Wednesday, December 10, 2014, 4:30-6:30 – Aspen
 - Monday, January 5, 2015, 4:30-6:30 – Aspen
 - Monday, March 30, 2015, 5:30-7:30 – Aspen
 - Monday, May 11, 2015, 6:30-8:30 – Aspen
 - Monday, June 15, 2015, 5:30-7:30 – Aspen
 - Tuesday, July 14, 2015, 5:30-7:30 – Aspen
 - Tuesday, August 4, 2015, 5:30-7:30 – Aspen
 - Monday, August 17, 2015, 5:30-7:30 – Aspen
 - Monday, August 31, 2015, 4:00-6:00 – Aspen
 - Monday, November 2, 2015, 5:00-8:00 – GFHS
 - Monday, December 21, 2015, 5:30-7:00 – Aspen
 - Tuesday, January 26, 2016, 5:30-7:30 – Aspen

The Little Russell rejuvenation was included in the Facility Plan as part of the tasks associated with replacing the 88 year old Roosevelt Elementary School. The Facility Plan can be found at this link: www.gfps.k12.mt.us/sites/default/files/Facility%20Plan%20Final_0.pdf. See page 11 for the information about this process:

3. Build a New School to Replace Roosevelt Elementary School

PROJECT PURPOSE(S):

- Construct a modern elementary school to replace an 88-year old building in a safer location at the current location of the Building and Grounds Headquarters at the old Lowell Elementary School, 3117 5th Ave. N. See map in Appendix B.

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

- Upgrade Russell Elementary (2615 Central Ave. W.) See map in Appendix C.
 - Renovation of ceilings, floor coverings, walls/doors finishes, lighting, etc.
 - Mechanical System Upgrade
 - Exhaust system
 - Exhaust system
 - New Construction 80' x 180' building
- Continue to accommodate technology work space at Russell Elementary
- Relocate the Buildings and Grounds (B&G) Department housed at Lowell (3117 5th Ave. N.) to Russell Elementary
- Relocate B&G located at the District Office Building (DOB) to Russell Elementary
- Relocate the Environmental Education Department from Lowell to Paris Gibson Education Center (PGECC)
- Demolish Lowell
- Construct a new school on the 5th Ave. N. property

PROJECT RATIONALE:

- It makes sense to build a replacement building for Roosevelt.
 - It is 88 years old and its infrastructure is suffering from age. A very conservative estimate of repairs that need to be done in the next 10 years is over \$1M with more anticipated to include major plumbing and structural fixes.
 - It is not a viable educational building for another 50 years.
 - The location of Roosevelt, surrounded by 3 heavily trafficked one-ways, is less than ideal. There are safety issues for students and parents due to the traffic.
 - Enrollment is projected to slightly increase and this northside neighborhood has affordable housing which leads to predictions that this will continue to be a family-oriented area
 - Annual operational savings will occur because the building will include many modern energy saving measures.
- It makes sense to build the replacement building at Lowell.
 - The District already owns the property.
 - There will be no disruption of the educational school year as this location does not serve students on a regular basis.
 - Relocation of current departments and programs at Lowell is possible.
 - It is only 9 blocks between the two sites so it is still within the neighborhood.
- It makes sense to relocate all Buildings & Grounds departments to Russell Elementary.
 - Better coordination of efforts
 - The amount of space available is conducive to this department's needs.
- It makes sense to relocate Environmental Education at PGECC.
 - It is centrally located and has good bus access to drop off students for instruction
 - There is classroom space that is available with no need for modification

PROJECT IMPACTS AND/OR CONSEQUENCES:

- Russell Elementary is not centrally located so there will be travel time from the westside to eastside. This can be mitigated by proper dispatching.
- Boundaries may need to be reviewed and there may be busing/transportation implications.
- Preschool opportunities should be considered.
- It will require the moving of programs and departments.
- Scope of work will require passage of a bond levy.

PROJECT COST ESTIMATES:

- Costs of Russell Elementary renovation & construction of building \$ 2,498,554
- Demolition of Lowell and construction of new school \$14,952,217
- Moving expenses – TBD

TOTAL \$17,450,771

The Trustees approved a bond levy of \$98.8 million to address all GFPS facility needs including the rejuvenation of Little Russell. The bond levy passed with 62% of the voters approving it. The ballot (which was mailed to every registered voter in the school district) clearly indicated the intent regarding Little Russell.

associated improvements; demolishing Lowell School and constructing and improving on the Lowell School campus a new Roosevelt Elementary school building in replacement of Lowell School and making associated improvements; renovating North Middle School to include upgrading mechanical systems, replacing doors, replacing fire suppression and alarm systems, upgrading the foundation, and replacing a portion of the roof; improving the former Russell Elementary School site by constructing a new operations building and renovating the existing building for use by the Building and Grounds Department, updating mechanical systems, installing fencing and sewer system improvements, and making associated improvements to existing space; renovating East Middle School by repairing the roof, replacing the windows, upgrading mechanical systems and replacing the fire alarm system; renovating Chief Joseph Elementary

The Little Russell site was selected to house the Buildings and Grounds Department because:

- GFPS already owns the property
- Hasn't been used as a school since 1986
- Don't need it for a school as per enrollment and West Elementary
- Large land area suitable for the prescribed use
- Easy to dispatch to all GFPS locations

As part of the 6 month bond levy campaign, nearly 60 presentations were given along with two community forums that were sponsored by the Great Falls Tribune and were well advertised in the Tribune to encourage public participation. Additionally, three bus tours were provided and were also well advertised to encourage public participation. Here is the slide from the presentations where the intent was clearly outlined:

Build a new school to replace 88-year old Roosevelt Elem. School
\$17.5M (Oldest building)

6 Steps:

1. Slightly remodel & build a new shop at Little Russell
2. Move Grounds Center to Little Russell
3. Demolish Lowell and build new school: 3117 5th Ave. N.
4. Move Roosevelt student/staff to new school (Name?)
5. Use Roosevelt for Longfellow students until their new school is complete
6. Sell or repurpose current Roosevelt



In addition to the community meetings, bus tours and other presentations, Superintendent Lacey wrote a weekly column in the Tribune highlighting each and every project. The Tribune also highlighted the Facility Plan and bond levy components in several articles. Little Russell was specifically mentioned in articles in the Tribune on:

- January 26, 2016
- February 22, 2016
- June 15, 2016
- July 25, 2016
- November 14, 2016

[Click here to see the articles.](#)

Claims that the District did not communicate the Little Russell rejuvenation or any of the Facility Plan components to the public are false.

This website has all past and current information about the project:

<http://gfps.k12.mt.us/content/little-russell-site>.

You are welcome to share your thoughts by sending an email to: little russell@gfps.k12.mt.us or by mailing information to: Superintendent Tammy Lacey, P.O. Box 2429, Great Falls, MT, 59403.