



COMMUNITY WITHIN A SCHOOL

A Redevelopment Opportunity Study

Prepared for Space Inc.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Saddled with crumbling facilities and escalating operating costs on an already-constrained budget, the Clear Creek School District seeks to understand if a vacant school can regain its position as a community hub that fills the gaps in unmet needs through an adaptive reuse project.

The Clear Creek School District is the owner of the substantially-vacant 86,706 square foot former Clear Creek Middle School located in Idaho Springs, Colorado just southwest of the central business district. The building was constructed in 1968 to serve as the Clear Creek High School followed by the Clear Creek Middle School, but it was vacated in 2002 when the schools were consolidated and relocated to their current location twelve miles east near Evergreen. Today, the building is mostly vacant and the school district spends about \$6,000 per month to operate and maintain.

This capstone project, aptly named “Community within a School”, is based on this building and facilitated by Space Inc’s Carla Pokrywka Cole and Jenny O’Neill. The “Community within a School” concept infers there is an opportunity for the Idaho Springs community as well as the school district to realize broader community goals and objectives within the existing building as part of an adaptive reuse project. The result of this project is an opportunity study that will serve as the basis for community engagement, proforma development, and project feasibility analysis, and inform marketing and communications related to this site and building.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Share best practices and social and economic benefits of adaptive reuse.
- Understand ongoing planning efforts that affect this project.
- Examine adaptive reuse case studies with similar mixed-use buildings that house key services that round out basic needs gaps in the community and exhibit the characteristics desirable to accomplishing a vibrant community.
- Collect, summarize, and analyze community needs.
- Identify the community’s top needs and show how this building could meet them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Rather than demolish and build new, adaptive reuse occurs when an existing building with a prior use is able to be preserved and adapted through renovation for another use - factories have been converted to condominiums, industrial buildings into offices and food halls, and retail buildings into institutional and civic uses.

While not a new idea, adaptive reuse continues to gain a foothold in communities where vacant buildings create gaps in the urban fabric and the cost of construction labor and materials continue to rise. Demolishing and building new is not only becoming less economically feasible but also viewed as less environmentally sustainable. Communities are taking note and reducing regulatory barriers that inhibit adaptive reuse allowing for the preservation of existing buildings over demolition and new construction or expansion into greenfield areas. Developers and financial institutions are also beginning to facilitate adaptive reuse opportunities in the existing built environment by developing methods to capture data and create funding mechanisms for these types of projects.



HISTORY

An opportunity to bridge the past to the present



CONNECTIONS

Reconnect social & economic opportunities within communities



ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts through the preservation of existing materials



SAVINGS

Potentially save time and money over building from scratch



REDUCED BARRIERS

Becoming less onerous of a process due to the realization of its benefits by local municipalities and banks

ADAPTING SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Old school buildings were designed to last indefinitely evident in the quality and sturdy materials attributable to a classic and timeless aesthetic. Beyond the physical structure, old school buildings also possess the following benefits:

Location: Often embedded in existing neighborhoods that allow for walking and biking and access to transportation.

Sustainable: Offer the ability to reuse many components of the existing building as well as capitalize on energy-saving systems.

Affordability: Alternative to demolition and new construction, adaptive reuse is usually cheaper.

Community Rallying Point: The desire to maintain an already-existing structure in the community is usually a cause worth supporting.

Funding Mechanisms: Many costs to adaptive reuse can be subsidized by state and federal tax credits

CASE STUDIES

The case studies revealed a common thread: closed and vacant properties leave gaps in communities. School properties are especially prominent went left behind due to their size and once prominent role. Through adaptive reuse, a community can resurrect a community icon, remember and tell its history, and restore a critical social hub.

These efforts were not without challenge, however. Many of these projects were only realized after many years of vacancy and planning and through the creation and commitment of many partnerships who all brought something to the table.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COMMUNITY NEEDS

A need can be defined as a gap or discrepancy between what is and what should be. A needs assessment (NA) focuses on the ends to be attained rather than the means, and supports broader-based decision making that can lead to an action, change, and improvement.

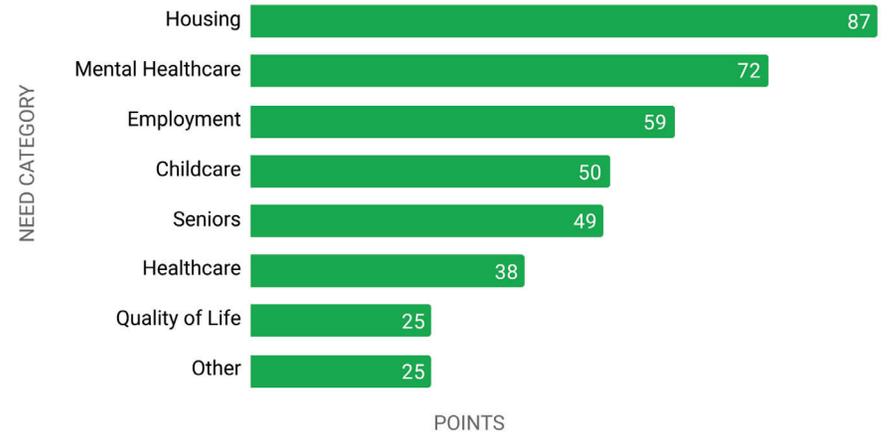
Performing a new needs assessment was not feasible within this project's timeline. Rather, this project utilized the Meta-needs Assessment (MNA) method. This methodology was developed in recognition that a NA is not always feasible. Many organizations lack time and resources to complete them. An MNA utilizes already existing human services NA as produced by other organizations in a community as a source of secondary data in an analysis. By collecting these NA, the amount of time needed for data collection is shortened and provides an efficient path to the analysis of community needs.

Ten NAs were collected identifying 76 needs covering a variety of needs ranging from youth substance abuse to affordable housing. The needs were sorted into broader categories needs - Childcare, Housing, Mental Healthcare, Employment, Healthcare, Quality of Life, Seniors, and Other. Each need was provided a weight score depending on their prioritization in each NA. To rank the top five needs for this project, each category's needs were calculated resulting in the following ranking in order: Housing, Mental Healthcare, Employment, Childcare, and Seniors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this project is to identify new uses for this school that can meet gaps in community needs. The building has the capacity to meet many of them. Based on general floor square footage calculations, uses were identified for each floor. Site and floor programming plans are provided on the next page.

POINTS BY NEED CATEGORIES



1st Floor: The first floor can accommodate up to 3,500 square feet of daycare space which could serve as many as 35 children. The first floor could also provide 40,000 square feet if Carlson Elementary School needed to be relocated. This includes using the 9,600 square foot gym. The former track and field could serve as the playground and sport fields needed for the daycare and school. Lastly, a lobby area at the building's elevator and ramp will be reserved for users for the second through fourth floors.

2nd Floor: This floor will serve the mental healthcare need. At nearly 14,000 square, there is flexibility and room to also share space with healthcare providers.

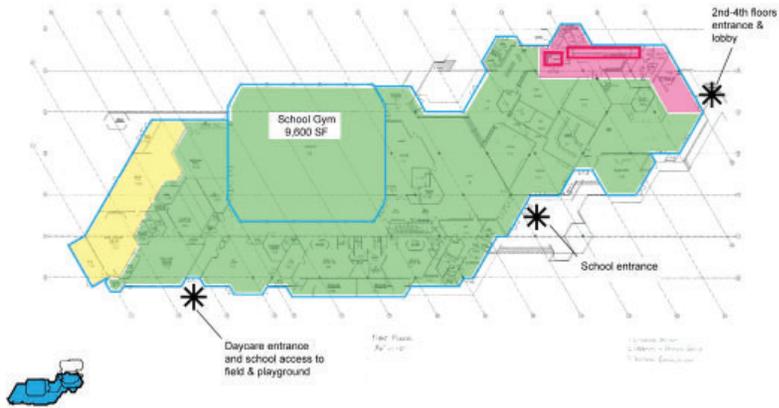
3rd Floor: Affordable housing for the school district's staff and teachers could provide housing for as many as 10 households.

4th Floor: This floor has the existing auditorium and music rooms with varying ceiling heights and floor levels for acoustics. While not a listed need, this floor could easily be adapted for community events and performance space

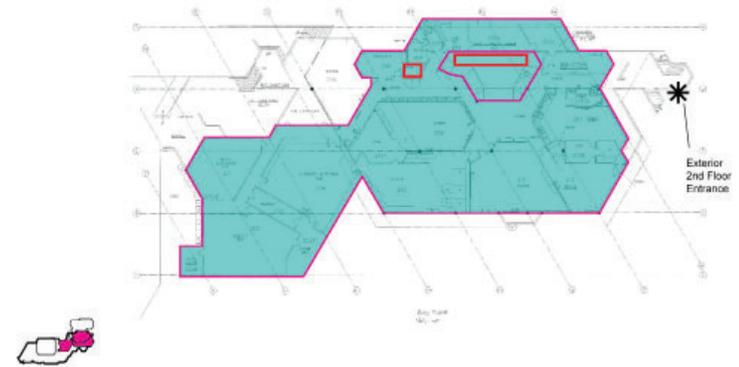
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USES BY FLOOR

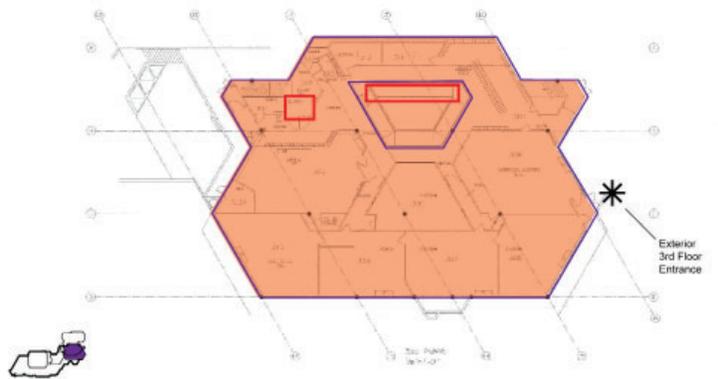
FIRST FLOOR



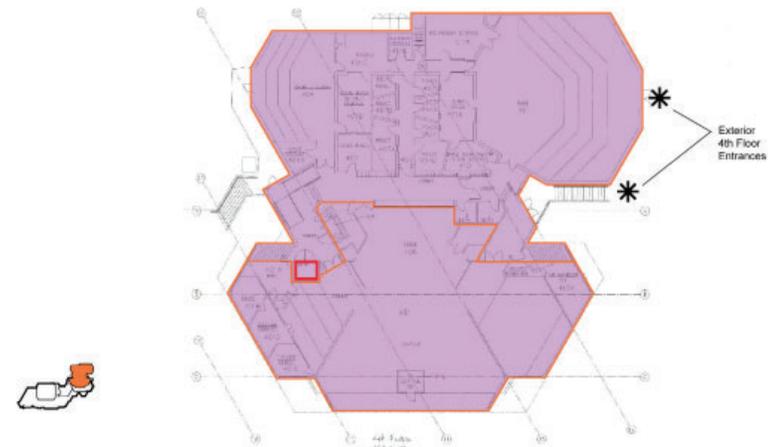
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS Continued

Historic Designation

In addition to reprogramming the uses for this building, it is recommended that this building be nominated for historic designation. It represents a unique school construction era. The population increase after World War II, as well as the consolidation of school districts to serve larger geographic areas, created the need for new and larger capacity schools. It was also a period when architecture reflected a modern era with simple and clean lines emphasizing function in the school over form. The building is listed as an example in the *Colorado's Mid-Century Schools, 1945-1970 Multiple Property Documentation Form* submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office in 2016. While historic preservation at the State and Federal level does not prevent demolition, it does make it eligible to receive state grants and tax credits.

Sources of Funding

Adaptive reuse of the school will undoubtedly be complicated requiring creativity in planning, design, and funding of the improvements. Exhibit 19 outlines general sources of funding available from local, state, and federal funding sources that can provide this project with the necessary capital.

CONCLUSION

Idaho Springs and the Clear Creek School District have an opportunity to further social and economic development goals through this project. It is apparent that the community values history and its resulting built environment as evidenced by its preserved downtown and the Argo Mine. This is yet another chapter in its history that can be saved and put to use serving the current needs of the community. Through an adaptive reuse project this is all a possibility.

THE ARGO MINE



Image Source: The Denver Post