

WRE Project Programming Committee

Meeting One - February 28, 2017

Summary

Committee Overview

The purpose of the WRE Project Programming Committee is to work with project architects from Perkins + Will to provide information and direction regarding design elements for WRE's expansion project.

The expansion project will potentially include 12 additional classrooms, and more space for core/central functions, such as the gymnasium, cafeteria, library, kitchen and administrative/front office. Final elements will be determined through the committee's process.

Committee members include WRE teachers, current/future parents, members of the Perkins + Will design team and RISD operations/facilities staff. The committee is expected to meet five times over the next two months, in addition to two meetings to share the committee's work with the broader WRE community.

Committee members include:

- Lee Walker – Design Committee Lead
- Jen Walker – Support Staff
- Denise Newman – Support Staff
- Joni Owen – Kinder-1st Grade
- Gretchen Stewart – 2nd-3rd Grade
- Miriam Osborne – 4th Grade
- Amy Burger – 5th-6th Grade
- Ron Crawford – Specials
- Brittany Code – 504, Sped, ELL & Dyslexia
- Susan McGinnis – Library & Computer Lab
- Angela McClure – RISD Exec. Director
- Michael Longanecker – RISD Facilities
- Sandra Hayes – RISD Asst. Supt.
- Perkins + Will Representatives - Architects
- Keely Smith – PTA President
- Stephani Walne – LHECPTA
- Robert Walne – HOA, parent
- Josh Northam – HOA, parent
- Mark Gray – Dads Club
- Scott Woodard – Dads Club
- Jason Metcalf – HOA, parent
- Richard Duge – WRVNA, future parent

The committee's work to provide programming information is the first step of a process that will also include preparation of the formal architectural plans by Perkins + Will, amending the planned development for the WRE site through the City of Dallas, followed by construction. The overall goal is for the project to be completed by August of 2018, in advance of the 2018-2019 school year.

Meeting One

The committee met for approximately three hours on February 28. The meeting began with committee members introducing themselves, and their relationship to WRE and/or RISD. Ms. Walker then discussed committee norms and expectations. She reiterated the expectation and request that parent members of the committee are responsible for communicating the work of the committee to the parent and/or community group that they represent, and bring feedback from those groups back to the committee.

Members of the Perkins + Will (P+W) team assigned to the project led the meeting and shared a presentation (available on WRE website). P+W team members include:

Patrick Glenn, K12 Practice Leader
Daniel Day, Project Manager
David McMillin, Project Architect
Nick Nepveux, Project Designer

P+W began with the master plan process & timeline for the committee's work, as follows:

Meeting One: Listen. Focus on campus exterior, uses & elements.

Meeting Two: Listen. Focus on school interior, features, uses & elements.

Meeting Three: Engage & Create. Possible design options and possibilities.

Meeting Four: Develop. Develop and refine master plan and programming ideas.

Meeting Five: Finalize. Finalize master plan that will guide specific architectural plans.

Ms. Walker & P+W both stressed that the guiding factor of the process should be on what's best for students.

P+W then asked guiding questions to solicit feedback from the committee to help P+W understand more about the school, neighborhood and uses of the campus (with the focus of meeting one being primarily on the campus site and exterior footprint). Committee members shared a variety of responses to the questions that were captured by P+W.

Question 1 – What culture, traditions and values do you love about this campus?

- It's the heart of the neighborhood
- It's a neighborhood (WRE) within a neighborhood (LH)
- It's a walkable school for the neighborhood
- It allows for a small town feel in a big city
- Unique energy that attracts parents and residents
- Facilitates friendships
- Incredible culture of involvement & support
- It honors traditions
- Outstanding staff – people want to work here
- Parent lunch with kids
- Facilitates parent & family/sibling involvement
- Graduation and other events/ceremonies celebrating student achievement
- Senior breakfast

- Glow a thon
- Back to school picnic
- Meeting place for teachers, parents, students & families
- It's a community center in addition to a school
- Use of the school/grounds by neighborhood & parent groups, such as National Night Out, Wreck the Night, school-based team sports practices nightly

Some of these responses led to a discussion about how the enrollment growth has hindered some of the traditions/student celebrations due to lack of space and additional administrative & planning hurdles due to higher numbers and smaller facilities. Larger, more comfortable and flexible spaces are needed.

Question 2 – How will we define success? (upon project completion)

- Freedom & flexibility for teachers, staff & parents to plan & implement instruction and events
- Ability to absorb enrollment growth & potential eventual enrollment loss
- Flexible spaces
- Provide teachers and students with what they need to be successful
- Less hallway congestion
- Purposeful spaces
- Keeping a small school feel
- Large enough to comfortably accommodate everyone
- Maintaining the current WRE culture
- Common grade level areas large enough to accommodate all sections
- Students feel safe & comfortable (fire drills, congestion, K-6 mixing)
- Ease of circulation throughout school & schedules
- Teachers can focus more on teaching and less on managing schedules & the accommodations that have come with large numbers of students in smaller core/central areas
- Cohesive & integrated
- Students do not miss academic opportunities
- Space for small groups/break out instruction
- No partial combining of classes for specials due to lack of space
- Equity of classrooms (old vs new) in terms of technology/furniture/feel

This led to a brief discussion and clarification that the expansion project will include new classrooms and updated common/core spaces and other potential elements that support instruction, but that renovating existing classrooms are not part of project scope, and have not been in other RISD expansion projects across LH and the district, including WRE's 2012-2013 expansion.

(Editor's note: through Bond 2016, all RISD classrooms are being brought to a standard complement of technology/equipment.)

The committee then separated into three groups to brainstorm about the next three questions. After the smaller groups discussed ideas and information, questions and answers were brought back to the larger group for feedback and discussion.

Question 3: What currently works on the site? (focusing on the campus footprint and exterior)

- Outdoor events, including field day, team practices, & PTA/community events like National Night Out, Wreck the Night
- Traffic - front & back pickup/drop off & carpool line is efficient for most part – does rely on volunteers (traffic dads)
- Adding rear drop off has helped
- Afternoon dismissal of walkers
- Front of school as gathering place for parents
- Landscaping attractive & functional
- Playground
- Wrap around sidewalks
- Pavilion

Question 4: What currently does not work on the site? (exterior/campus footprint)

- More staff parking needed, especially as staff grows
- Carpool/pickup relies on parent volunteers to be efficient
- Pedestrian access – wider sidewalks & ramps needed, particularly along Chiswell
- PPCD (preschool program for children with disabilities) access to playground
- Access to portable classrooms require crossing parking spaces
- RISD badge readers access should be enabled at all doors for staff entry
- Traffic flow requires well-defined plan (traffic dads should be engaged for feedback)
- EMS access to some special program areas
- Gym not adjacent to fields
- Poor drainage in parts of fields
- No outdoor power supply
- No outdoor water fountains or supply
- Small playground equipment
- Covered areas - front & back

Question 5: What would you like to see on the site in the future?

- More on-site parking, resulting in less reliance of staff on street parking, which impacts traffic flow pick up/drop off

- Better traffic flow – possibly making adjacent streets one way during pick up/drop off periods
- Wider sidewalks, especially along Chiswell
- Additional play space or better utilization of existing play space
- Outdoor learning space/potential learning garden area
- Covered play space
- More Crossing Guards
- Site circulation plan
- Changes to site should be mindful of evacuation planning
- Parking near common areas
- Exterior water/power supplies

P+W staff have visited WRE several times, both when empty to evaluate every room and current use of space, and also during operational hours (including pick up & drop off), to observe processes and functionality.

P+W staff presented information, code requirements and possible limitations related to the existing site, including:

Parking & Traffic

- Site currently includes 79 on-site parking spots (75 spaces are required)
- A minimum of 93 on site spots will potentially be required by code depending on the specifics of the expansion
- Traffic dads manage morning drop off between 7:20 – 8:00 a.m.
- Afternoon dismissal occurs as follows:
- 4th-6th grades are dismissed on north side of building
- PPCD/DP students dismiss on east side of building
- K-3rd grades are dismissed on south side of building
- A traffic study, conducted by a traffic engineering firm, will be conducted as part of the plan development process

Site Constraints and Easements

- Amendment to the current WRE planned development district through the City of Dallas will be required for expansion project
- The entire site is approximately 10 acres, 60% of which can be covered
- Most of the current field portion of the site sits in a flood plain and is not available for construction or permanent structure unless modified (elevation raised) through a special permit. (see presentation for flood plain areas)
- Surface parking can be constructed in a flood plain
- 30 foot setbacks are required on front, sides & rear of site
- Current zoning allows for 1 story construction with a 40 foot height requirement

Potential Areas for Construction

Based on the current configuration of the school and locations of the flood plain on the site, P+W staff showed different zones that are logical areas for potential use in the expansion project. (see presentation for zone locations) These areas were presented as a starting point for where expansion efforts might occur, with all options on the table in terms of where elements that could be located. For example, new classrooms could be located in one area, existing core areas (such as cafeteria/gymnasium/library) could be enlarged, or existing core areas could be moved entirely and the vacated space used for other purposes. Two zones (adjacent to the existing fields) if used, would require infill to be raised out of the flood plain.

P+W staff indicated that the committee will be able to comprehensively explore possible options through a plexiglas model exercise during the third meeting.

During this portion of the meeting, RISD staff shared that the initial budget projection for the expansion project was estimated at \$16-\$20 million. The final projected cost will not be determined until the planning and design process is completed. P+W staff indicated that the projected amount was healthy and should be sufficient to cover the anticipated scope of work of the expansion project.

Additional discussion during this portion focused on the priority that no current classrooms lose exterior windows as part of the expansion work, and that windows with exterior light are important to teachers and students.

P+W staff concluded their presentation and exercises for this meeting, and reminded committee members that the next meeting will also be designed primarily to gather information from the committee, but with a focus on the interior of the building.

Ms. Walker thanked committee members for attending and the meeting concluded.

Para asistencia en español, favor de llamar al: 469-593-0303