

Happy Valley Elementary School Design Feedback Summary

The Happy Valley Educational Specifications/Design Advisory Committee held a community meeting at 6 p.m. on Monday, July 21 at Happy Valley Elementary School. Approximately 20 people attended the meeting. Community members were given the opportunity to submit written comments to the Department of Communications and Community Relations by noon on July 25, 2014. Seven feedback forms were returned and six community members emailed feedback.

Themes:

- Excitement for the new school, especially due to the environmentally-conscious planning that includes green spaces.
- Concerns about buses going down Mill Avenue and 27th Street due to narrow roads, no sidewalks and increased noise.
- Appreciate separate bus drop-off and vehicle drop-off locations although there is not consistent agreement about where the bus drop-off should be.

Representative comments:

Building plan seems thoughtful in terms of kids, education, and current best practices in education. The building will be much more energy efficient.

We are concerned that the plan to route school buses and cars along Mill Avenue and 27th Street to a bus drop-off and staff parking lot will have negative effects, particularly with regards to safety and neighborhood character.

Happy Valley Elementary Design Collective Feedback July 21, 2014

The following is a compilation of comments from the feedback forms. All comments are listed verbatim, with the exception of grammatical corrections.

What resonates or what do you like about the committee's proposed site and building plan?

- We are excited for the new school to be designed and built. We hope that the new school will continue to promote safe walking and growth of desirable community character in our neighborhood. We hope that you will consider our concerns and suggestions towards that goal.
- I support building new buildings for the school, however, I feel the best location for dropping off and picking up children is on 24th Street.
- I think it is a good idea to have the buses use the entrance at 27th Street. There will have to be improvements made on Mill Avenue and 27th Street roadways. However, a better idea might be to push 27th Street north to Douglas Avenue.
- New building, new greenery, higher tech building.
- Love the building ideas; don't overemphasize use of green space/veggie area if they aren't maintained as the current garden space is not maintained. Is there enough funding for teachers/programs to use green space/veggie beds, etc.?
- Separate bus/auto drop off (but don't like the location). Look and feel of the concept drawings. Considerations of public interest. Outdoor area and environmentally conscious planning.
- A lot of work in the plan.
- LEEDs/eco focus of new building.
- I like using current school district property rather than buying new property.
- Nice thoughts on the building layout.
- Building plan seems thoughtful in terms of kids, education, and current best practices in education. The building will be much more energy efficient. We wish solar could be incorporated for two reasons: 1. Model best environmental practice for students. 2. Be state of art in terms of green building.
- My wife and I are very excited that the school district will be investing in Happy Valley. We have a 10 month old son and he will in great position to make the most of the new school.

What don't you like, or what concerns do you have?

- We are excited about the prospect of the new school, and that the process is underway. We live near the school on Mill Avenue, and enjoy being in the neighborhood of the school. However, we are concerned that the plan to route school buses and cars along Mill Avenue and 27th Street to a bus drop-off and staff parking lot will have negative effects, particularly with regards to safety and neighborhood character.

Safety - Placing the bus drop off and numerous parking spaces off of 27th Street will produce a significant increase in the amount of traffic on Mill Avenue and 27th Street. This will include parents who will drop their kids there even though they are not supposed to as well as faculty. The increase in traffic will be not only at drop-off and pick-up but also after school for youth sports practices and all Happy Valley events. The streets are very narrow with little or no sidewalks, which make an increase in traffic a major safety hazard for children and adults who walk in the neighborhood. Because it is a dead-end street, all traffic must pass twice making the impact significant.

Neighborhood Character - Currently, being close to Happy Valley Elementary School is an attraction for the current and potential homeowners on Mill Avenue and 27th Street. A major traffic route through our crowded streets will decrease this appeal, reducing property values in our neighborhood, and making it a less desirable place for families to live. As homeowners move from Mill Avenue and 27th Street, they would be more likely to be replaced with student renters, which would make Happy Valley surrounded on all sides by transient WWU students who have less understanding of community and the importance of taking care of it. Currently, when WWU is in session, there are beer cans and bottles, pizza boxes, condoms, general trash in the ditches and grass areas surrounding the Happy Valley Elementary School. Over time, this problem would only be made worse if home-owning families were deterred from buying on Mill Avenue and 27th Street. Finally, if 27th Street needs to be widened to accommodate buses and sidewalks, older trees will need to be removed, which is antithetical to the purported environmental goals of the new school.

We were dismayed that the presenters were deceptive in their description of the increased traffic along Mill Avenue and 27th Street, claiming that only a few buses and delivery trucks would be added every day. However, they were not forthcoming with the fact that teacher parking spaces are also planned in the bus drop-off area – they only acknowledged this fact after one of us asked about it. As we know from current experience at the school, those parking spaces will be used for after-school events, sports practice, camps, and more, potentially resulting in nearly a hundred additional cars per day.

Mill Avenue and 27th Street are not able to safely accommodate such increased

traffic as the streets currently exist. We would require, at a minimum, at least one sidewalk that extends the length of the streets. The sidewalk would require a storm water solution (currently the neighborhood is mostly served by drainage ditches), and possibly street widening to allow parking along the road. Furthermore, the crest of the hill about half-way down the length of Mill Avenue makes visibility to the other side difficult until within 20 yards of the crest. We drive slowly in our neighborhood, but I can imagine that someone rushing to soccer practice might not realize this and would race over the crest, not suspecting that a child might be bicycling on the other side. A re-grade of this hill crest may be required to address this safety concern.

- I am concerned about traffic if 27th Street and Mill Avenue or 24th Street and Mill Avenue become the pathway to enter the school for buses. The everyday use of buses will create extra noise and danger to kids and adult residents on the street because of the lack of sidewalks and the poor visibility. Not to mention, when parents come to pick up their children or if there is a special event at school, more traffic is created than daily bus traffic. This is already noticeable on Mill Avenue with the setup there is now. When I leave for work, there are cars lined up well past the school to pick up children. I can't imagine substantially higher traffic on a daily basis in our housing area. We already feel the impact of the traffic near the public storage units on Mill Avenue, in which people who don't live on 24th Street and Mill Avenue drive without caution, and it is a true danger.
- Increased traffic equals less safety for community, a lot of children and elders live on 27th Street, Mill Avenue and 24th Street especially the neighborhood on Durbin Court, Mill Avenue and 27th Street.
- I don't believe Mill Avenue is the solution for traffic concerns/bus safety. As a resident that lives on Mill Avenue it is already unsafe for the amount of traffic that currently runs down Mill Avenue.
- Traffic on Mill Avenue and 27th Street, it would be a change to the feel of quiet Mill Avenue. Increase danger on the narrow road and sidewalks. Don't want widened streets and sidewalks etc, on Mill Avenue.
- I am not in favor of bringing buses down Mill Avenue and 27th Street.
- You will disturb peace and quiet of Mill Avenue and 27th Street. Roads are narrow especially on 27th Street.
- The proposed bus drop off area off of 27th Street, Mill Avenue and 27th Street are very narrow streets with no sidewalks. There is no room for people walking and vehicles driving at the same time.
- Traffic on Mill Avenue – having any sort of lot at the end of Mill Avenue will mean it is open for soccer practices and school events which means a lot more traffic on Mill Avenue. Even with only bus traffic, more sidewalks needed on Mill Avenue.

- Bus entrance off 27th Street. From the meeting, it is apparent that this entrance will be parking and have traffic way in excess of 3 buses, 2 special education buses, and 1 delivery vehicle per day. This quiet neighborhood will be forever changed to its detriment with this traffic concept.
- We do have concerns about the proposed route for bus traffic. Although the proposal is only for a small number of buses and one delivery truck, it seems very likely, almost assured, that there will be additional traffic. People may drive to this entrance on weekends to access the grounds or do extra work; parents will likely come up the road despite the recommended pattern. It seems impossible that there won't be additional traffic. I understand that the district has determined this to be the most optimal location for the school. The basic problem is that there are a lot of young children on this street, at least 15 children under the age of 12 on this block of Mill Avenue, and there are no sidewalks. There is nowhere safe for children to walk, so the increased traffic will have a much higher impact here than it would on a street with proper infrastructure.
- It upsets me to listen to the 27th Street complainers (NIMBYs). They drive everywhere through everyone's neighborhoods, but think they should be left in peace and quiet in their own private cul-de-sac! Shame on them for putting themselves first before safety for children and common sense.

Do you have suggestions for improvement?

- Too much of the property is taken up by pavement. You should cut down on the size of the auto drop off and parking area. The purpose of this site is for educating children – the school should be the focal point, not the asphalt.
- At the meeting, I heard one of our neighbors suggest a simpler solution that could mitigate all of these problems, possibly more cost-effectively than engineering the required street widening, sidewalk, drainage, and grading improvements needed along Mill Avenue and 27th Street. A school bus driveway could be placed along the northern border of the school grounds, allowing the school bus to drop-off children in the proposed northeast side of the new school. It was not clear to us why school buses even need to drop-off in that location – it would make more sense to drop-off on the northwest side, which would reduce the needs to staff two completely separate drop-off locations.
- Do not put buses on Mill Avenue, Durbin Court or 27th Street it would not accommodate and would lack safety.
- Use main 24th Street arterial for both entrances; I don't have an immediate solution other than running a bus lane on the top northern portion of the property.
- All pickup/drop off accessed from 24th Street either all directly from 24th Street or access road from 24th Street to bus area along north side of property. Increase energy on conscious planning.

- Listen to the neighbors please.
- Keep traffic (buses and cars) with 24th Street access.
- Leave bus and car traffic on and off 24th Street.
- Keep the bus traffic on the already busy 24th Street if possible.
- I drove Mill Avenue and 27th Street this morning and they actually seem adequate for bus traffic. There is no parking allowed along those streets. The area marked “B” (end of 27th Street) that runs along the school property is narrower but I would assume that can be widened. The corner at Mill Avenue and 27th Street is fairly obscured. The tree on the northwest corner is overgrown and literally right on the street. I wonder who owns the land that is marked “A” (field south of the school). Could it be purchased with the funds for the build? Would that owner be more open to the idea if it removed routing traffic on Mill Avenue and 27th Street? Could it be used for a drop-off loop? How might that change the layout of the build? Was there any discussion about punching 27th Street through to Douglas Avenue? Guessing that would be an expensive option or would the City pick up some of those costs?
- All school traffic should enter and depart on the already established arterial of 24th Street. We liked the idea of the school building being located on the eastern high ground of the property. We hope alternatives for the building and bus location are considered.
- If the school district follows through on the current plans, it should build a sidewalk down the length of Mill Avenue from 24th Street to 27th Street and extend the sidewalk on 27th Street to the end of the cul-de-sac. I imagine the City will require the district to build a sidewalk for a portion of 27th Street anyway.

Questions/Other:

- Where will the school entrances be located? It looks like a long walk or bike ride in the rain from 24th Street.
- Please really look into other options for routing buses. This area is already crowded and Mill Avenue is not the answer.
- Has any thought been given to drainage on the south side of the school property to keep runoff from all of the properties south of the school?
- We are both retired teachers with combined experience (K-12) of over 66 years. We've taught in public, private, rural, suburban, urban, and foreign settings. We hope that BSD is sincere and genuinely willing to 'monitor and adjust' this proposed draft plan. Our experience has been the opposite. In districts where we've taught, 'public input' was sought and given. The reality there was the district had made their decision previous to these public meetings. Plans were 'done deals' upon arrival. If this plan is a 'done deal', then BSD hasn't heard the neighborhood concerns. The infrastructure cost for the sidewalks, engineering of traffic, tree removal, and lighting, (Complete with



neighborhood ill will.) will drain money from the project budget that might be better spent on the school building/educational plant.