

Center Schools Construction Progress

A little more than a year after the Center community approved a bond allowing the district to build a new PK-12 facility through the Building Excellent schools Today process, the project is on schedule and under budget. As of the end of the year foundations have been poured, floors have been laid, steel has been erected, roofs have been installed, an outer brick skin is in place, windows have been installed, and most of the inner walls have been framed and are being sheet rocked and taped.

Because of better than anticipated bidding results the construction team has even been able to add in-floor radiant heating, upgrade from an asphalt parking lot to concrete for durability, improve the quality and amount of playground structures, and add polished and stained floors to the finished product. It is anticipated that the heating system will be turned on in mid January and crews will be able to get down to installing finishing surfaces during the rest of winter and early spring.

Klipp Architecture of Denver and the GE Johnson Construction Company of Colorado Springs have been working with Center School District's core construction team on the project since January 2010. Michael Lobato, Center Schools Board President, said the Klipp-GE Johnson team was hired "because of a strong track record in designing and building quality schools and during the selection process we found they offered the greatest construction value for the tax dollar spent."

After hiring Klipp-GE Johnson in late December 2010 the team spent much of the spring turning the Center Schools facilities master plan into a highly functional building design to meet the needs of students and community members. The design process included the Center School District core construction team, staff members, students, and many community members. The district reports that an independent third party inspector is very pleased with the job GE Johnson and Klipp have done on the building design and structure.

Center Schools Director of Facilities, Richard Brandt, has been a key participant on the district core construction team. He has continually reviewed plans, inspected work, and kept a focus on decreasing long term district operational costs as a result of the process.

The resulting final building design is a two story PK-12 facility with double loaded corridors. The preschool-kindergarten area will have a separate playground, and a separate drop off and entry point for easier access for parents and children. There will also be alternate entries to the grade 1-5 school area as well as the grade 6-12 facility. Music rooms and administration offices will be on the ground level floor, as well as the library, cafeteria and gymnasiums.

To better serve the community, the new school facility will have a separate access point to all the community areas of the school including adult learning, commons, athletic facilities, the technology support center, and the school-public library. Probably the showcase portion of the structure will be the new library. It has been clearly designed with the

community in mind, offering separate access points for public patrons and students. There will be a dedicated community room that can also serve as instructional space for library classes during the daytime. A nice children's area will be installed to allow greater access to books for small children while shielding patrons from the noise that comes from such groups. Finally, public access restrooms have been designed into the facility so users don't need to enter classroom areas to meet their personal needs.

The alternative high school will even get an upgraded facility as the Center High School wing that was built in 2000 will be remodeled into an adult and community learning facility to suit the Academic Recovery Center, the Center Virtual Academy, and general adult learning services. With an additional scheduled upgrade of the current vocational building, the oldest un-remodeled structure in the district will be the bus garage that was completed in Spring 2007.

The Center Schools Board of Education has been mindful of the district's history while in the process of completing the project. Corner stones and construction plaques will be saved and displayed prominently in designated areas of the facility. Local families who have planted memorials on campus have been contacted by board members and asked for guidance regarding the relocation of their trees and plaques. Homage has also been paid to the 1918 structure in several brickwork design elements on the new building. Most importantly, numerous opportunities will be taken advantage of to honor the many people who have walked the Center Schools hallways in the last 100 years by installing imagery throughout the facility.

The remaining construction schedule during the school year calls for the removal of the current varsity gymnasium and construction of a replacement in March, installation of surface finishes and furniture in the classroom areas during the spring, and a complete move in during the month of June. The instructional year ends on May 16th this and materials relocation will begin at that point. Demolition of the current elementary, middle and high schools is scheduled to begin on Tuesday after Memorial Day. On graduation day 2012 (Saturday May 26th) current buildings will be open to the public for final inspection by community members and tours of the current status of the new facility will be offered.

Although the district will occupy its new home in June 2012, work will continue during the summer on construction of the new varsity gymnasium, remodeling the new adult learning center and current vocational building, leveling and constructing parking lots, installing landscaping, and building a new football-soccer practice field.

The district is anticipating holding a formal ribbon cutting ceremony at the end of July, though work on peripheral aspects of the project will likely continue through October.

Community members interested in touring the facility while under construction are welcome to do so by calling the district office at 754-3442 to schedule an appointment.