

The Sensible Solution:

COMMUNITY INFORMATION PACKET

This report was written to build support for a viable option at a time when this community is sorely in need of consensus. It is not intended to be a criticism of anyone involved in the process thus far. Rather, it is an attempt to change the conversation from talking about each other to talking about the district's educational future. This high school construction project should be cause for community celebration. Instead, it has become one of the most divisive issues this community has ever faced.

The readers of this report are invited to draw their own conclusions as to whether the proposed one large high school building or the continued use of the existing two high school buildings (with total renovation) best meet the future educational needs of the district. This report should serve as a platform for a constructive dialogue between the school board and the community it serves. With all due respect to assertions made otherwise, this type of community-building and effective dialogue has simply not yet occurred.

The entire report is accessible on line at www.sensible-solution.org and hard copies will be available for review at the Schlow Memorial Library. The abridged version provided this evening includes the following:

- Sample Endorsement Letter
- Executive Summary
- Comparison Tables

The sample endorsement letter is an opportunity for citizens to call on the school board to stop and re-evaluate this two building renovation option. Whether through the CDT, school board meetings, or other avenues, we have a right and an obligation to become informed on this issue and to make our voices heard.

We owe the children of this community nothing less.....

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO SAVE \$30M DOLLARS

The Sensible Solution:

LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT

The State College Area School District has embarked on a path to make the most dramatic and sweeping changes to the high school campus and the student learning environment since the school's original creation. The decisions and changes made today will literally affect the educational environment of our community's young people for decades in the future.

Given the gravity of these decisions and their impact on generations of State College residents, I agree with the following recommendation to simply more fully evaluate the Sensible Solution alternative.

Recommendation: Based upon the overwhelming favorable comparison of benefits and costs of the Sensible Solution relative to the one building plan, I recommend that the State College Area School District Board postpone the release of bids on the one building plan so that the Sensible Solution can be further evaluated. Further evaluation would include: constructive community dialogue on the Sensible Solution plan with input from the community, students, teachers, and administrators; and a detailed design and cost estimate produced by an independent architect.

As a first step, I request that the State College Area School District Board schedule a working session to evaluate this alternative. This work session should include representatives of all relevant parties involved in the development of the board's proposed plan (consultants, CAC members, board members, department heads, etc.). The output of this session would be a comparative analysis between the two plans to be presented at a board meeting as an action item. The vote on this action item would be to commission a detailed design and cost estimate prepared by an independent architect.

Signature

Name (print): _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

Please Sign and Fax to 814-861-4668

The Sensible Solution:

A Compelling Alternative Design Proposal for the SCASD High School Renovation

Public Information Summary, 1/22/07

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this document is to demonstrate that the alternative Sensible Solution conceptual design is equivalent to the SCASD proposed one-building State High in terms of satisfying the district's requirements - and that it is a superior and less risky approach with regard to the following major considerations:

- **Improved Delivery of Student Education:** The Sensible Solution is more in line with and adaptable to the modern delivery of education for the 21st century in terms of school size and facility design - with multiple learning and teaching methods in mind. It is also a high school configuration that has a 20+ year proven track record of successful academic outcomes in our district. This alternative delivers comparable space increases for program needs.
- **Lower Construction Cost:** This alternative delivers cost savings of \$30 - \$36 million (30%-36%) and meets/exceeds the requirements outlined in the SCASD plan. Including financing costs, the Sensible Solution saves taxpayers over \$42 million.
- **Enhanced Flexibility:** Should enrollments increase over the expected life of the facility and/or the district experiences fluctuating enrollments due to a host of factors, including nationally anticipated increases in school choices (e.g. charter schools), two moderately sized and fully renovated buildings will provide significant flexibility for the future.
- **Safety, Security, and Comfort Improvements:** The Sensible Solution addresses concerns about crossing the street. It provides asbestos removal, up-to-date heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems throughout, new main entrance office areas to each building and controlled access to the building. All renovated areas are fully updated and modernized to the same extent as renovated areas in the Kimball plan.
- **Greater Community Consensus:** Increased community support for a project of this scope is a critical component of the district's future success. The Sensible Solution is based on an analysis of abundant public input from various stakeholders. Therefore, it is more likely to be a better consensus point within our community.

The Sensible Solution includes sufficiently complete conceptual designs to estimate cost. The proposal is to completely renovate the two existing high school buildings and make necessary additions – providing the same total square footage as the SCASD one building plan for an “apples-to-apples” comparison. This alternative plan is not a “minimal” renovation and it is not the cheapest possible solution. It provides for a beautifully restored, completely up-to-date educational facility for the future.

This document has been prepared by a professional team led by David Paterno and has been reviewed and endorsed by other respected community professionals in the fields of construction, high school operation and maintenance, engineering, business, education, and architecture.

Recommendation: Based upon the overwhelming favorable comparison of benefits and costs of the Sensible Solution detailed in this document, the team recommends that the SCASD Board postpone the commencement of the one building plan so that the Sensible Solution can be further evaluated. Further evaluation would include: constructive community dialogue on the Sensible Solution plan with input from the community, students, teachers, and administrators; and a detailed design and cost estimate produced by an independent architect.

Summary Sheet of Benefits:

The Sensible Solution:

- **Is More in Line with the Modern Delivery of Education:**

Provides significant and comparable learning environment improvements such as: aesthetics, technology access, flexible instructional and student-focused spaces, mechanical systems, air handling and temperature control, natural light, and asbestos abatement. It also includes additional instructional space for educational programs such as the Career and Technical Center (CTC), library, and music.

Maintains the current configuration of housing a large enrollment in two distinct and developmentally appropriate smaller learning units – in line with educational small-schools research and the district’s proven track record of academic success in this building arrangement.

- **Is More Affordable:**

The Sensible Solution adequately meets the district’s documented and implied design requirements for \$32-\$35 million dollar less construction cost and less risk of cost overruns and/or delays. The savings allow more flexibility for the remaining facility upgrades in the district-wide master plan. When you factor in debt service costs, the total savings are over \$40 million.

- **Is More Flexible for the future:**

As anticipated growth occurs in our community, enrollment shifts will be easier to manage with two moderately sized facilities. If it becomes necessary and/or desirable in the future, the Sensible Solution will allow for an easy transition to two high schools or variations of grade level distributions and changes in delivery of education. The current SCASD plan is not being built for any increase in enrollment at all.

- **Provides Significant Safety and Security Improvements:**

Main offices are relocated to the main entrances of both buildings and both buildings will utilize district-wide controlled access systems. Monitored entrances are included at both sides of the totally enclosed pedestrian bridge.

The pedestrian bridge provides weather shelter and eliminates pedestrian crossing on the Parkway.

- **Is Based on Community Support and Community Needs**

This is the only design concept for the high school that was recommended by the CAC for facilities and the original DWMP. It was the only configuration seriously considered from December, 2001 to April, 2005.

Oral testimony at the Act 34 hearing indicated that 98 of the 222 speakers (44%) would prefer a two-building design (compared with 27 of the 222 speakers (12%) who supported the school board’s one-building design).

The Sensible Solution allows two auditoria for housing simultaneous school and community events - with more total seating and stage space than the one-building option. The Sensible Solution adds technology to allow for both auditoria to observe the same program at the same time (one via screen) for certain events.

The Sensible Solution’s renovated buildings do not require the use and denigration of Community Field and do not negatively impact the quality of life for adjacent neighborhoods.

Highlights of the Alternative Design:

- ❑ All spaces are fully renovated for aesthetics, safety and comfort, and better program use
- ❑ Renovated and expanded CTC classrooms
- ❑ New Administration/Counseling offices Located as Main Entrances
- ❑ New Dedicated Student Center (not a cafeteria)
- ❑ New Expanded Library
- ❑ New traditional classroom wings
- ❑ New and Expanded Cafeteria
- ❑ Controlled Access Throughout as per new district security standards
- ❑ Two additional Gymnasiums
- ❑ Two Fitness Centers – one in each building
- ❑ All New and Expanded Music Suite: Band Room, Scene Shop, Costume Shop, Choral room, Practice Rooms, etc.
- ❑ Both Auditoria fully renovated
- ❑ Connecting enclosed bridge over the Parkway for safe travel between buildings
- ❑ New variably-sized flexible learning centers and rooms for multiple faculty/instruction use throughout buildings
- ❑ All new HVAC and Electrical systems throughout
- ❑ New Data networking systems in each building for wireless access throughout
- ❑ Natural lighting in all instruction areas
- ❑ All deficiencies addressed such as asbestos abatement, flooding problems, etc.

5.1: COMPARISON CHARTS:

MODERN DELIVERY OF EDUCATION (1 of 2):

Variable:	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
School Size	<p>A verbally stated goal of SCASD’s design is to “create a sense of community for the school.” There is no reason to believe that a stronger connection between grade levels and/or teachers could not be achieved in other non-construction ways – including providing the <u>time</u> to connect.</p> <p>It is hard to assume that 2700 very busy students will feel “connected” just by virtue of being contained in the same building together; particularly when the students are not housed or grouped in any way and interactions in hallways and the large cafeteria will be rather random.</p> <p>Based on abundant research on school size, there are also likely to be other social and academic drawbacks associated with creating a school building that will house 2700 students.¹</p>	<p>The existing unique two-building high school has proven to provide a proper facility configuration for the comprehensive curriculum and documented outstanding academic success enjoyed by our district.</p> <p>A two-building configuration divides the large student body into two developmentally appropriate, culturally different, and physically separate smaller units – thus offsetting the large-school effect. This existing protective factor is likely preventing State High from fully experiencing the typical effects seen in more traditionally designed large high schools with similar enrollments.</p>
Small Schools Initiative & Advisory Groupings	<p>Some such program can and should be done in the large building. However, the current tentative plan seems insufficient for dealing with a school of 2700 that is not organized by any student-focused groupings.</p>	<p>A personalization program of some sort can and should be done in a two-building plan. The exact space requirements and details for this program would need to be determined as the program develops. Building support among stakeholders is essential.</p>
Technology	<p>The modern enhancements are wireless and/or equipment based and can be done in either configuration.</p>	<p>The Sensible Solution provides comparable technology updates.</p>

¹ See Appendix 3 for full discussion and literature review of educational impact of school size

MODERN DELIVERY OF EDUCATION (2 of 2):

Variable:	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
<p>Flexible Modern Spaces for Small-Group and Project-based Learning</p>	<p>The Kimball plan shows many regular, traditional classrooms.</p> <p>In some departments, there are additional smaller spaces – but these are apparently for use in that specific department and not accessible to all teachers.</p> <p>No evidence of project-based or small-group learning areas except potentially in the library.</p>	<p>The Sensible Solution is also primarily a traditional design with many regular classrooms.</p> <p>In the North Building, the old Library converts to a Student Center that includes areas for project-based learning. In the Sensible Solution, there is room for individual and group learning in the new library and throughout the classroom wings to be flexible smaller spaces available to teachers for variable teaching/learning/faculty uses.</p> <p>In the South Building, some classrooms are converted to formal and informal flexible project-based learning area that is centrally located and designed to be utilized by all departments.</p>
<p>Student Center</p>	<p>The only student center listed is the 900-seat cafeteria.</p> <p>This student center will obviously not be available for lunch periods. The large scale and distracting odors may also reduce its usability as a true student center.</p>	<p>In the Sensible Solution, the current North Building library is converted to a Dedicated Student Center with the features noted above plus additional technology to allow multiple uses. The feel of this informal space is meant to encourage social contact, group learning, and personalization. The Roar Store is also located in this Student Center to heighten a sense of student/school connections. This is also an ideal space for after-school club meetings, etc.</p>
<p>Increases for Programs</p>	<p>The plan calls for significant increases for CTC, Music programs, etc.</p>	<p>The Sensible Solution matches these space increase requirements.</p>

CONTROLLING COST:

Variables	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution												
Construction Cost	\$97-99 Million (does not include any improvements to the South Campus).	\$62-67 Million (Includes improvements to the South and North Buildings). (30- 36% cost reduction).												
\$43 Million Savings	<p>Total cost to tax payers is project cost less state reimbursements, and debt service cost. Estimated using 20 year debt service at 4.0% interest makes</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>\$ 98M</td> <td>1-Building Price</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- 7.5M</td> <td>State Reimbursement</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>+ 41.1M</u></td> <td>Debt. Service</td> </tr> </table> <p>= \$131.6 Million Total Cost</p>	\$ 98M	1-Building Price	- 7.5M	State Reimbursement	<u>+ 41.1M</u>	Debt. Service	<p>Total cost to tax payers is project cost less state reimbursements, and debt service cost. Estimated using 20 year debt service at 4.0% interest makes</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>\$ 66M</td> <td>2-Building Price</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- 5M</td> <td>State Reimbursement</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>+ 27.7M</u></td> <td>Debt. Service</td> </tr> </table> <p>= \$88.7 Million Total Cost</p>	\$ 66M	2-Building Price	- 5M	State Reimbursement	<u>+ 27.7M</u>	Debt. Service
\$ 98M	1-Building Price													
- 7.5M	State Reimbursement													
<u>+ 41.1M</u>	Debt. Service													
\$ 66M	2-Building Price													
- 5M	State Reimbursement													
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South Building	<p>\$4.4+ Million.</p> <p>While currently on hold or “up in the air,” the plan on record still calls for the demolition of the South Buildings and the placement of ball fields at 4.4+ million.</p> <p>If the board chooses to deviate from this plan, it will cost an estimated \$10 - 15 Million to renovate the building.</p>	<p>The South Building is included in the above cost.</p>												

FLEXIBILITY FOR THE FUTURE:

Variables	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
Increase in Future Enrollment	<p>In the case of any enrollment growth, the large building will be crowded and the district will be facing the need to build a second high school building and perhaps a third middle school. If SCASD moves to two high schools, the one-building high school will be too large to occupy efficiently with a greatly reduced population. The building is rather physically constrained and offers few options for minor expansions.</p> <p>The likely scenario is that district officials may be pressured to simply squeeze as many students as possible into the large building and for as long as possible - to avoid having to make the expensive transition to two high schools</p>	<p>If there is growth in the district or a broad desire to create two high schools, this will be relatively easy to do with two moderately sized, completely updated buildings. The two buildings also have ample room around their perimeters for minor expansions as needed.</p> <p>The North Building could easily be converted to a 9-12 grade high school and the South Building could be easily converted to a third middle school if two high schools are needed in our future. This would mean that the district would only be facing having to build one new moderately sized high school facility if enrollments increase.</p> <p>The Sensible Solution thus also addresses the need to accommodate middle schools into the consideration of potential growth in our district.</p>
Educational Flexibility	<p>Our culture is moving away from the “one-size-fits-all” educational model where all students are expected to thrive in a large comprehensive high school. New possibilities like Magnet, charter and private schools are expected to increase.² Different learning methods may require different spaces. There may be reasons in the future to separate 9th grade from the rest of the senior high school, for example. The large building organized by department is less adaptable to these types of changes.</p>	<p>It would be ideal to not be limited by a large facility and its capacity/organization issues when making educational choices about new and innovative possibilities.</p> <p>The two buildings historically have shown great flexibility in adapting to different programmatic and grade-distribution needs over the past 40-50 years. With two complete sets of science wings, auditoriums, cafeterias, etc., there are simply more options available.</p>

² See Appendix 3

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND COMFORT (1 of 3):

Variable:	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
Safety (Student-to-Student)	Students generally fare worse on many scales in larger schools. Discipline problems, attitudes toward school, violence, and substance abuse are more prevalent in larger schools ³ .	“The size of the student population and scale of school buildings also have a substantial effect on school safety. When schools and classrooms are small enough to allow teachers and students to form personal relationships, a sense of community is established that promotes a safe environment. By limiting the population of an individual school – or by providing spaces for smaller schools within large ones - school designers can help maximize supervision and encourage healthy social interactions among students, teachers, administrators, and community users.” ⁴
Street Crossing Safety	Students still need to cross for parking, athletic facilities and gym. Street crossing during the school day greatly reduced.	Construction of bridge and controlled access would eliminate need to cross the street at all. Better utilization of each building and scheduling reduces need for students to leave their building.
Fire, Air Quality Emergency (e.g. gas leak), etc. Evacuation Issues	2700 students exposed to risk (i.e. smoke inhalation) in some types of emergencies. Potentially more difficult crowd control in emergency when 2700 students are suddenly outside, in and around parking lots, etc.	Only 1300 students exposed to risk at any time. Multiple ground-level ER exits throughout for ease in evacuation and especially handicapped accessible evacuation. The unaffected building can be used for controlling and safely housing the evacuees of the affected building.

³Cotton, K. (1996). “*New Small Learning Communities: Findings from Recent Literature*”. Northwest Regional Educational Library, Portland OR: found at www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/nslc.pdf

⁴Bingler, S., Quinn, L., Sullivan. (2003). “*Schools as Centers of Community: A Citizen’s Guide for Planning and Design*”. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities. U.S. Department of Education. p. 11.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND COMFORT (2 of 3):

Variable:	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
<p>SECURITY: (Intruders): Also includes evacuation and isolation of threat issues (See Above)</p>	<p>Only two main entrances (front and back). Front entrance controlled with buzzer-surveillance method with adjacent main office. Will likely include other district-wide equipment upgrades such as surveillance cameras.</p> <p>Greatly reduced pedestrian traffic flow in and out of the building.</p>	<p>Only two main entrances (one at each building). Each front entrance controlled with buzzer-surveillance method and adjacent main offices. Will include other district-wide equipment upgrades such as surveillance cameras. All other exits are ER only during the school day.</p> <p>Placement of monitoring/security office at two bridge entrances. Pedestrian flow b/w buildings remains - but is reduced from the current level due to reorganization of program space.</p>
<p>COMFORT: Natural Light, Noise, Air Quality, Electrical Upgrades, Physical Appearance, Asbestos</p>	<p>These qualities have all been shown to affect learning. In the SCASD plan, all of this will be improved with all new systems and materials.</p> <p>Asbestos must be abated in both existing facilities in both plans.</p>	<p>In the Sensible Solution, all of this will be improved with all new systems and materials to a comparable degree.</p> <p>Example: the Kimball plan's 1956 wing is going to be renovated to be comparable to brand new spaces. Renovation can and would be done as well in the two-building plan. The Sensible Solution provides comparable spaces with natural light and all new air and temperature and electrical systems.</p> <p>All asbestos will be abated properly.</p>

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND COMFORT (3 of 3):

Variable:	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
<p>Scale and Social Climate:</p>	<p>Students not organized by any student groupings like grade-level, etc. 2700 randomly placed students roaming throughout the building. Difficult to maintain order and familiarity among students and faculty. Teachers may need to assume more responsibility for maintaining order in the school.</p>	<p>Students in each grade grouping are in the same smaller building most of the day.</p> <p>The scale is manageable from a “crowd control” perspective - and more intimate.</p>
<p>Flooding and Site Issues</p>	<p>Of course, the flooding at the North Building will be addressed by the Kimball plan.</p> <p>It should be noted that this flooding is a problem exterior to the North Building. This flooding could have been addressed many years ago and has nothing to do with the age or condition of the building.</p> <p>The Geo-technical concerns are being addressed in the plan, but still carry some potential risks that may not be apparent until construction begins.</p>	<p>The alternative two-building plan would likewise first correct the site-flooding problem.</p> <p>Due to the simplicity of the Sensible Solution, much less green space or new land is disturbed, reducing the risks of unforeseen geo-technical difficulties.</p>

COMMUNITY CONSENSUS (1 of 2):

Variable:	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
2001 District Wide Master Plan	Single-building design not recommended	Two building renovation recommended
Citizen's Advisory Committee for Facilities	Did not make a recommendation for the one-building design	Recommended renovations to two buildings
Historical Public Input	All public input except the hearing in April of 2005 (just weeks before the decision) was based on a two-building design. The concept of the one-building design at the North Building was not conceived of until one month prior to the decision.	The first public hearing about renovating the two-building high school was held in October 2004. Prior to this date, there were only brief, general public discussions of the high school renovation in the context of the DWMP and other facilities.
Post-Decision Input And Act 34 ⁵	<p>Significant community opposition to the one-building option since the decision to switch from a 2-building plan to a 1-building plan.</p> <p>Unheard of attendance and testimonies for an Act 34 hearing - over 10 hours of oral testimony showing 195 of 222 speakers spoke in opposition to the board's 1-building decision.</p> <p>74% of the oral & written Act 34 testimony opposed the SCASD plan.</p>	<p>The 2-Building Renovation Received the most support of any option, in both oral and written Act 34 testimony. + 44% supported in oral testimony (98 speakers of 222).</p> <p>Act 34 testimony included 11% support for a Two High School option. While the Sensible Solution is not a Two High School option, by renewing both North & South Buildings now, it provides the flexibility and superior cost effectiveness to allow a 2nd High School in the future.</p>

⁵ All Act 34 data based on SCASD board member analysis of Act 34 Testimony obtained from website on 12/09/06: <http://www.scasd.org/249710026193544/FileLib/browse.asp?a=374&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=56419&249710026193544Nav=|&NodeID=1146> . It should be noted here that the ACT 34 hearing was not meant to offer alternative solutions. The fact that so many people mentioned renovation of the two buildings anyway is a clear indication that the two-building option is worth further consideration.

COMMUNITY CONSENSUS (2 of 2):

Variable:	SCASD Plan	Sensible Solution
Community Use of School Building (s)	<p>The one building may actually reduce the ability to house events. With only one auditorium so close to the large Cafeteria, it may be hard to house simultaneous events as we do now. The one auditorium is quite nice, including sunken orchestra pit and balcony. Reduces total seating to 1300 seats and reduces total stage area.</p>	<p>The two auditoria with lobby space and two cafeterias in the Sensible Solution currently allow and will continue to nicely allow multiple, simultaneous school and community events. Both will be fully restored. Does not include a sunken orchestra pit. Does include combined total seating for 1500 and slightly more combined stage area. Will utilize video-conferencing technology to display same program to 1500 simultaneously.</p>
Neighborhood Impact	<p>In the SCASD plan, the building and new roadways and parking facilities are placed onto a significant portion of Community Field. This permanently reduces an important community green space and the cars, extra traffic, lighting, etc. of this facility may interfere with quality of life issues for the adjacent neighborhood.</p>	<p>The Sensible Solution makes no major changes to Community Field and does not need to utilize this green space for any parking lots, etc.</p> <p>Nothing in the Sensible Solution will adversely impact adjacent neighborhoods.</p> <p>The current facilities, when renovated, will still be scaled appropriately to the adjacent neighborhood.</p>
Athletic/Parking/ Traffic Site Issues	<p>Due to a lack of a plan for the South Building, parking, traffic, and athletic field needs for the full high school facility have not yet been determined as of 1/17/07. This indicates that that these things are either not a true priority of the district or it is not being adequately addressed. If it is a true priority, it should be addressed prior to any bidding or construction effort to avoid holistic campus design problems that would need to be fixed in the future. Moving ahead with only half a campus plan seems disorganized and inconsistent with the district’s previously stated needs for the facility.</p>	<p>The full campus will function much as it does now with improvements made to the bus drop-off areas to address stated concerns about bus circulation.</p> <p>It was beyond the scope of the team to determine what the parking/traffic/athletic needs truly are for the district at this time. Athletic needs have not been provided to the team for a determination and there is no way to infer what is needed from the district’s incomplete plan for these issues.</p> <p>Since there is no current plan for much of the high school campus (the entire South Side), it is not clear what the district’s site design priorities are. When/if those priorities are determined, they could likely be addressed in the Sensible Solution.</p>