

Central and East Lawrence Elementary School Consolidation Working Group

REVISED AGENDA

7-9 p.m., January 2, 2012

Lawrence Public Schools' District Office, 110 McDonald Drive

Multi-Purpose Room

1. Presentations From Schools About What They Would Need if Their School is to Close.
2. Hillcrest presentation of "Belt Concept"
3. Facilitator Focus Questions & Discussion
4. Meeting Evaluation
5. Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Meeting Schedule

January 16 and 30.

“Belt Concept” Overview Presented by Hillcrest Representatives

In working to analyze the potential consolidation of elementary schools in Lawrence, the Hillcrest team has developed the “Belt Concept” outlined below to frame and prioritize issues.

Description

Rather than dividing Lawrence between east and west, the Belt Concept reflects a “belt” of the city going through the middle of town, from east to west. This belt captures the urban core of the city, from east Lawrence, through downtown, to central Lawrence and neighborhoods adjacent to the University.

Elementary schools in the belt

The belt would be anchored by an elementary school in East Lawrence, and then include Cordley, Hillcrest, and Sunset Hill. Each of these schools could become a strong three-section school, with the capacity to take in an additional fifty to one hundred additional students beyond its current enrollment. Projected enrollment growth over the next five years will mean the need for additional elementary school seats. Providing additional capacity within the belt elementary schools (by expanding to solid three-section schools) could eliminate the need to build another new school on the periphery of the city over the next five to ten years. Enrollment is projected to rise in East Lawrence, while Cordley and Sunset Hill can be seen as “relief valves” for nearby schools reaching and exceeding capacity. With their central locations, trained staff across the board, and commitment to English Language Learners and their families, Cordley and Hillcrest play a vital role as ESL cluster sites in the middle belt.

Key Considerations

The Belt Concept builds on the following considerations:

- *Support for the urban core of Lawrence and downtown area*, the symbolic center of the city. The Belt Concept recognizes the significant revitalization efforts occurring downtown and in East Lawrence, including new housing projects, a grocery store, economic enterprises, and the library renovation project. Strong elementary schools play a vital role in supporting the core – and there is a direct relationship between schools, families, and neighborhood vitality. Without these schools, neighborhoods are likely to become rental areas and significantly decline in value, pushing growth to the periphery of the city.
- The *University of Kansas* as the academic, economic, and geographic center of Lawrence. The Belt Concept also recognizes that Lawrence is a “knowledge city,” with the University as its center. The University needs strong elementary schools in close proximity to campus, for both international and non-international families. These schools provide a learning laboratory for university students and faculty, a welcoming environment for international families, and an anchor for university neighborhoods.
- An *analysis of the neighborhoods* in the “belt” area indicates that the size of homes is a good fit for “starter” homes and university families, and that older families are retiring and selling their homes in a predictable cycle. Again, there is a direct relationship between strong, sustainable elementary schools and the vitality of these neighborhoods.