

Community Invitation to Begin Planning for the Re-Use of the Columbia School

In the summer of 2009, the New School will leave the Columbia School for its new facility in Rainier Beach and for the first time in more than 100 years, a public school may not be operating in the heart of Columbia City. Over the coming year, the Seattle School District will likely decide what to do with the soon to be vacant Columbia School building.



All too often, especially in Southeast Seattle, vacant properties become more than just eyesores: they become magnets for crime, drugs, and vagrants. As a community, we have an opportunity to come together and be proactive about what will happen to the school.

Friends of Columbia School (FoCS) was founded to facilitate an open dialogue about the future of this property in hopes of creating a coalition to communicate with the Seattle School District and develop a vision that reflects the community's wishes.

Goal

The goal of the planning process is to develop community-supported, financially viable alternatives for the re-use of the entire 3.2 acre school site. The planning process will only be successful if it is transparent and open to the entire community. A critical working assumption is that the School District is required to sell or lease the property at fair market value and therefore any community-driven plan must work within the market's realities.

Planning Process

The planning process will begin with a community outreach campaign and will be designed to foster and encourage the exchange of information and opinions. The process will be focused around a series of large community meetings over four to six months, such as the following.

- Meeting #1:..... Presentation of site/building analysis and Columbia City Neighborhood plan. Discuss neighborhood's values and goals for neighborhood and what role this site could play in the future of Columbia City.
- Meeting #2:..... Neighbors work with designers to develop alternative site plans.
- Meeting #3:..... Presentation about financial viability of different alternatives.
- Meeting #4:..... Presentation about different alternatives' strengths and weaknesses. Discussion about preferred alternatives and next steps.

For more information, please contact Rebecca Cate at rkcate@comcast.net or 760-8078.