

AISD Repurposing Conversations

Sims Elementary Campus | June 6, 2023

How do you define the community?

- This community is an under-resourced community; a lot of the original residents are still here and depend on each other for support and needs
- Lost history, lost things prominent to African Americans and have not recovered - gentrification has impacted this community
- The community was built by African American women
- Community is...
 - where you feel safe, included and welcomed
 - a place where you have a voice
 - its history, inhabitants, architecture and its boundaries

What are the challenges / needs of this community?

- Not a lot for youth to do in the area
- Voices are not heard and are competing with the money
- Lack of housing for...
 - Workforce
 - Affordable
 - Affordable housing being built is limited (the affordable housing set-asides on new construction are very small)
 - People on fixed income and with disabilities of all ages
 - Accessible housing is limited and people can wait decades
 - Retirees
 - Short-term housing (160 something unhoused individuals in the area)
- Lack of licensed child care centers
- Disconnect of the Older Eastside with the new neighborhood
 - Developers coming in and purchasing sites that could be serving the community but are ignoring the needs
- Have to go outside the community to secure resources
 - Healthcare, mental health services, housing options, childcare
 - *In the past, was able to walk from the school and there were resources available for residents*
- Need space for AISD schools during Bond modernization
- Walkability
- Access to fresh food

- Lack of space to support local businesses (storefronts, marketplaces, etc.) and lack opportunity to bring money into the community
- Important to ensure that we do not use the site in ways that causes further trauma for the community
 - Example of AISD Police using Sims for active shooter training
 - Police presence can be concerning/frightening
 - Need more transparency and communication when site is utilized
 - Need to be cognizant of the history
 - Need to complement the culture of the community (old and new neighbors) and bring back excellence
- Access to green space, especially as community continues to lose due to influx of apartment buildings being built
- Growth of Austin won't be changed - need to do something to keep up

What future uses would you like to see at the Sims campus that would best address these needs and challenges?

- With the changing dynamics of the neighborhood, possibility to repurpose the facility and the land to provide different community focused spaces (garden, life skills, services)
 - BIPOC vendors, workforce and life skills, non-profit and community organizations can utilize the facility
 - Could be similar to a Resilience Hub (COA has created a department for this)
 - Important to connect with organizations that are already in this space (i.e. City of Austin, Austin Affordable Housing)
 - Can help to make sure it does not all fall on AISD's shoulders
- Multi-use facility that can employ local residents (include athletics)
- Similar use to YMCA center
- Trades training center - workforce development
- Important for education to continue to be part of the future (vocational, CTE classes) and couple that with healthcare, community garden
 - Should be multi-purpose
- Utilize a portion of the facility as a propagation center
 - Employ local residents to work at center
- Green infrastructure - which is lacking on the Eastside
 - Partner with nonprofits like Treefolks
- Adult continuing education
 - Connecting generations to support learning
 - Resource for the immigrant population

- Funding and resource that already exist so the building can be used immediately
- Cultural arts program
 - Dougherty Arts Center is located too far away
- Swing space for surrounding schools that will be undergoing modernization as part of the 2022 Bond
 - Can AISD utilize the Sims facility in lieu of placing students in portables?
 - Often no shade and concern about quality of portables
 - One community member expressed the opinion that AISD houses the programs/children that are less convenient in portables.
 - Who could it serve? The setup for elementary students is different from setup for middle school
 - Suggestion that it could be used by Sadler Means YWLA
 - Also suggestion to use it for nearby elementary schools slated for modernization, such as Oak Springs ES and Pecan Springs ES
 - Concerns about what investment would be required and the amount of time required to accommodate
 - What is the investment, length of time and how long can they be housed? How are we utilizing Bond dollars?
 - How long would the building be out of commission because of the swing? How long are we putting off the long term solution?