

# **AISD Repurposing Conversations**

## *Former Sims Elementary School Engagement Summary*

Last updated: 9/15/23

---

## OVERVIEW: Austin ISD Repurposing

---



Austin ISD is committed to finding new uses for our properties that are underutilized or no longer in use to steward taxpayer investments and benefit students and communities. Called “repurposing,” this process aims to provide long-term investments that are responsive to affected communities’ needs while maintaining district sites as community assets.

As Austin ISD starts to explore ways we can use the former Sims Elementary School campus to strengthen our schools and communities, we held a series of virtual and in-person community meetings, both in English and Spanish, and conducted a public survey, between May 9, 2023 and June 30, 2023.

The following report summarizes the feedback from the community engagement process. For additional information about the repurposing process for the former Sims Elementary School campus, please visit [www.austinisd.org/repurposing](http://www.austinisd.org/repurposing).

### ***How do you define the community?***

---

### ***What are the challenges/needs of this community?***

---

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

---

#### **May 23 Virtual Meeting**



**20**  
attendees

#### **June 6 In-Person Meeting**



**40**  
attendees

# Former Sims Elementary School

## Meeting Summary - May 23, 2023

Number of Community Members/Partners in attendance: ~20

### **High Level Feedback:**

- *Need stability for student/families in the community regarding housing and services*
- *Supportive of delaying repurposing so facility can be used as swing space for students in lieu of portables during construction of new schools*

### **How do you define the community?**

- Community is a place where people can feel safe, accepted, encouraged and have a sense of family
- Encompasses the people who live, work and those who utilize the local businesses
- Austin ISD students, family and staff
- Those who have a historical attachment to the school, including students/families that were impacted by consolidation of Norman-Sims

---

### **What are the challenges / needs of this community?**

- Affordable housing
- Swing space during Bond construction
- Access to childcare/daycare
- Access to food and healthcare
- Increasing gentrification
- High cost of living

---

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

- Short-term use for swing space to help during the 2022 Bond construction
- Housing options serving many populations (retirees, teachers, students, families)
- Community garden and small food market (could sell the food grown in the garden)
- Place for multi-generations to interact
- Provide support for the unhoused
- Remain as a school
- Mixed-use building that addresses housing and services
- Utilize Sims as a commercial propagation room for trees and accompanying educational opportunities for students

# Former Sims Elementary School

Meeting Summary - June 6, 2023

Number of Community Members/Partners in attendance: ~40

## High Level Feedback:

- *Need more transparency and communication from Austin ISD*
- *Need to be cognizant of the history of the site and the neighborhood, complement the culture of the community (old and new neighbors), and bring back excellence*

## 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
- 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
- Lack of affordable, senior, workforce and supportive housing
- Disconnect of the Older Eastside with the new neighborhood
- Access to fresh food, green space, childcare, and physical and mental health services
- Need space for AISD schools during Bond modernization
- Lack of space to support local businesses (storefronts, marketplaces, etc.) and lack of opportunity to bring money into the community

---

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

- Swing space for surrounding schools that will be undergoing modernization as part of the 2022 Bond
- Should be multi-purpose; provide community focused spaces (garden, education, life skills, services) similar to a Resilience Hub
- Cultural arts program
- Desire for ways to use the existing building rather than wait for redevelopment
- Green infrastructure

# Public Survey Results

Number of Participants: 396

**261**

**Thoughts**

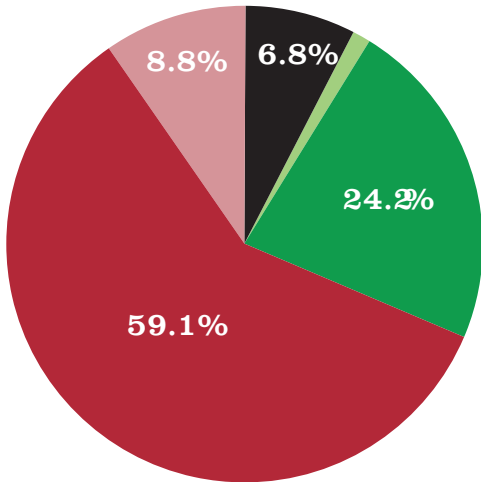
**9,995**

**Ratings**

**38**

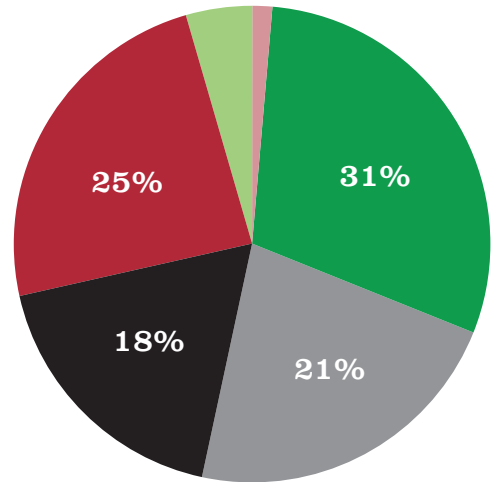
**Ratings/Thought**

**What is your connection to Austin ISD schools?**



- Austin ISD Staff
- Student
- Parent/Guardian
- Community Member
- Other

**How long have you lived in the community?**

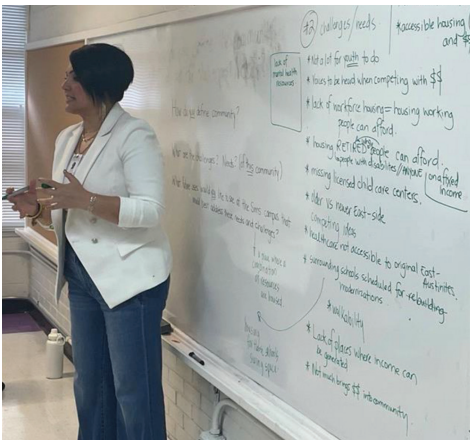


- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 10-15 years
- More than 15 years
- Not Applicable

## Highest Rated Thoughts:

1. **"There should be an effort to retain the Sims name or to note the historic significance of Ms. Sims and the building.** Too much history is being lost in East Austin. Don't let this building be another casualty of gentrification."
2. **"Mixed use development with larger retail space for a community sized grocery store, and other smaller retail spaces.** The community is currently in a food desert with limited fresh groceries available at dollar stores or convenience stores."
3. **"Multi-purpose community space, affordable grocery/farmers market, coffee shop, community art/event space, making use of the park space for kids.** Used to be a school--should not be razed for condos, this neighborhood needs more open + collaborative/creative space for its residents"
4. **"Convert it to apartment/condos. Consider low income opportunities.** We need housing options around here that aren't \$700,000"
5. **"Grocery store.** We all need healthy food options"
6. **"a multi-use retail space that includes a grocery store, with parking, extending the playground with a walking path.** A central, safe space for the neighborhood. The Shack is not safe, there is gang & drug related activity there at all hours."
7. **"Convert the gymnasium into a propagation room, for growing trees, annual food, and Texas natives for distribution and installation within East Austin.** While increasing biodiversity and green infrastructure within East Austin, we will prepare our community and children for a career in ecology/farming."
8. **"Area is a food desert. Need an actual small grocer with produce, casual dining, coffee/cafe.** Coffee shop across the street has moved and we have to travel far for any kind of food that isn't fast food."
9. **"Community Garden and Public space for learning.** Creating food and knowledge is key"
10. **"Affordable housing reserved for teachers and their families. Density is OK. Retail on the first floor (lease \$\$\$ for the district) and housing on top.** Provide affordable living for teachers and income for the district."

education  
keeling  
**park** **aisd** restaurants  
sims east store **affordable**  
programs  
**site** staff food **walkable**  
**community**  
garden **desert** sadler thriving families  
bar center **child** close  
**gym** care grocery retail ywla  
**housing** options austin means  
resources public **area** neighborhood  
space **magnet**



AISD Team member Joi facilitating group discussion.



Attendees discuss recommendations.



KEYE News Covering the meeting.