

TOP TEN REASONS TO RENOVATE ROOSEVELT

In 2005, the architect for the Erie School District, Mr. Robert Marz of Roth-Marz Architects, suggested tearing down Roosevelt and designing a new school. Since then, historians, architects and citizens have urged renovation of the 1922 landmark building at 2300 Cranberry Street.

During the June 2009 School Board meeting, Lisa Austin spoke in favor of renovating Roosevelt. Marz responded to Austin's remarks advising the School Board that Roosevelt is not *architecturally significant*. Marz informed the School Board that *newly constructed schools last longer* than renovated schools. Mr. Marz's statements are inaccurate and contradict the spirit of the number-one Keystone Principal, "*Redevelop first.*" (From the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Keystone Principles & Criteria for Growth, Investment & Resource Conservation).

Here are the facts:

- 1. Roosevelt is architecturally significant.** Roosevelt's grand staircase, spacious hallways, auditorium, and hand-painted fountain tiles should be preserved and used by our grandkids. A gracefully designed civic landmark, Roosevelt "fits" the neighborhood of two-story flats and single-family homes. Centered along the East side of a lot composed of two city blocks, Roosevelt's ornate main entrance directly faces West 23rd Street and provides a compelling "terminal vista" for children walking or riding their bikes to school. The Executive Director of Preservation Pennsylvania, Mindy Higgins Crawford, wrote an Erie Times News Op-Ed in support of renovating Roosevelt. The Pulitzer-prize winning author of Save Our Lands, Save Our Towns, Tom Hylton, wrote two Op-Eds for the Erie Times News outlining the rationale for renovation.
- 2. Renovation lasts as long as new construction.** As Thomas Hylton explained, "*All renovated schools must be brought up to code and will have the same life expectancy of a new school.*" With normal maintenance, Hylton noted that schools built before 1940 can "*last indefinitely.*"
- 3. Renovation creates local jobs.** One of Governor Rendell's Keystone Principals states, "*Renovating schools and historic buildings creates local jobs in urban communities.*" Renovation projects use most of their budgets hiring skilled locals. New construction projects spend most of their money buying materials produced elsewhere.
- 4. Renovation saves taxpayer money.** The Secretary of Education writes "*Experience has shown that it's generally less expensive to renovate an existing building than to build a new one... the Public School Code was amended in 2005 to provide additional state funding for renovation projects.*" When all costs are compiled, the average price of new school construction (\$213 dollars per square foot) is almost twice the cost of renovations (\$115 --per square foot.) As an added financial incentive, Pennsylvania offers a 10% funding bonus for school renovation projects.
- 5. Renovation is "GREEN."** Demolition and new construction a) wastes the "*embodied energy*" in the old bricks, masonry, etc; b) wastes all the fuel and human labor used to construct the historic building; c) creates debris that must be transported to a landfill;

d) uses aluminum, steel and vinyl materials that have a huge carbon footprint (due to the materials' production methods.)

6. **Renovation is faster.** Teachers and students can be back at Roosevelt more quickly if the building is renovated. *"Time is money."*
7. **Architects support renovation.** At the May 2008 Roosevelt Design Charrette (organized by the Erie Center for Design and Preservation and Preservation PA) three experienced architects recommended renovations with small additions to adapt Roosevelt for the 21st century. The 14 page report on Roosevelt is available on line: <http://www.saveourlandssaveourtowns.org/pdfs/Case%20Studies/Roosevelt%20charrette%20summary%207-23-08-1.pdf>.
8. **Both the PA Dept. of Education and the PA School Boards Association support renovation.** In their document *"Renovate or Replace? The case for restoring and reusing older school buildings,"* Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, the Secretary of Education, writes *"Many older schools can be renovated to 21st century standards."* The 28 page document is available on line at www.saveourlandssaveourtowns.org.
9. **Roosevelt and Ainsworth Field embody treasured community memories.** Dozens of alumni and Erie residents have spoken out for renovation of Roosevelt. It is a powerful experience to walk the halls and sit in the auditorium and realize your parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents walked and sat in the same spaces when they were young. There are many stories told of Roosevelt's ball field. In 1923, Babe Ruth hit a home run and with the crowd cheering, the ball flew over the school's smokestack. Outfielder Britton Scheibe reported that twenty years later, 5,000 fans filled the stands to watch the Erie Sailors in their farewell game at Roosevelt's Ainsworth Field.
10. **New construction would be "TRADING DOWN."** Given the reality of today's economy, nothing we build today will be as well-designed, as architecturally significant, or as well-constructed as what we already have. Commenting on the craftsmanship of Erie's older schools, Mr. Marz said, *"I think they paid a little more attention to detail."*

Given the facts about renovation, continued talk of demolishing historic public schools is foolish. We urge our School Board to save money, create jobs, go "green" and celebrate our architectural heritage by passing a resolution to "redevelop first."

Erie Center for Design & Preservation

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