



HISTORIC SCHOOLS

S u c c e s s S t o r i e s

Woodrow Wilson High School

Dallas, Texas

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Woodrow Wilson High School, a Jacobean Revival style inner-city school, defines the identity and traditions of East Dallas, Texas. Like many inner-city schools, Woodrow Wilson has a multi-cultural population and serves as an educational and community resource. Motivated by the closing of numerous historic schools throughout the region by the Dallas Independent School District, concerned neighborhood residents,



devoted alumni and students created the Site Based Decision-Making Council (SBDM). This successful initiative has supported the preservation of the school, restoration of a courtyard and related landscape work.

The 1928 high school defines how a historic neighborhood school can remain a vital and integral part of the educational process and continue to serve surrounding historic neighborhoods. The school serves as an unusual model for how a community can successfully maintain and care for a historic building that defines their community and educates their children. This project presents the highest of examples for others to follow to save inner-city historic neighborhood schools.

The continued preservation of the Woodrow Wilson school has directly effected the historic districts that surround it by providing a high level of education that children can easily access and the community can be a part of. Since the renovation, there has been an increased interest in the school. This will likely encourage a new cycle of reinvestment in the community.

Council Members

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Description of Project

Project

Address: 100 S. Glasgow, Dallas, Texas 75214

Status

Local, state, national designation: The school is a Texas State Historical Landmark (1989) as well as a Dallas Landmark.

Architect: Roscoe P. Dewitt and Mark Lemmon, noted local architects

Date of construction: 1928

Date of renovation: The Juanita Antoine McCormick Courtyard was renovated in 1998. Date of previous renovation: A second gymnasium was added to the school in 1953. A fine arts wing was added in 1979.



Use

Size: Information not available
Student/teacher ratio: 16:1 (1,400 students)
Alternative uses: The school serves as the backdrop for a spring Broadway musical production and golf tournament. In 2001, the school was included in the Swiss Avenue Historic District's Tour of Homes.

Location

Historic district: The school is surrounded by numerous historic districts, including Swiss Avenue, Munger Place, Junius Heights and Lakewood. The Hollywood Heights/ Santa Monica Conservation District is also located nearby.

Walking distance

Bussing vs. walking: Located in the inner-city, students can easily walk to school rather than ride the bus.

Cost

Total renovation cost: Estimated \$1.5 million (restoration to historic building), Estimated \$1 million (mechanical updating), Estimated \$1.5 million (construction of new building)
Per square feet: Information not available
Per student: \$2,857.14

Source of funding

Local: The School District paid for 100% of the project.

State: No

Federal: No

Private: No

Tax credits: No

Cost estimates for new school construction: A new high school costs between 8 and 12 million dollars.

Problems and/or Threats

Close the school building: Numerous historic schools in the Dallas area have been closed due to deteriorating facility conditions. In 1976, the Dallas Independent School District proposed closing Woodrow Wilson High School. The Board of Education felt the building was too old and costly to maintain thus focused its efforts in support of constructing a new school in an outlying area. Following the

forgoing developments, parents initiated legal action against the District.

Raze existing building in order to build a new facility: While there were proposals to construct a new sprawl school, the School District did not suggest razing the existing building.

Policies promoting the construction of school sprawl in outlying areas:

Acreage standards: The current standard for a school has changed, including parking and playing field dimensions.

State funding biases: No

Inadequate government funding: No

Acceptance of donated sites for new school construction: No

Inflated school renovation cost estimates: No

Poor or bad renovation job: No

Resolution

Strategies or state/local polices utilized to achieve success story:

The Site Based Decision-Making Council (SBDM), which is comprised of neighborhood residents, devoted alumni and student groups, fought to retain the school.

Renovation Success

Undertakings

Classroom size and circulation: Information not available

State-of-the-art facility: Yes

Computer technology: In 1998, all science labs were renovated and additional computer labs were installed.

Meets education programmatic needs: Yes

Building codes: Up to date

Life safety codes

Asbestos: While there was very little asbestos present at the site, it was completely removed.

Fire safety: A new fire safety system was installed. In order to accommodate deaf and blind students, the school's system has blinking lights as well as a high pitch alarm.

Air quality: Ceilings were lowered to accommodate a new air conditioning and heating system.

Handicapped accessibility: In the 1970s, the school updated its ADA requirements.



Parking: Since there was ample parking available prior to the renovation, there was no change.

Playing fields: The school is currently working with the Park Board to get rights to an adjacent public park.

Awards Granted

Achievements/ Recognition: The school received a Texas Historical Marker and is listed in the American Institute of Architects Guide to Dallas Architecture.

Future Endeavors

Maintenance plans: The Facilities Committee will be responsible for any future maintenance plans.

Maintenance funding: Funding for future maintenance will be resolved at an upcoming bond issue hearing.

Description of Outcome

Community Response

Neighborhood stability: The school, which is described as one of the most beautiful historic buildings, defines the identity and tradition of East Dallas.

Safety: No change

Community reinvestment: Since the renovation, there has been an increased interest in the school. This will most likely encourage a new cycle of reinvestment in the community.

Economic growth: No change

Community Benefits

Students: In comparison to a sprawl school, this inner-city school has a multi-cultural population that exposes students to a rich diversity.

Increased academic achievement: The school has a high achievement rate.

Independence: No change.

Teachers: Many teachers are alumni of the school. They are very proud of the restoration work.

Parents: Parents of all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds are pleased that this urban public school was saved from abandonment.

Quotes

“Like many inner-city schools, Woodrow has a multi-cultural population which reflects the rich diversity of East Dallas. From millionaires to recent immigrants, Woodrow is a place for all children to learn, explore, and grow into contributing members of the new global community.”

—Report prepared for the National Trust for Historic Preservation

“It is a model of how historic school buildings can remain a viable part of inner-city neighborhoods.”

—Mr. W. Dwayne Jones, Executive Director of Preservation Dallas

“We consider Woodrow Wilson High School one of the key components of our neighborhood and community. It is a neighborhood treasure and a major part of our educational, architectural and cultural heritage.”

—Ms. Kara Kunkel, President of Junius Heights Homeowners Association



Exterior detail