The Historic Pine Bluffs High School Charette Report

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Historic Pine Bluffs High School
Community Design Charette

May 17, 2008
Pine Bluffs, Wyoming
The Historic Pine Bluffs High School Community Design Charette was planned and presented by the University of Wyoming American Studies Department, with the help of a grant from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund and with additional support from the Pine Bluffs Heritage Society and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Special thanks to Dr. James Rose of the Wyoming Community College Commission for volunteering his time to plan and help facilitate the charette.

Planning Committee:
Mary Humstone, University of Wyoming American Studies Program (Project Director)
Marcia Britton, Wyoming Humanities Council
Jenny Buddenborg, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Jack Hockersmith, Pine Bluffs Heritage Society
Tom Johnson, Wyoming Business Council
Jim Rose, Wyoming Community College Commission
Eric Sandeen, University of Wyoming American Studies Program
Barbara Talich, Pine Bluffs Heritage Society
Alvin Weiderspahn, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Jessie Nunn, University of Wyoming American Studies (Research Assistant)
Katherine Feiten, University of Wyoming American Studies (Intern)

Report prepared by:
Mary Humstone, Project Director
Kurt Dubbe, Architect, Dubbe-Moulder Architects
Tom Johnson, Financial Advisor, Wyoming Business Council
Introduction

The Historic Pine Bluffs High School in Pine Bluffs, Wyoming, was built in 1929 with subsequent additions built in 1947 and 1949. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is significant both for its prominence in the lives of the citizens of Pine Bluffs and as one of Wyoming’s best examples of progressive 1920s school architecture in the Classical Revival tradition. The school building possesses a high degree of historic integrity. It features a distinctive domed gymnasium-auditorium which is a source of community pride and has drawn the attention of architects and engineers throughout the region. The many attributes of this fine structure are addressed in detail in a report entitled “A Feasibility Study for the Rehabilitation of the Pine Bluffs High School, Pine Bluffs, Wyoming,” prepared by Long Hoeft Architects, August, 1995 (See Appendix D).

In 1996, the Historic Pine Bluffs High School was saved from demolition by the efforts of local citizens led by the Pine Bluffs Heritage Society. The Heritage Society secured a 50-year lease from Laramie County School District # 2, and assumed responsibility for management and maintenance of the building. The Heritage Society currently rents space to Laramie County Community College, Head Start, and Laramie County School District # 2, and to community groups for special events. Since 1996, the Heritage Society has repaired the roof, tuck pointed the entry, installed new sidewalks, curbs and gutters, replaced innumerable broken window panes and renovated the Little Theater. Although currently in use, the 23,000-square-foot building, which has eleven large classrooms in addition to the gymnasium and small theater, is underutilized and in need of a regular source of funding.

In 2007, the University of Wyoming American Studies Program received a grant from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund to develop a plan for the preservation and reuse of the Historic Pine Bluffs High School, using the “charette” design process which brings together community members and outside experts in an intensive 1-day workshop. The charette is a dynamic process in which participants are actively engaged in solving design problems.
The charette was held on May 17, 2008. Forty-six people attended, 33 community members and 13 “resource people” who were invited to help the community with ideas for new uses, design solutions and sources of funding (see List of Participants, Appendix A). The charette addressed issues such as community needs, allocation of space, use of the second floor, sources of funding and code requirements, as well as the role of the building as a historic and cultural asset in Pine Bluffs.

The goals of the charette were to:

- Explore possible uses for the Historic Pine Bluffs High School
- Determine the best and most likely uses
- Sketch out how the new uses would fit in the school and what upgrades would be needed to accommodate them
- Estimate the expenses and potential income
- Identify sources of funding for rehabilitation

At the start of the day-long charette, participants talked about what the school meant to them, as well as the role the building could play in the future of the community. Following a tour of the building, participants broke into small groups to brainstorm community needs and how those could be accommodated in a renovated Pine Bluffs High School. Ideas ranged from offices for professionals, government programs or community organizations to health services and fitness programs. The possibility of converting the second floor for housing or office use was explored by several groups. The importance of the building, especially the gymnasium, for large community gatherings, conferences and other events was also noted (see Brainstorming of Potential Uses, Appendix B).

Following lunch in the gymnasium, participants worked on a plan for the future use of the building, including necessary improvements to accommodate new uses, opportunities for funding and next steps.

The following sections of the report summarize the work done at the charette. The Appendix includes detailed notes taken at the meeting, as well as useful supplemental information.
Why the Historic Pine Bluffs High School Is Important to the Community

Participants at the charrette were given note cards and asked to write a few sentences about what the Historic Pine Bluffs High School means to them. Many participants spoke of memories of their own experiences attending school here or that of their parents, children, brothers and sisters. “Third generation graduate – I still hear the greetings in the hallways,” wrote one, and “Just walking through this school brings back so many good memories,” said another.

Many wrote of the beautiful architecture and craftsmanship of the building, and its importance as a landmark in the town of Pine Bluffs. “The Old School is one of the last old buildings left. We need to keep something to remember.” “This building is a visual reminder and testament to the community values of striving for excellence, belief in architectural values of strength and permanence, belief in the importance of arts and sports to a well rounded education.” Many noted the unique design of the gymnasium’s roof, as well as its great acoustics and natural light.

Others noted the importance of the Historic Pine Bluffs High School as a community gathering place and place for events, from graduations and high school proms to musical performances, polka dances and funerals. No other place in town can fill this need. Stewardship of public resources was also a theme, and the sense of pride that comes from taking care of something and handing it down to the next generation.

Perhaps the following quote best describes the intangible values of the building:

The feel – this is one of those areas difficult to describe. But it was the feeling that people belonged here. As I walked through the building, I could feel the memories of time past. The question that flooded my mind was this: how do we maintain the “feel” in the renovation? When people walk in, no matter what the purpose, they must feel like they “belong.”
Features of the Building and Architectural Parameters

As mentioned above, most participants at the charette praised the Historic Pine Bluffs High School for its architecture, especially the handsome exterior, large classrooms, high ceilings and generous windows. Some of the architectural features that enhance the National Register-listed historic building also provide challenges in adapting it for contemporary uses. These features were discussed during the charette and include the following:

- **Extensive windows** provide abundant natural light and ventilation and great views, particularly from the second floor. (It was noted that the entire charette took place without the use of electric lighting.) The historic windows are a major character-defining feature of the building. **Challenge:** Historic steel windows are thermally inefficient.

- **Massive exterior walls** with excellent proportion and massing and unique brickwork provide a durable, beautiful and very pleasing exterior. The masonry is a very important character-defining feature of the building. **Challenge:** Repairing/replacing older masonry work while maintaining historic integrity in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties.*

- **The gymnasium** with its unique domed roof provides an attractive, naturally lighted, large assembly or activities area. In its design and engineering, the gymnasium roof is the only one of its type in Wyoming and possibly the region. The gymnasium is popular for community events and dances including weddings and proms. The gymnasium, and most notably the roof system, is a very important character-defining feature. **Challenge:** 1) Repairing/maintaining the unique roof system while maintaining historic integrity in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards;* 2) current interior configuration provides limited access to mezzanine level due to several level changes and barriers.

“I value the historic nature of the building – especially the gym.”

“The halls and classrooms have a welcome and comforting scale. There is so much natural light and it seems like an ideal learning environment”
• **Diversity of spaces**, both large and small, including classrooms and assembly areas, provides opportunities for multiple use. **Challenge:** Limited future expansion potential; insufficient access and egress.

• **Vaulted ceilings** in classrooms and the Little Theatre are a unique design and construction feature. **Challenge:** Ceiling configuration could present challenges when incorporating new mechanical and electrical systems (if needed).

• **Passive energy features**, especially the massive exterior masonry walls, create a stable interior environment with respect to heat loss/gain, natural ventilation, etc. **Challenge:** Difficult to modify for future mechanical and electrical systems, although the overall mass of the building suggests that fairly simple and efficient systems could be implemented depending on future use and occupancy.

• **Infrastructure configuration** is a unique design and construction feature with perimeter chase for systems access. Existing systems are in place. **Challenge:** Existing systems may be outdated and inefficient, requiring modification and/or replacement depending on future use. Perimeter systems access may present challenges for future upgrading.
Possible Uses for the Historic Pine Bluffs High School

The Community Design Charette held at the Historic Pine Bluffs High School solicited many ideas for possible future use of the structure. Attendees actively participated in an engaged design exercise intended to evaluate existing conditions, identify possible future uses, and determine the best and most likely use for the Historic Pine Bluffs High School.

Identified possible future uses included, but were not limited to:

- Retain Laramie County Community College (LCCC) and Laramie County School District as anchors
- Mixed use: community service (first floor), housing and/or professional offices (second floor)
- Medical offices for University of Wyoming Clinic
- Combination of non-profit and commercial leases
- Community arts center
- Conference center
- Event center for receptions, reunions, etc
- Additional facility for town/county offices such as recreation department, administrative offices
- Workforce development offices
- Education classrooms and distance learning center (UW, LCCC, others)

(For the complete list of suggested uses, see Appendix B)

Note: Any future use will require addressing items such as structural stabilization, mechanical and electrical systems upgrades, data networking infrastructure upgrades, and current building and energy code compliance. If housing (including the preparation of food) is considered as a possible future use, careful consideration must be given to code compliance for life safety and egress planning above and beyond day use only. An elevator will most likely be required for second floor access regardless of future use.
Best and Most Likely Uses

Based on our initial evaluation, it is our opinion that the best and most likely use for the Historic Pine Bluffs High School facility is to maintain classroom and office use, including continued and enhanced association with Laramie County Community College and recruitment of additional institutional users (such as University of Wyoming) as facility anchors. An important consideration is to maintain a high degree of flexibility and adaptability when considering future uses. Additional uses must be compatible with existing tenants and should not include users that will require investment of significant funds for specialty features that may require dramatic modification of the existing conditions and potentially compromise the historic fabric of the structure. Many potential future uses have been identified that would be compatible with existing uses such as classrooms, offices, meeting spaces, studio space and assembly areas.

Upgrades Needed to Accommodate New Uses

The overall goals of rehabilitating the Historic Pine Bluffs High School are to reduce future operating expenses, increase energy efficiency, increase accessibility and accommodate new uses, while preserving the character-defining architectural features that qualify the building for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Specific objectives are to:

1. Improve building performance through new and improved mechanical and electrical systems;
2. Improve thermal performance through increased insulation, improved roof system, and improved exterior door and window performance;
3. Improve accessibility and life safety for all occupants by incorporating current building codes for existing buildings;
4. Improve structural integrity by incorporating new building structure stabilization including seismic upgrades; and
5. Reduce long term maintenance needs by addressing deferred maintenance and developing a periodic maintenance program to avoid major repair projects in the future.
Any proposed upgrades and modifications must be evaluated for their potential to impact the existing historic fabric and unique character-defining features of the building as outlined above. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties provide guidance for sensitive rehabilitation of historic buildings, and these guidelines should be followed for any proposed upgrades or modifications. The latest practices in energy-efficient building (“Green Building”) should also be incorporated into the rehabilitation. For example, the windows are a major character-defining feature of the building and should not be replaced. Windows are a factor in overall thermal performance, but are relatively insignificant compared to the roof. Removable storm windows do not destroy the character-defining features of the windows, and help with thermal performance. Removing the existing windows is a non-reversible solution (see Secretary of the Interiors Standards) that is not justified in terms of energy efficiency, which can be gained through other measures.

The existing building layout will accommodate future classroom and office uses without major modification. Any future use would most likely require remedial repair and minor architectural and cosmetic modification. However, the “big ticket” rehabilitation items would include such upgrades as:

- **New mechanical and electrical systems** to increase efficiency and reduce operation and maintenance costs. Design of systems will depend on future use and occupancy and can only be determined after a detailed assessment of the existing building conditions and future needs conducted by a professional mechanical engineer (estimated cost to remove deficient existing mechanical and electrical systems, and replace with basic new systems: $350,000).

- **New data network infrastructure** (estimated cost to install new basic data network infrastructure: $100,000).

- Evaluation and implementation of **structural stabilization** (roof, foundations, exterior and interior walls, floor systems), including new elevator shaft, modifications to stairs, seismic upgrades, etc. (estimated cost to evaluate and implement structural stabilization: $350,000).

- **Exterior envelope upgrade** (roof, exterior walls, exterior windows and doors), and **energy audit** to determine the most effective solutions for improved performance. This would include new insulation, repair (not replacement) of existing windows, introduction of new energy-efficient removable storm windows, overall masonry repair and clean-up, roof repair, gymnasium skylight repair or replacement in-kind, repair of existing exterior doors with new weatherstripping, and general overall exterior building
clean-up and repair (estimate to evaluate and upgrade thermal performance of exterior envelope: $400,000).

- Evaluation and implementation of current **building code compliance** (access and egress, fire suppression, ADA compliance). This may include such items as additional ADA restrooms at both floors, modification of existing stairs for code compliance, and installation of an elevator (estimated cost to evaluate and implement code compliant upgrades: $150,000; cost includes elevator ($60,000), ADA restrooms ($30,000), upgrade existing stairs ($30,000), widen select egress doors if needed ($5,000), sprinkler system ($25,000).

- **Site development** including parking, ADA access, emergency access, and landscaping (estimated cost for site development: $100,000).

- **Overall clean-up, repair**, repainting, new floor, wall and ceiling finishes as required, *depending on future use* ($75,000). Note: This is a very difficult number to predict without being certain of the specific future uses.

“This building lifts my spirits…it represents optimism, thoughtfulness, quality design, craftsmanship and many people unknown to me who walked its halls, played and danced in the gym, taught and learned. It’s a place where important things happened and continue to happen.”
## Summary of Estimated Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanical and electrical systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data network infrastructure</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structural stabilization</td>
<td>350,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exterior envelope</td>
<td>400,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessibility and code compliance</td>
<td>150,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall clean-up</td>
<td>75,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site development</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>10% Contingency</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ESTIMATE</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,677,500</strong></td>
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Please note that this is an **estimate only** and should be considered for planning purposes only. These figures are based solely on a single brief site visit to observe visible existing conditions. This estimate does not include any additional items not listed, and may vary depending on solicitation of actual proposals or bids from qualified building contractors. This estimate does not include any professional architectural and/or engineering fees that may be required to complete the work outlined, and does not include any non-fixed items such as furniture, fixtures and equipment, and any special use items unique to the proposed future use.
Conceptual Plans

The existing building layout lends itself very nicely to the identified best and most likely use as classrooms/offices and meeting/assembly areas. With this in mind, the most significant architectural impact would most likely occur where new ADA-compliant restrooms, and modified stairs and elevator are located. Potential locations for these are noted in the floor plans below.
Business Plan

The business plan for the Historic Pine Bluffs High school is based on operating budgets from the past 10 years. At the charrette, Wyoming Business Council Southeast Regional Director Tom Johnson stated that after review of the operating reports of the Pine Bluffs Heritage Society, and based on his experience with other, similar communities, he was confident that the building could be self-sustaining in the future. Johnson prepared the following summary of current and 5-year profit and loss projections.
## PINE BLUFFS SCHOOL

### Current & 5 Year Profit & Loss Projections

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<th>Income</th>
<th>Current Year</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
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<td>Reimb. From Cheyenne</td>
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<td>$10</td>
<td>$10</td>
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<td><strong>$32,657</strong></td>
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### Expense:

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<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
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<td>$8,601</td>
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### Net Income

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<td></td>
<td>$1,211</td>
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### Assumptions

1. Current income levels will remain the same, which implies LCCC & school district remains committed partner
2. Expenses will rise at 2% annually
3. Base Year Financial Statement are based on 2007 year end financial statements
Next Steps

It was determined that the Pine Bluffs Heritage Society, with assistance from the UW American Studies Program, the Wyoming Business Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation should proceed as follows.

- Form a Joint Powers Board (any combination of School District, City, County, Laramie County Community College).
- Request formal transfer of the Historic Pine Bluffs High School from Laramie County SD#2 to the Joint Powers Board.
- Prepare an application to the Community Facilities Grant Fund (December 1 deadline) for a grant to complete rehabilitation work as recommended in this report, in order to more efficiently use the building for educational purposes, youth services and as a community gathering space, as well as enhancing the historic character of the community of Pine Bluffs.
- Market space in the building to public and private entities

“If you could take this building and move it to our campus, I’d do it in a second.” (Darrel Hammond, President, LCCC)

Appendix

A. List of Participants
B. Brainstorming of Potential Uses (from team breakout sessions)
C. Copy of Notecards
## APPENDIX A: List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acheson</td>
<td>Sherry</td>
<td>Laramie County Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Pine Bluffs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blumenshine</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>Preservationist (Riverton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bovee</td>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britton</td>
<td>Marcia</td>
<td>Wyoming Humanities Council</td>
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<td>Buddenborg</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>National Trust for Historic Preservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culek</td>
<td>John</td>
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<td>Conger</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
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<td>Crea</td>
<td>Maureen</td>
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<td>Curtis</td>
<td>Gail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daracie</td>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Wyoming School Facilities Commission</td>
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<td>Dubbe</td>
<td>Kurt</td>
<td>Dubbe-Moulder Architects</td>
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<td>Filkins</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Pine Bluffs</td>
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<td>Todd</td>
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<td>Richard</td>
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<td>Gieber</td>
<td>Clarence “Bub”</td>
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BRAINSTORMING OF POTENTIAL USES

Team 1—Ideas for Uses

- Children’s Theatre (Movies, Guest Performers, Drama Education)
- Community Needs Facility (e.g. Food Pantry, Thrift Shop)
- Cosmetology Facility/School
- Massage Therapy School
- Shipping Center
- Local Offices for 4-H, Fair, Scouts
- Gateways Needy Animals Office
- Law Office
- Living Quarters Upstairs
- Print Shop Capabilities
- Vocational Training (Electronics)
- Business Incubator Space
- Flower Shop
- Youth (not limited to) Dances
- Educational Displays/Museum
- Health Center/Spa/Tanning
- Dance/Gymnastics/Arts Facility
- Music School, Studio and Recitals

Team 2—Ideas for Uses

- Senior Activities
- Daycare Option
- Community Skills Center: e.g. Cooking, Automotive Training, Child Parenting Skills, Gardening (community members sharing their skills)
- Youth Center
- Dance Studio (Classes and Dance Space for Modern/Ballroom Dancing)
- Community Gathering Area
- Acting/Arts/Music School
- Housing: Possibilities include Low Income, Loft-type, Rental Space, Apartment, Senior, Combination Housing/Work Studio Space, Teacher Residences
- Office Space: Alternative Energy (Perceived Need)
- Mixed Use (Community Use on Lower Level, Business Use Upstairs)
- Events (Receptions, Reunions, Parties)
- Planetarium
- Expanded Archeological Museum
Team 3—Ideas for Uses

- Wind Farm Education (space for training)
- County Offices
- Professional Offices
- Eastern Laramie County Health Services Center (Health and Other Services)
- Private Childcare Facility
- Rental or Condominium Housing/Lofts
- Arts School

Team 4—Ideas for Uses

- Arts (Painting Studios, Music Studios, Economic/Art, Audition Spaces, Gallery)
- Evening Classes/Adult Education
- Resource Centers
- Weekly Seminars
- Head Start
- Music
- Tri-County (or 3-state?) Training Center for Archives and History; Genealogy
- Corporate Retreat Center
- Conferences and Events
- Strengthen Bond with LCCC and UW
- Heath (Fitness) Center
- Vo-tech School with Dorms

Distillation of Team Brainstorming

- Compatible Uses for Pine Bluffs: Retail Downtown, Offices/Classrooms in Old Pine Bluffs High School
- Anchors are LCCC and School District: need to keep them
- Consider Mixed Use with Community Service (1st Floor) and Housing (2nd Floor); or Offices (2nd Floor)
- Medical Offices for UW Clinic (Current Facility is Unsatisfactory)
- Combination of nonprofit and commercial leases (need to consider compatibility; possibility of using tax credits if there is a for-profit component)
- Arts/Education
- Conference Center
- Receptions, Reunions
- Recreation Department (town offices, programs)
- Workforce Development
- Need to Avoid Financial Burden on School District
- Save Potential for future classroom use
Grad. 1945 2 older sisters prev
exdent teachers staf - bldng
accomades all local functions
my wife ruled here as sec'try
for 7 yr, here family graduated 6 chil

now it has a lot flottom from
City for meeting space
remun inteme-

... i value the historic nature of this
... building - especially the gym which
... used to described as being "in style
... in Easter Egg!"

... the cultural venues are important -
... plays - music, present ions (woods tea co)
... quilt shows, etc.
... can be a place for meetings such as
today's event.

... if we destroy our past we shall have
... no future!!
I feel this is a wonderful well built building. The biggest mistake was not incorporating it when the need arose, as was desired. The community is very decided about the facility, and veryopposing. Maybe it could be incorporated when the new school is built.

PBN is a public asset, Resource, equity having a sense of responsibility, being a good steward of public resources.
Graduate from this building.

Spend a lot of time keeping the building operational which gives me a great sense of pride to see the building used.

Have been a member of the society since its beginning. We have a daughter that graduated from this school. We believe the building needs to be preserved for the future.

For Continuing Education for our community.

GED needs to be offered so students don't have to go to cheaper ones.

To offer Places for Receptions & Dances.
Have presented several wonderful musicals here in the little theater.

I have taken several MCC classes here. Have attended several dance/drama here. Graduation ceremonies were here.

No "brownjings" here—however as a cultural tourist in my private life.

Such historical readings as this school provides context as to what makes this community a living place. It shows why you are here, what you value, why I should visit. I learned about Pink Boots as a whole.

I hope we can find a use for this school, so more generations can enjoy it. Maybe a private school, art, or lofts. An acting or music school? People from both here may come out for this or a taste of the West. I remember when there was a dude ranch, a music school in Truckee, etc.
Several years ago we lost the
Pastime Theater, and the old high school is
now one of the last things buildings left.
We need to keep something to
remember. I know that the people
in town are pretty new and perhaps 30 years
and the buildings are old but I think
that if they are refurbishable we need
to do what we can to keep them
around and useable.

I had the privilege to sing at an Eastern
Star meeting in the gym. Also I sang at
the funeral of a very dear friend that was held
in the gym. The acoustics are incredible. I
did not need a microphone either time.
I have cried through three graduations. Recently I
attended a program on Raptors that was presented
for young children. In short, there are not words
enough to cover the function and need for the whole
school.

For a place to meet
and for children to
have a place to meet
I'm here since 1947 and a 1950 graduate. I belong to the Heritage Society and a strong desire to keep this building and find good uses for it, without complete changes. We have lost so many good old buildings due to destruction. I have helped clean, paint, scrub, etc., to keep it up and admire doing it. Lots of memories and pride!!

We've used this building in the past for our Lamar County Homemaker's events. I would like to see a small room available to be used for different band playing events in this community easily accessible to older people.

I have no connection to Pine Bluffs High School. However, the grade school I went to in Aurora (as well as my parents & grandparents) was demolished a couple of years ago because we could not come up with a use for it. I hope it does not happen here too!
Adult/Continuing Ed
Group Meetings/Functions - Weddings,
Senior Housing w/Activity Center

I am new to this building but
the feelings that this building evoke
are very different from my hometown
school. The halls and classrooms
have a welcoming and comfortable
scale. There is so much natural
light and it seems like an ideal
learning environment.

Clarence Gither
I was the custodian for
of this building from 1975 to
1988—The maintenance was
no more for me, it was also
involved with The New Gym
and drove a bus in later years.
It is and was the best Bld.
That school Dist # 2 had and
It still is as far as I'm
corned all 5 of our Children.
This building is a visual reminder of:
- Testament to the community values of striving for excellence
- Belief in architectural strength and permanence
- Belief in the importance of Arts and Sports to a well-rounded education
- Numerous proms and events even after school closed
- Limited personal memories but my husband has many!

This building lifts my spirits when I drive into Pine Bluffs and see it standing here - it represents optimism, thoughtfulness, quality design, craftsmanship and many people unknown to me who walked its halls, played and danced in the gym, taught and learned. It is a place where important things happened and continue to happen.

Eugene Groves, the original architect, has 10 buildings on CSU campus.

My kids are 4th generation grads of this bldg.

The dome has been likened to old Mormon tabernacle.

Bldg. is the most significant one left in Pine Bluffs by far.
PBITS - Pine Bluffs Heritage Society

In my estimation, a good blog that should not go to waste could have continued as a school with an addition for computing, a little closer to the disabled students, teachers, grandparent's etc.

Connect in - little theatre where we're meeting and programs be cooperation of EDCAC.

But... an important factor - the school where I went has been torn

He who knows only his own generation is a "jock"

Don't also I thought and when I went back to visit a new school didn't have nice big windows and good natural light. As a kid, going to that parent show and by the window or just sitting at my desk, I could see the sky and clouds.... This was part of my survival. In school they want people to see what a school was like and to enjoy how it was constructed.

Ben Williams

Cultural Events:

Polka Dance yearly or bi-annual
Dance Lessons 3rd contests for younger students or adults. Hopefully in the future!
Being co-ordinator for the Polka Dance the past 3 years. I'm interested in continuing this fun event and promoting more interest of young participants to continue this lively fun music.
I did not grow up here or go to school but both of my daughters did. They both have good memories of this school and I like to see it used. Some of the uses are already in place like the 2002 Outreach, Headstart & the Girl Scouts. With work the second floor could be used as office space; handicapped restroom and an elevator would make this an asset to the community.

Ann Landen (Torrington HS)  
grad

* 2 out of 3 of my children attended classes here

* Memories - Band concerts, Jr./Sr. Academic Awards night 
  Agricultural events, track meets, etc.

I enjoy history and appreciate the vision that the original designers had in mind.

While working on the historic schools project at UW, I fell in love with Eastern Laramie County. When my parents came to visit I actually took them on a tour of historic schools to Pine Bluffs and Afton to look at historic schools.
This building is built very steadily unlike things that are built today.

I saw so many memories of my children's attendance here. It is a place with lots of storage. The egg-shaped dome is like no other west of the Mississippi. The heritage holds many activities but community involvement is scarce.

In this this away world

If it is a sin to tear down anything in a small town such as Pine Bluffs, Wyo., visitors that tour the bldg are amazed at the beauty of the structure.

Sylvia Sayers
Pine Bluffs

- Architectural beauty

- Pine Bluffs icon

- Integral piece of Pine Bluffs history and growth

- An example of an important historic resource not only to the city of Pine Bluffs but to the state of Wyoming as well.
My first connection to the high school was when I walked in to review the working of Jersey City Community College. I noticed various things:

- The gymnasium - What a roof! This has to be preserved somehow.

- Classrooms - The big windows, the light shining in. Of this building is renovated, the big windows and the view must stay.

The feel - This is one of those areas difficult to describe. But it was the feeling that people belong here. As I walked through the building, I could feel the memories of time past. The question that flooded my mind was this: How do we maintain the "feel" in the renovation. When people walk in - no matter what the purpose - they must feel like they "belong."
Memory: "My 1st Connection w/school attending Art Council Events."

- Having the privilege of
- (Also) working w/ Missoula Children's Theatre, helping by accompanying

I have always felt that we have an obligation as members of a community to contribute all we can by any means - be it working w/a cause - helping.

Promote positive things that encourage others to be motivated to also contribute to the success of a community.

It brings a sense of pride and makes me feel good.
- Importance

- Historic buildings helped evoke memories of the stories of Wyoming communities, particularly Pine Bluffs in this case.

- Preservation of the Pine Bluffs school provides a positive model for other Wyoming communities.

- Preservation projects foster pride in all community members of all ages.

- Historic buildings link the past to the present, particularly for youth in the community.

- Preservation projects, particularly regarding schools, draw communities together in unified, caring efforts.
... Archard Forsyth

Watching my two brothers
grow up. Both of them got
up when I was small and
about Programs.

More community things
Going on here. Nothing
On the Programs. That my brother
Went to High School. I had
to go to Cheyenne Special.Ed.

In Cheyenne Wyoming. Because
they didn't have special
in Mom and I live. We drove back from
Cheyenne. That's all.
Personal reference to meaning of ABHS

- received good basic education
- wonderful growing & maturing base

definitely should be restored / updated to facilitate needs of large groups of people
  - bathrooms
  - handicap facilities are needed

agree to interesting plan lay-out
big question: how to finance and keep it
The building represents:
Bridge past to future

2. Places
   a. By community
   b. Opportunity to develop a center of cultural activities
   c. Supplement to town's museum

When first seen a few months ago, the building reminded me of my HS in Illinois, which unfortunately was torn down. In that, I realized the value of memories.
3rd generation graduate – I still hear the greetings in the hallways.

special family get-togethers

my sister’ funeral here as no church big enough

ELCC classes here

friends & family memorial money in so many of the upgrades of the bldg

(over)

This is such a good sturdy bldg & has the amenities to be used in so many ways. It would be unforgivable to ever rid the town of this beautiful historic landmark.
1) Pine Bluffs is of such architectural distinction that it should serve as an anchor to the community. It has the potential to be a great contributor and point of pride for Pine Bluffs, perhaps even attaining regional or national recognition.

2) Pine Bluffs community can unify the community all be a vehicle to service delivery, community events, economic development.

Plus it may create a greater awareness of the unique economic and social value of historic (and newly old) buildings that give a community charm and highlight its unique history and heritage. These ideas have tangible civic, cultural and economic benefits.
This school is important to me because my parents, my brother, and I all graduated from here. It was such a well-built, unusually designed building (especially the gym, with its unique dome ceiling). I have enjoyed having such annual alumni and guest hosts the past few years. I would hope that somehow the roof that has been built between saving this building and doing it right can be mended. It has mended some with times, I hope to continue with this mending process. Just walking through this school brings back so many good memories.
A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE

PINE BLUFFS HIGH SCHOOL
PINE BLUFFS, WYOMING

LONG HOEFT ARCHITECTS
AUGUST 1995
A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE
REHABILITATION OF THE

PINE BLUFFS HIGH SCHOOL
PINE BLUFFS, WYOMING

A STUDY FOR
SAVE OUR SCHOOL
PINE BLUFFS, WYOMING

SUPPORTED BY GRANT FROM
THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

LONG HOEFT ARCHITECTS
P.O. BOX 1847, 921 ROSE STREET
GEORGETOWN, COLORADO 80444
TEL (303) 569-2456
FAX (303) 893-9516
INTRODUCTION

The field work for this assessment of the Pine Bluffs High School was accomplished on the seventeenth of August, 1953, by Gary Long and Kahlees Hoefl of Long Hoefl Architects and Don Scarbary of Capstone Construction Company. The assessment is funded by a grant from the Preservation Services Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The study is a test of the premise held by a significant number of Pine Bluffs school constituents that the 1929 High School offers assets that would be difficult to obtain in new construction, and that rehabilitation for present and future educational needs is both feasible and economical.

The assessment includes the following:

Context.
Description of the building and a statement of its architectural significance.
Assets and liabilities of classrooms and support facilities for the learning environment.
Analysis of deficiencies regarding life safety, environmental controls, and accessibility.
Hypothetical rehabilitation program.
Summary conclusions.

CONTEXT

Pine Bluffs is a small Wyoming farming and ranching town forty miles east of Cheyenne on I-70. The town is stable in population, in the last forty years staying close to 1,000 residents. The seven-through-twelve student population is also stable, ranging downward in number. The 1960s averaged 228 students in this group, the 1970s 210, the 1980s 154, and the 1990s 169.

A single campus site contains educational buildings, some shared, serving elementary through high school students. The elementary, junior high, and gym-industrial arts facilities are of recent construction. The high school is older, with original construction in 1929, expanded in 1947 and 1948.

In 1994, town and district voters approved a bond issue which, for Pine Bluffs, included a new 7-12, 300 student capacity facility that would be either (A) an all new building or (B) a renovated existing high school with new addition. No mention was made of demolition of the existing high school should a wholly new school be constructed.

With counsel from architect Gordon/South Group of Casper and after substantial deliberation, the school district trustees have come to favor a wholly new school and demolition of the historic high school. A group informally designated Save Our School (S.O.S.) has formed to attempt preservation of the old high school, preferably in continued use as a school with option B renovation. To this end S.O.S. has filed for judicial review of the School Board's decisions.

Published early estimates by the architect of the cost of option A—new and option B—renovation-addition were almost the same: 6.4 million for option A and 6.3 million for option B. Jim Thomas of Gordon/South recommended option A, however, due primarily to the existing building's perceived lack of flexibility in accommodating present and future instructional technology. At sharp issue is the judgement of value of the existing high school, and what course provides the best environment for the education of Pine Bluffs' students.
Upper. Pine Bluffs High School, from the 1939 yearbook.
BUILDING DESCRIPTION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Exterior
The front section of the 1929 high school is two stories, nominally flat-roofed with parapet
surround, and symmetrical in form, plan, and decoration about a western entry axis. The rear
section of the building is an oval-domed auditorium flanked on either side with balconies over
single story classrooms. The stage-house of the auditorium terminates the building entry axis.
The building is constructed low to the ground with but two risers to the first floor from entry
walks.

Additional single-story classrooms added in 1947 and 1949 extend to the east behind and
around the stage. The 1929 original school contains approximately 20,900 square feet. The
later additions contain 9,400 square feet for a total of 26,300 square feet (these areas are taken
from rough available information and are indeed approximate).

The exterior of the building is multicolored brick with cast-stone trim. The front-east facade
is divided into three bays by slightly projecting the central bay, which includes the entry
portal. The portal is framed in cast-stone with lintel incised with the letters HIGH
SCHOOL. The central bay is slightly higher than the side bays, and is now capped with wood
shingles. It originally was capped with red tile. All facades are dominated by large window
panels subdivided with steel mullions and muntins. Brickwork and stonework, in comparison
with available original drawings, appear unchanged from original construction.

The original north and south side elevations are identical. Exit doors within slightly projected
bays mark the transition from the two-story classroom front to the single-story classrooms
flanking the auditorium. The higher stage loft at the west end of the auditorium completes
the original composition. The rise of the auditorium is visible beyond and above the flanking
classrooms.

The 1947 and 1949 single-story additions carry beyond and around the stage loft. The order
and articulation of the original construction is lost in these additions. Though the brickwork is
similar, stone trim is deleted. Windows are residential in scale and most have been replaced
with contemporary units. Parapets are also deleted. A bay left open on the south side for coal
delivery back to the boiler room under the stage has been filled in recently, with outside
wall framing covered with wood siding.

All roofs, including that of the auditorium, appear to have been covered with a urethane foam
application for both insulation and weatherproofing purposes. The building is well-protected
with the possible exception of the auditorium roof. Leaks have been reported but evidence was
not noted. However, the additional thickness of the foam reduces the effectiveness of the
skylight curbs. The ingenious detail for weeping any water penetration to the outside of the
skylights might have been compromised.

Plan
The entry axis which penetrates visually straight through to the stage is the organizing force
of the original plan. A crossing hall way to side stairs and side exits joins four classrooms and
library on the second floor to the six classrooms and entry offices on the ground floor. The
auditorium entry is just across the crossing hallway from the front door.

The two open stairs to south and north of the main entry rise to landings which extend to serve
men and women's restrooms, and extend further to the balcony level of the auditorium. The
balconies at their far ends are served by stairs dropping to stage level, then down to west exits.
The 1947 and 1949 classrooms are reached through hallway extensions of the auditorium east exits. Plan illustrations are included in this report for the 1929 construction, taken from the architect’s original drawings. Plan illustrations are not provided for later construction because drawings have not been located.

Structure
Foundations are concrete footings and stem walls. A concrete boxed pipe tunnel is formed around the perimeter and down the center axis of the original building. The first floor is otherwise slab on grade.

Masonry walls with steel lintels over openings carry the second floor structure and the roof. The second floor and the roof are steel bar-joint construction with concrete topping slabs.

The ovular dome of the auditorium is an inventive combination of single curvature concrete vaulting supported by bar-joints, with bold contained by concrete compression and tension rings. The high compression ring supports a traditional bar-joint roof punctuated by extensive skylighting. The mid-level and base tension rings support the radial sets of bar-joints. The base ring is arched over the stage proscenium. The bar-joints support a wire-and-cardboard formwork sheet for the concrete. The bar-joint, formwork, and concrete structure is common throughout, but is exposed to view only in the auditorium. Auditorium lighting is original and equally inventive, with lights regularly spaced around the high and mid rings.

Much of the foregoing structural description is derived from the original drawings with some field confirmation. The 1947-1949 construction is known only by surface observation. These additions appear to be more lightweight frame construction with exterior masonry bearing walls. Dropped ceilings concealed original ceiling surfaces.

Interior materials
Floors are concrete, either carpeted or painted. The auditorium floor is maple wood, a legacy of the earlier combined use of the space as a gymnasium. The stage is wood on wood structure above a lower concrete floor, the space between forming a below-stage storage area. Stairs are concrete, painted. Wall bases are painted concrete which wrap up against the masonry partitions and bearing walls of the 1929 construction.

Interior walls and partitions are probably masonry tile, fully plastered and painted. The original construction provided deep walls between classrooms to accommodate closets, bookshelves, and other storage.

Ceilings are most unusual in original classrooms. Celotex panels, a material still marketed by the same name, are suspended below the bar-joint structure on wood furring strips to form a slight barrel vault, with a pattern of celotex battens covering the joints. Other ceilings of the 1929 construction are traditional plasterwork. The ceilings of the 1940s and later construction are a mix of lay-in ceilings, plaster, and gypsum board.

Electrical
The original system was placed in conduit and over the years has been regularly brought up to contemporary code. It is reported to be safe, and to be presently adequate to the tasks served. Most sources in classrooms and other areas originally designed for incandescent lights have for the most part been converted to fluorescent fixtures and lamps. Most of this work appears to have been accomplished as an element of the late 1940s work. In some classrooms a rather unique bare bulb U lamp star burst centered on the original junction box continues in use. Noted before, the lighting in the auditorium is in its original condition, and, though the painted vines and flowers that once joined the lights are almost obscured by later painting, the
original design and construction is extraordinary.

Mechanical
The original heating system remains in place: a central steam boiler with two pipe distribution system to room radiators. The only other element of the system, also remaining, is a central fan and heat-exchanger in the boiler room for auditorium heating. A closed cycle of return from four locations near the floor and supply from two locations from towers near either side of the stage. The only significant modification to the steam system is the recent installation of individual radiator thermostatic valves reported to have significantly improved the system.

Ventilation is by operable sash. Classroom windows are fitted with lower hopper sash and upper awning sash. Two rotary ceiling exhaust hoods exhaust the auditorium, but the space is reportedly quite hot at times from the heat generated by those gathered and by skylight solar penetration.

One window air-conditioner is installed in the administrative space. The masonry mass of the school inhibits quick afternoon thermal build-up in spring and fall. Blinds are used on classroom windows to control sun penetration.

Architectural Significance Opinion
Pine Bluffs High School is a fine example of progressive 1920s school architecture, with interior structural and finishing detailing that is unique.

The style of the school is marked in its symmetry, proportion, and decorative detail as of the classical tradition, and is common to the expectations of the late 1920s for schools. The multi-colored brickwork and absence of cornice work is also typical. It is exemplary of 1920s masonry design and construction. The large steel-glazed window panels were state-of-the-art technology in providing good natural lighting and ventilation for an optimum learning environment.

The auditorium is the distinctive element of the complex. The architect, Eugene Groves, was regionally prominent as an inventive designer of concrete structures. The auditorium is a sterling demonstration of his skill. The dome is a fine exhibit of the structural engineer’s ability to span great spaces with minimal material. The richness of the tension of the dome punctuated with overhead skylights is visually arresting.

In lesser ways the school is also special. The subtle barrel vaulting of the classrooms, achieved with a common Celotex material, lifts the spirit of the classroom, and, with the batten cover patterning of the joints, provides detail of a human dimension that is memorable.

The concrete base to the walls is also special. It is strong, and permanent, and, in its low-maintenance function, is example for students of environment that is meant to last.

Of like kind is the curious and imaginative detail of the toilet room partitions. The bracing for the partitions and their panel construction is the mark of a creative designer who contributed something of worth for later generations to consider. The lesson for learning is meaningful. Even the most mundane function for human requirement can be subject for the artist.
Pine Bluffs High School Library from the yearbook 1931 and in 1975.
The little theatre from the 1935 yearbook and in 1995.
EDUCATIONAL ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Pine Bluffs was proud of its new 1929 school. From a news article at the time: “The new high school building is one of the most modern in Wyoming. It excels in workmanship, in arrangement of school departments, in quality of materials used, and in attractiveness of interior.” The article goes on to describe the rooms and their uses. No mention is made of computers. The changing needs of education and the “arrangement of departments” are difficult moving targets for the architect.

This school or any school will offer both assets and liabilities in support of learning and teaching. This will be true of old schools and new schools as well, if for no other reason that all students do not learn alike and all teachers do not teach alike. There is no perfect school. Flexibility in housing and enabling the process of learning and teaching remains thus the ever present goal. In the recent past of educational design this goal found its form in movable walls, open plans, and movable furniture. The problem today revolves more about the issues of communications technology and the effective uses of computers.

Assets

At the time that the high school was built, natural light from great window bays had come to be expected, supported by a typically minimal number of incandescent lamps. The fluorescent lamp, air conditioning, and the energy crises of 1973 have led contemporary schools toward hermetically sealed rooms relying almost wholly on fluorescent lighting. This is a road taken at significant cost to the learning environment. Most will agree that natural light is preferable to fluorescent light for learning environments. And most will argue for a window that will open when spring overrides winter. The dry Wyoming plains, largely unburdened by insects, are a benign if not benevolent environment for natural ventilation and cooling. Natural lighting and natural ventilation are significant values offered by the old school.

The high school might be condemned simply because it is not new; simply because it is old. Age, however, has much to offer for the education of our young. Buildings of various ages about us are artifacts reminding us of our past and providing a reference from which to mold our future. Buildings are markers of our culture and of our common history. The old school is arguably the most noteworthy of the town’s older buildings. Once destroyed, the distinctive decorative detail and finish of the old school marking inside and out the confidence and energy of the 1920s will soon be forgotten. There is something to be said in our throwaway society for a few elements about us that are repaired when necessary, altered as required for continued function, and given special symbolic respect. Education itself is one such element. The buildings that house education have traditionally been given similar regard. Universities, for instance, seldom destroy their first buildings.

Related to the social value of the old school is the fact that it is also extraordinary in its architectural value. Such value is further from direct measure in the balance for education, but quite real. The auditorium is unlike other auditoria and is, to the best of our knowledge, unique. The structure is an elegant statement for students of the appropriate joining of materials in mankind’s age-old defiance of gravity, and the quality of natural lighting for daytime operations is beautiful. Of equal delight are the original slightly arched and decorated ceilings that make each classroom a special classroom. The visual and tactile surround for education is important. In this regard the old high school is at the front of the class.

Liabilities

Few values are without their concomitant liability. The big windows spill winter heat. The ventilating sash are difficult to seal and might be drafty at times. The original steam system
is reported to be difficult to control for room thermal comfort and, though fully operational, is near the end of its service life. These liabilities are real, and replacement or mitigation costs are discussed in the program for rehabilitation.

Another frequently mentioned liability is the cost and difficulty of providing power and communications to learning stations involving computers in their many educational forms. No little work has already gone into providing such technology in the various classrooms, but future efforts at linkage among stations is anticipated, along with the need for flexibility to meet changing and yet-unknown network and utility requirements. The existing building liability in these regards is not so much the difficulty in providing the necessary services to learning stations, but rather the perceived difficulty in providing such services and maintaining the aesthetic qualities of the present classrooms. This is in our opinion more a design problem than a technical problem. Linkage amongst stations and rooms is generally exhibited physically in conduit form carrying various cables. Properly selected, racked, and positioned, surface conduit need not be precluded in renovation work. Island computer station clusters can be fed with ceiling masts. Peninsular clusters can be fed from walls.

The steam chase at the perimeter of the ground floor can carry new primary power and communications for the school. From the chase, vertical and lateral conduit can supply all spaces with either surface or concealed installation. Classroom ceilings are suspended, and conduit can be fed over them if full concealment is finally deemed essential.

A final possible liability is the size of existing spaces in meeting contemporary spatial requirements. The building program of 24 April 1995 by Corder/South Group lists ten classrooms at 800 square feet, already reduced from an industry optimum of 900 square feet. The seven classrooms in the two-story front section of the existing school are 700 square feet; 22' x 32'. This smaller area is possibly a limitation to the use of these classrooms. On the other hand, Pine Bluffs enjoys a remarkably low student to teacher ratio, and, at least at the high school level, the present rooms are reported to be adequate in size for present function.
The Pine Bluffs High School Auditorium
SAFEY, ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL, AND ACCESSIBILITY

Safe exit
The 1929 plan has exits that are easily found and of adequate size at the front and sides, and at either side of the stage to the rear. This has been compromised by the 1947 and 1949 additions in the area east of the stage. In this area exits cannot be understood without the use of signs, and passageways are not clearly defined. These are serious deficiencies.

Stairs
The stairs to the second floor are open, and both stairs discharge into the common main hall. The landings of the stairs serve restrooms at that level plus the auditorium balcony level, further complicating the clear path to safety from the second floor. Exits from the auditorium balconies are properly placed at either end of the seating areas, but the west exits are through the main second floor stair landings, and the east exits are through stairs down to the stage as landing, then down to the later addition corridors. These balcony exit routes are not obvious, do not exit promptly to the exterior, and, on the east, pass through the stage area, an area of high hazard.

Safety is a relative term—one is more or less safe in particular competing circumstances, but is never absolutely safe. In this case the circulation of the building was considered acceptably safe in 1929, and, later, in the 40s construction. It would not be acceptable for new school construction today. In a major program of rehabilitation, alterations will be necessary to separate the means of second floor egress from the first floor by the addition of wall separation with doors and by the addition of stairs in new additional construction. It would appear that a partition can be added at the landing for separation, and that the landing can be extended through the restroom anterooms to outside vestibules with new additional stairs. This extension would logically overlay the existing lower corridor system.

Energy Conservation
Given available data, it would appear that the energy efficiency of the high school is already quite good. It is noteworthy that a 1981 Wyoming Department of Education facility appraisal profile rated energy conservation high, 4 in a range of 1 to 5. Pine Bluffs schools together rank better than all but West Bend Elementary, which has little glass. The 1985 graph for this comparative study is included on the next page. A quick computation of costs for a recent twelve months indicates for the high school a cost per square foot of 22 cents for electricity and 23 cents for gas, an extraordinarily low total of $45 per square foot. Any claim of obsolescence for the high school based on energy efficiency should be quickly challenged.

Windows
The window glazing of the 1929 school is original, a window wall system of steel glazing bars and single thickness glass. Sash within the window wall are operable for ventilation, a hopper sash low and awning sash high. Thin blade blinds control direct sun penetration, and reflect sunlight onto the ceiling for indirect lighting. Windows are tight and in good repair, but students sitting close to the glass must surely be chilled from radiation to cold glass surfaces in the winter, and the glass is a poor barrier to energy loss. Energy loss analysis will probably justify the replacement of the window walls with double thickness glazed units and thermal breaks in the metal sash, and this would be recommended in a major program of rehabilitation.

Walls
Other heat loss from the shell of the building is less serious a concern. Though exterior walls are uninsulated, the heavy mass of the walls and the building itself balance to some degree extremes of energy loss from the building. Additions to the walls to improve thermal resistance would not be justified in energy accounting.

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Roofs
Winter energy loss through the roof is a more serious question. The original drawings indicate no insulation at roofs. The roofs presently are covered with what appears to be blown-on urethane insulation, and this is most valuable, though an application generally of limited life. Additional study of energy losses through the roof is merited.

Ventilation and Cooling
Ventilation for school populations from window sash appears to be satisfactory with the exception of the auditorium. Two roof wind-turbines provide some exhaust from the auditorium, but there is not sufficient positive addition of outside air to the large space. Cooling needs in classrooms in late spring and early fall are reported to be accomodated with window ventilation, and the mass of the building prevents quick daytime thermal build-up. But the auditorium has heat gain from skylights and people that, along with ventilation, is a problem. The administration office has a window air-conditioner.

Accessibility for wheelchair handicapped
Accessibility from the site into the building is not now provided, but the building is only two risers above sidewalk entry grade, and can easily be accomodated by reworking sidewalks to ramp to entry level.

Once in the building, a clear path is open to all ground floor spaces. Second floor access will require the installation of a lift for wheelchairs, or, if budget allows, an elevator for more general purpose. Space for lift or elevator is available just to the left or right of the main axis auditorium entry.

Restrooms are not now wheelchair accessible. The landing level cannot be reached except by the stairs and thus cannot be made accessible. The ground floor restrooms would be the target for overhaul to provide the clearances and fixtures necessary for those in wheelchairs.

The auditorium balconies are at stair landing level and thus are not accessible. Though this would not be allowed in new construction, it is a reasonable compromise to remain in a historic building, especially since these are not preferred seats.

From the Dana Rehal Larson Architects study of 27 March 1985.
Energy consumption in Pine Bluffs schools does not appear to be a problem.
South elevation and side entry detail
A PROGRAM FOR REHABILITATION

Exterior Improvements

1. Remove the 1947 and later additions, approximately 5,400 square feet.

2. Remove and replace existing windows with window wall of insulated glass and steel mullions with thermal breaks replicating the existing window wall dimensions and sash details.

3. Remove existing roofing, gutters, and downspouts. Extend skylight curbs and install clear plexiglass larger-bay skylights over existing glass skylights. Insulate the roof surface with rigid insulation and roof with modified bitumen. Install eave gutters and downspouts along auditorium-flanking classrooms.

4. Make masonry repairs. Remove front facade high wood shingles and replace with mission tile.

5. Remove front and side concrete sidewalks and replace with slightly ramped walks to accessible entries. Install accessible walks to rear entries.

6. Construct vestibules outside of the north and south entries to house stair runs up to the second floor stair landings (through the existing restroom ante rooms).

Heating and Ventilation

7. Remove and replace the steam boiler with a water boiler and associated equipment.

8. Remove and replace steam heating piping with water piping.

9. Remove heating radiators and replace with baseboard convector.

10. Install economizer air heating/cooling system for the auditorium, stage, and corridors in the south second floor space adjacent to the projection booth.

Accessibility

11. Install a 5x7 elevator in the north second floor space adjacent to the projection booth and the space below.

12. Reconfigure and renovate the ground floor restrooms to make them accessible.

Interior Improvements

13. Install glazed smoke barriers with hold-back doors at the second floor stair landings (separating the landings from the ground floor).

14. Replace all carpet.
15. Repaint walls and ceilings.

16. Replace lighting fixtures.

17. Install a conduit loop system for power and communications to computer stations: At ground floor feed up from the existing pipe tunnel beneath the perimeter slab. At classrooms feed from wall distribution just below sill level around the room.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

This construction program was designed to fairly test the assertion by the group Save Our Schools that the cost of rehabilitation should not preclude the continued educational use of the Pine Bluffs High School. The hypothetical program includes: demolition of the 1940s and later additions; complete renovation of painted and carpeted surfaces; installation of conduit wiring for added power and communications capacity at each of the teaching spaces; complete reworking of the roofing, window wall, and heating systems; and improvements to the building to make it safer and accessible. The result of this work would be teaching and support spaces that would be, as it were, like new, but with the assets of the historic building still in place for present and future students and teachers.

No attempt was made to anticipate design of additions to the building to accommodate the expanded and enhanced 7-12 program. We do not view the aesthetic union of old and new as different from any other design challenge. The logical attachment point would be to either the south or north building entries, or to both. There are many fine examples of sensitive additions to historic buildings including schools. The brick from the demolished 1940s work, which closely matches the 1929 brick, could be reused to support a sympathetic addition design.

The cost of hypothetical rehabilitation is estimated by Capstone Construction of Denver to be $1,036 million dollars. For the 20,000 square feet of the 1929 school, including the cost of demolition of the later additions, the resultant cost per square foot is just under $50. The schematic design cost-per-square-foot proposed by Gorder/South Group for both new construction and for the old school rehabilitation was approximately $85 per square foot (in that both the bond issue scheme A-all-new and scheme B-old-plus-addition were close to the same). Our hypothetical analysis would suggest that the Gorder/South estimate of costs for rehabilitation might be excessive, or that more work is proposed than is necessary. It should be noted that $85 per square foot buys an average house; there is reasonable question whether this number is appropriate for a public building. Rehabilitation would enable budget savings of some $730,000 for added quality in the new construction.

Cost is important, but clearly not the only issue for consideration in deciding the fate of the High School. It is assessors' opinion that the old school brings to the learning environment assets that will be most difficult to achieve with new construction. First amongst these is natural lighting. Second is natural ventilation. Third is the role of the school as cultural lesson for our common history; a symbol of permanence in our throwaway society. Fourth is the architectural value of the building both to academe and to Pine Bluffs; it is a unique Wyoming building of which all should be proud.

The Pine Bluffs High School should be rehabilitated, and should be made safer and more accessible. The work necessary is cost effective and affordable within the bond issue. The Pine Bluffs High School should, in our opinion, remain the centerpiece of Pine Bluffs education.