

Good afternoon,

Once again, I have serious concerns regarding the schools in our beautiful, historic neighborhood. I have been reading about the plans of the district and the board and am truly concerned about the situation.

First, I have read that the district is taking options on properties in our neighborhood with no approved plan or referendum in place. It does not seem proper to me to start down this road again with no approval from voters.

We purchased our beloved home twenty-two years ago so that our children could attend Dr. Howard. At that time, the Schools of Choice plan did not exist. Our children went to school with other children in the neighborhood. We walked to school. Parents stopped and chatted on the way back home and sometimes, it evolved into having coffee or making plans for playdates after school. We loved our diverse neighborhood and school.

By the time our youngest son attended Dr. Howard, things had changed. Schools of choice was now in place. Our wonderful school had changed. The attitude amongst the teachers and parents had changed and the district was largely not maintaining the building. What horrified me most was the day that I was volunteering for the walk-a-thon and I heard a fifth grade student say that the district had given up on our school so she did not understand why we were even bothering to have a walk-a-thon to improve the school because it was going to be ripped down. Oh my, what a terrible thing to hear from a student. The discipline issues were significant.

You have to realize that our home is not only part of our family's story but it is also a part of our retirement plan. We will likely sell our home and downsize at some point. We need our property value to continue to be strong so that we will be able to do that. The plans currently being talked about really concern me. I am not sure that tearing down many historic homes in our area will be supportive of our property value.

One thing that needs to be thought about in this is that Central has never had an athletic field adjacent to it. Why is that just now such a problem? When Edison was the original high school, the football and baseball field was McKinley. The football field that both high schools use now was originally constructed for Central. Centennial High School was built later. It is not ideal to have the field away from the school but it has worked for a long time.

Have you been to New York City where the schools have no green space? Again, I am not saying that it is ideal but children go to school there everyday and go on to achieve great things.

We did not support the previous referendum. Because of this, I have been criticized by some people who have thought me to be unsupportive of the district. In fact, I spend

hundreds of hours volunteering in addition to my full time job at the university. I have spent thousands of dollars sponsoring the music programs in our sons' schools. I have spent thousands of dollars so that I could chaperone band trips. In addition, we pay in excess of \$5000.00 each year in property taxes of which a good portion goes to the school district. I am spending my Saturday afternoon to express my concerns to you and will spend my Saturday night at a Gala supporting the music program at Centennial (even though I am a Central parent). I think that I am pretty supportive. My concern is that I am willing to put up both my time and my hard earned money and that I often do not see that is being handled in what I see in a responsible way.

We have four sons. Three have already graduated from Central. Two have graduated from UIUC and one will graduate from UIUC in December. Our oldest is a PhD student at Stanford. Our second is in the process of applying for graduate schools in mycology. Our third son will be a certified music educator in a few months. Our fourth son will attend Central in the fall as a freshman and proud member of the class of 2020. Our boys have been high achievers and have received a good education. For that, we are truly grateful.

I think that the district should reach out to our neighborhood by sending out a mailing, or doing a canvassing or holding a neighborhood meeting. Many people in the neighborhood feel that this new plan is being forced on us and that it will not have a good result for us.

In addition, it does not appear that the district is working with the City. This really needs to be a joint project between the district, the city government and the people.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kimberly Liestman Wurl  
Unit 4 Parent