



Statement on Lowell High School Vote

6/13/17

As a leader within the Southeast Asian community, as someone who cares deeply about this city, and as a father of two children - a recent Lowell High School graduate and a 10-year-old who will attend the new LHS, I am compelled to express my full support for keeping LHS downtown, and to express my belief that option #3 is the best choice for our children and for the future of our city.

I have arrived at my support for option #3 after hours of discussion of the issue with people from all corners of Lowell, gaining perspective from many different neighborhoods and ethnic groups.

The cost estimates clearly illustrate this option is the most fiscally sensible decision for taxpayers. This is an aspect we cannot overlook, but it alone does not provide a sufficient basis to make a decision of this magnitude.

High school is a critical time of life; a time that requires a first-class education that will propel one to college or into a productive and satisfying working life. And education does not only happen in the classroom. Young people need a social and cultural education, one that can be had in a downtown setting that includes a public library, a National Park, UTEC, Girls Inc., Umass Lowell, MCC, and more.

A state of the art facility that respects history while embracing the future can be achieved downtown. The opportunity to situate an institution of learning in the heart of the living museum our downtown represents is an opportunity of which other communities would be envious.

To those who say we cannot safely make changes because of environmental hazards, I say the safety issues can be resolved; we have the tools and technology necessary to renovate the current site without putting our children at risk.

Moving the high school to the far edge of the city will create a hardship for many if not most students and their parents. Those who walk to school from the Acre and other nearby neighborhoods will no longer have that option, placing more cars and buses on our roads, taxing our infrastructure and going against the Sustainable Lowell 2025 plan that was adopted by the Council not long ago.

I hope any Councilor who votes to move the high school to Cawley understands that to provide busing for students, more than \$3 million will be unavailable to hire more police officers, firefighters, or provide other much needed services for the city.

I fear that removing the high school from a central location, which is equitable and accessible to all, will have a devastating impact on many of our students. I believe that making the high school more difficult to get to may exasperate the performance gap that persists in our school system, may negatively impact attendance rates, particularly amongst at-risk groups, and may make school resources like tutoring and extra-curricular activities more difficult to access. These are risks that we cannot afford as a community.

Engaged in a fight to preserve the history of New York City, Jacqueline Kennedy once asked; "If our children are not inspired by the past of our city, where will they find the strength to fight for her future?"

If, in Lowell, Massachusetts, we are committed to reaching our potential, we must ask ourselves the same quest. We must inspire our young people to care about this place. That happens naturally when they go to school in the heart of the city, surrounded by our indelible heritage and our formidable history.

For these reasons, I support keeping the high school downtown and urge the council to do the same.