

American Architectural Foundation
Great Schools by Design



Akron School Design Institute

A REPORT OF FINDINGS

Akron, Ohio
December 6 – 8, 2005

American Architectural Foundation

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AAF's *Great Schools by Design* program aims to improve the quality of America's schools by promoting good design, encouraging collaboration in the design process, and providing leading-edge resources that empower schools and communities to transform themselves. Throughout the country, *Great Schools by Design* engages superintendents, architects, teachers, parents, citizens, students, and local government officials in a far-reaching conversation about what must be done to improve the places where children and adults learn. At AAF, we strive to help create schools that both support student achievement and serve as centers of community. Herman Miller, Inc. and McGraw-Hill Construction are co-founding sponsors of *Great Schools by Design*. For more information, please visit us online at www.archfoundation.org.

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**Great
Schools**
by DesignSM
An initiative of the
American Architectural
Foundation

Akron School Design Institute

A REPORT OF FINDINGS

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Assignment Overview

After attending the National Summit on School Design held in Washington, D.C., in October 2005, Mayor Donald Plusquellic invited the American Architectural Foundation (AAF) to conduct a school design institute for the city of Akron, Ohio. Inspired by the educational planning and design concepts discussed at the summit, Mayor Plusquellic wanted to introduce these new ideas to his staff, to the staff of Akron Public Schools (APS), and to design professionals. He also wanted to encourage innovative thinking when people were considering how best to improve Akron's public school facilities in support of student achievement and community involvement. Thus, the Akron School Design Institute was designed to be informative for school and city officials in an effort to create an improved working partnership between the city of Akron, APS, and the Ohio Schools Facility Commission. The Akron School Design Institute was held in Akron on December 6–8, 2005.

APS currently has an enrollment of nearly 30,000 students. In Akron, there are eight school clusters, with one high school and a varied number of elementary schools in each. Three thousand students are now being bused; students are entitled to bus transportation if they must travel to an elementary or middle school that is farther than two miles from home.

Major Issues

AAF worked with the deputy mayor for intergovernmental relations, Laraine Duncan, in arranging the event. The city and APS determined the issues to be covered at the institute: design, community engagement, and the formation of partnerships to share resources. These broad areas were discussed in detail with the AAF program director, and specific questions were formulated for consideration by the AAF resource team.

The Akron School Design Institute was organized to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas regarding systemwide planning and design and to encourage discussion of prevailing issues. The goal of the institute was to introduce innovative ideas and solutions to compelling design challenges for the benefit of local city and school officials. AAF brought together a team of experts to address the issues, which were posed in the form of questions.

The intent of the institute was also to provide city and school officials with the tools they need to better evaluate and interpret innovative design proposals. School design must enhance teaching and learning for all; create schools as centers of community; ensure community engagement; provide for health, safety, and security; share resources; and provide flexibility. According to Mayor Plusquellic, the challenge is to design true community centers.

Questions to Consider

Specific questions were formulated so that the team understood exactly what the city hoped to gain from the institute. Formulating questions also helped city and school officials think through exactly what they hoped to learn from the program.

Generally, the main topics addressed were as follows:

- What are the cost comparisons and design issues related to restoration versus new construction?

- What are the most effective outreach measures to engage the public and to ensure community participation?
- How can new funding sources be identified and new partners brought into the process via public–public and public–private partnerships?

These questions served as a guide for discussion. However, the agenda was not limited to these questions. Resource team members were assigned topics but also contributed to the overall discussion. Details of each topic are presented below.

Topic 1: Design

Tom Blurock, Tim Dufault, Tom Rogér

Restoration versus new construction: The importance of restoring the familiar. What are the cost comparisons and design issues?

The resource team considered the costs of retrofitting old buildings versus the flexibility that can be designed into new construction. The city had been influenced by a recent study by a local group, Progress Through Preservation, which showed higher costs for new construction versus renovation in some buildings. Progress Through Preservation’s findings contradicted those of the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC), which claimed that renovation would cost more than new construction.

The resource team presented innovative design concepts, particularly showing examples of the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and of green building and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) design innovations for the

future. There also was some discussion of how environmental strategies are particularly important when money is tight; projected savings can help pay for initial costs.

Of particular concern was the issue of community access to public spaces within school buildings. How do the partners manage security issues after hours, and what types of uses work best within school facilities? Should design guidelines be adopted? If so, what are the broad requirements? Can the permitting process be streamlined to save time and money?

Topic 2: Community Engagement

Janet Fiero, Herb Simmens

Community participation: How best to engage the public. What are the most effective outreach efforts?

Akron officials have been frustrated by poor attendance at community events, having worked hard at promoting a variety of forums for community participation. Nevertheless, there are many issues that rally public interest. Some of the most effective strategies for involving the community in the planning and design of neighborhood schools were presented, as well as examples of certain methods that have proven successful in other cities. In some instances, it is far more expedient to present plans for the community to react to rather than encourage involvement in the formulation of plans. In some cases, it has been found that the smaller the group, the greater the participation. The team discussed different formats that work best to engage more people.

With far fewer students than only a few years ago, APS predicts student enrollment will continue to

decline. As a result, APS has excess space that the state will not pay to improve. Should discussion extend to right-sizing school districts? There is a need to recapture students from charter schools. The \$5,200 per student allotment from the state is needed for educational improvements. Redesigned facilities and improved student performance may help retain students and discourage the development of charter schools. Discussing some of these issues at a community forum should attract community participation in the planning and design of neighborhood facilities. Consolidation of facilities is another topic that engenders community reaction. A discussion of the pros and cons of consolidating elementary, middle, and high schools is an appropriate conversation.

Topic 3: Partnerships

Drew Becher, Judy Marks, Adam Rubin

Public–private partnerships: How can new funding sources be identified and new partners brought into the process?

Akron has the funding to renovate and construct space to accommodate the existing student population. However, if the city wants to develop the community learning center concept, then it needs to establish partnerships that are based

on both financial support and the incorporation of appropriate community services. Although other organizations are interested in sharing space and resources with the public schools, these potential partners do not typically have the funds

to renovate space. (Most grants fund programs, not bricks and mortar.) It is therefore crucial to the success of the concept of shared facilities to identify funders to serve as financial partners.

The team suggested considering services that benefit both students and the community, such as recreation facilities, performing arts spaces, and the like. It is important to consider how the potential for shared space can entice support from private organizations. Stakeholders need to be identified who can be involved from the beginning of the planning process. Flexible building designs can more easily accommodate a multitude of community uses. Partnerships depend on the ability to rally widespread community support and assemble strong advocates. Promoting educational achievement should help attract partners. Can corporations and universities be identified to help fund

space for new users? What is the best approach for attracting corporate sponsors or partners?

AAF Resource Team

To address the issues, AAF brought together a resource team of nine experts (see Appendix A for biographies) in fields related to school design and planning. The sessions were moderated by Ron Bogle, President and CEO of the American Architectural Foundation. Members of the resource team have a wide range of experience in architecture, planning, public service, community participation, education facilities information and planning, construction management, and public administration. The whole team participated in the discussions on all topics, and members were assigned to give presentations in their particular areas of expertise.

The Process

The resource team met at an organizational meeting on the first day. That meeting was followed by an informational briefing by city and school leaders. The briefing provided background information to supplement briefing materials that the city and APS had assembled and sent to the resource team for review before the team arrived in Akron. A dinner followed the briefing that provided an informal setting for the resource team to meet with city and school officials.

The second day began with a narrated tour of some typical school facilities, including a range of historic buildings and those more recently constructed, in various areas throughout the city.

The tour gave the team a quick overview of existing facilities and a sense of the possibilities of combining and adapting certain school facilities to serve as community learning centers. Brief stops were made at some schools and at certain downtown landmark buildings, including the National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF).

Group discussions began in the afternoon with a presentation of innovative school design solutions by the architects, followed by an open group discussion between resource team members and designated public officials. The mayor, the school superintendent, a representative from OSFC, and others participated. The second topic of the day,

community engagement, was followed by the discussion on design. Attendees were divided into smaller groups to discuss major interests and to illustrate the benefits of small group interaction. The resource team had a working dinner that evening at which discussion of general observations and suggestions for the city and APS continued.

The second day included a discussion of a range of partnership opportunities based on the team's experiences with other cities. Later the group divided into smaller groups to consider three development scenarios: rehabilitation and renova-

tion of a historic school facility, replacement and new construction at that site, and development of a community learning center at NIHF. The school design institute ended with a discussion of major observations, concluding remarks, and suggestions for future action.

Refer to Appendix B for a list of participants representing the city of Akron, APS, the Ohio School Facilities Commission, and other community partners. Appendix B also lists the AAF resource team, staff, and board members, as well as KnowledgeWorks Foundation staff.

General Discussion

The city of Akron is a partner with APS for providing activities and opportunities for the school-age population. The city is willing to maximize opportunities as far as funding allows and recognizes that flexibility is key. With an interest in promoting the development of community learning centers, the city can partner with an outside organization to provide assistance as necessary. Prospects within the business community should be investigated. Local businesses are currently engaged in a Business Advisory Committee with APS. The business community has supported the effort with money and expertise. The resource team suggested that members of this committee should be encouraged to take a more active role. The number one priority for 2006 should be to approach Akron CEOs to support initiatives for education.

Establishing Partnerships

Here is a good partnership example: city land was donated to the Urban League for a \$6 million

project for which the Urban League raised \$3.6 million. The Urban League operates a minority business development program at its current facility under contract with the city of Akron and funded by the Akron Community Foundation. The Urban League is building a facility (expected to open in March 2007) on a site shared with an elementary school in a neighborhood that had no school facility. The new facility will house child care, adult job training, business development and numerous other programs. The existing facility sold for \$1 million, although it will remain in its current site until the new building is completed. This partnership is a great success story.

The resource team emphasized the need to “leverage, imagine, and integrate.” This approach helps formalize partnerships and move them forward—with partners who will act as the drivers for education reform. Toward that end, it is important for the community to think about private business-

es and corporations that could become partners, establishing groups that can be assembled to consider new ideas. Some potential partners were discussed, including the following:

- Health care clinics
- The Akron Art Museum
- The Homebuilder Association
- GoJo/Purell
- Youth and religious groups
- Goodyear Tire
- Community-based institutions such as the community college
- EJ Thomas Performing Arts Hall
- Labor unions, for career guidance
- Athletic facilities, the Polymer College, and other departments at the University of Akron
- The Sports Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio
- The Akron and Summit County Health Departments
- The Akron Public Library

Such wide-ranging interests could serve as catalysts for new schools, offering choices that may entice students to move from charter schools back to public education. These potential partnerships represent interagency public–public partnerships and grant funding possibilities with corporations, foundations, and alternative methods of financing and support.

Developers seeking projects in Akron’s urban areas often base decisions on the condition of the neighborhood schools. Some developers create foundations as funding vehicles because foundations often understand how to finesse financing. Nonprofit organizations represent another partnership opportunity. A number of groups interface with school design and construction. Building Equity Sooner for Tomorrow (BEST) manages and

finances school construction. Cities can establish special assessment areas to build a new school, park, and community center and other support services and infrastructure. In addition, there is a not-for-profit leasing program for mixed-use development that includes a school. The resource team suggested exploring the option of having nonprofits provide ownership and management functions for the school system.

Large corporations that have had a significant effect on local schools include Disney in Osceola County, Florida; Microsoft in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Honeywell in Niagara Falls, New York. Some schools have sold naming rights to acquire additional funding to support construction and programs. For example, IKEA has purchased naming rights in the Renton school district in Washington. In North Carolina, Charlotte and Mecklenburg County schools offer naming rights for rooms and special-use areas. Price Club supports the City Heights school initiative in San Diego by targeting areas for housing, retail, and school development so that the corporation serves as an economic catalyst. Some alumni groups target K–12 historic schools. And some community learning centers generate fees that help cover operating costs. These examples are meant to encourage Akron to consider alternative and less traditional methods of financing. When a city is contemplating the development of community learning centers, it may be wise to consider having schools use existing community space and vice versa.

Creating a Public School Foundation

Akron needs to define the team that will support new development concepts for school construction. The team must encompass the city, the

schools, and the Chamber of Commerce. Each partner should focus on what it does best—schools focus on school issues, the city focuses on city issues—creating a new process for engagement. The resource team suggests creating a public school foundation as a 501(c)(3) arm of the public schools. A Chamber of Commerce committee could serve as the board of this fundraising and service organization, with business leaders proposing partnerships and reaching out to other private sector entities. The board might consist of 12 to 18 community leaders to add power and energy to the mission and give voice and focus for greater involvement of the business community. Corporate and independent contributors could cover operating expenses. The foundation would grant funding to APS as needed and help engage the community in school planning and design.

The foundation would be a single-mission organization dedicated to bringing the private sector onto the team. The AAF resource team learned that this general structure exists in the current Chamber of Commerce but that full-time staff would be needed to adequately administer the foundation. The foundation is considered a realistic option to encourage CEOs to support APS.

The public school foundation could become the model for a national strategy spearheaded by Akron's mayor. Akron is fortunate to have a mayor who is committed to improving the city's schools by developing community learning centers. Mayor Plusquellic is a high-profile mayor who can serve as the champion for this educational community concept.

Developing Community Learning Centers: Three Scenarios

Most of the discussion centered on three school sites: The National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF), the historic Firestone Park Elementary School site, and the downtown Central Hower High School site. After considering the Central Hower site (outlined below), participants chose to divide into three groups to consider various development scenarios for NIHF and the Firestone Park school site.

Central Hower High School is scheduled to close in May 2006 but could be used in partnership with the University of Akron for a K–12 school rather than for swing space, as currently planned. This existing facility provides an ideal opportunity for partnership with the university (given its proximity). Such a partnership could bring stronger educational opportunities to the district.

In the interim, Central Hower could be used for swing space, but it really is a long-term opportunity. Eventually, swing space could be planned elsewhere, though there may be difficulties finding enough land to house portables. Other issues associated with developing swing space elsewhere include finding the funds to construct temporary facilities, providing busing, and funding the potential purchase and rehabilitation costs of an existing building to be used as swing space. After-hours use remains possible at Central Hower. There are examples of high schools operating on an evening basis, allowing students to work during the day or perform child care services. However, Central Hower is a prime downtown site where future use will likely be determined by the value of the real estate. The resource team recommended that the city consider the potential development opportunity of this facility. The AAF resource team

members, together with the participants and observers at the institute, were invited to form three groups to consider separate development scenarios. The groups proposed plans for NIHF, renovation of the Firestone Park Elementary School site, and new construction at the Firestone Park school site. A description of each group's proposal follows.

NATIONAL INVENTORS HALL OF FAME

The resource team suggested that APS use the National Inventors Hall of Fame to exceed OSFC standards and demonstrate how redevelopment as a community learning center can be transformative for the city. This project could be a model for future school development. By focusing on one school project, the city could make a larger local funding investment. One of the many attributes of the site is that, given its location downtown near the University of Akron and other key institutions, development in this location avoids neighborhood issues and conflicts.

The proposal calls for the museum to become a community learning center that would serve approximately 500 students in grades 5 through 8. The museum building and site offers a unique opportunity based on the building itself, its contents, and its location within the central business district, surrounded by a multitude of institutions and cultural services: the University of Akron, the Akron Law School, the performing arts center, the Akron Civic Theatre, the convention center, health services, the public library, the adjoining park system, the art museum, incubator space, the Polymer Science College at the University of Akron, and the *Akron Beacon Journal* newspaper building.

These institutions offer unlimited resources that can benefit an educational program located at the museum. A list of resources includes the following: mentorship opportunities throughout the community; teaching, training, and other innovative programs associated with the university; funding and entrepreneurship opportunities; wide-ranging technical expertise; shared lab space at corporations with research labs; various supplies and equipment; naming rights; easy transportation access; and a regional student population. In addition, there are myriad opportunities for links with other educational facilities. The city library can fill the need for a school-based library. The school could work out an arrangement to share gym space with the university and auditorium space with performing arts institutions. The Central Hower gym may also be available, and a distance learning center could be established with other local schools. Shared parking space could be provided at local parking garages.

As a result, numerous costly facilities would not need to be duplicated at the NIHF community learning center. There would be no need to build a library, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, art lab space, a music hall, athletic fields, or a parking facility. After studying plans of the museum, participants were able to identify what types of new spaces would be needed: primarily collaborative spaces, including flexible labs, fewer classrooms, some office spaces, workrooms, and bathrooms. Identifying collaborative spaces would assist in creating the center.

What will be required to make this plan happen? Obviously, a number of operating agreements would be required. A steering committee should be established from among the institutions that

would interface with the school. A small group of perhaps four partners working with APS is suggested to guide the project and assist in the budgeting process to ensure that construction money is forthcoming. A good model is the downtown school in Minneapolis discussed by the resource team in their presentation. The AAF resource team and the participants and observers involved in this proposal believe that the museum school could serve as a national model. The facility could be used year round by incorporating a summer camp. A request for proposals (RFP) could help formalize this plan as a new model for development of a community learning center.

RENOVATION OF THE FIRESTONE PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

One group studying the Firestone Park site thought that renovation of the facility would be preferable. The challenge will be to bring excitement and support for renovation, but the group believes that the community would become engaged in the process. The group recommended that designing the school to accommodate technology should be a top priority. It was also suggested that the program be extended to include grades K–8. There are a number of building code issues: existing undersized classrooms can be increased to the OSFC-required 900 square feet by addressing code problems and locating science and art rooms in corner spaces of the building. Elevators are needed to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Better ventilation, upgraded bathrooms, and dead-end corridors can be addressed in a renovation plan. Some positive site components include adequate surface parking, attractive play space, an easily identifiable entrance, easy vehicular access with good drop-off space, adjacency to a new library,

and—perhaps most importantly—the potential to establish partnerships to create a community learning center. This assessment is not meant to negate the challenges, which include problems with the roof and ventilation systems and the need for abatement of foreign materials such as lead paint and asbestos. There is also a need to increase daylight by enlarging the windows, as well as a need to repair existing masonry. It is recognized that architectural restoration of an historic building is bound to provide some unknown challenges.

The consensus was that the preservation of a historic landmark building strategically located within the community is a project worth pursuing. The group agreed that recycling historic buildings is an admirable endeavor. Buildings such as the Firestone Park Elementary School offer historic context and a legacy for the neighborhood that will enhance the opportunity to attract and educate students.

NEW CONSTRUCTION AT THE FIRESTONE PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE

As a new construction project, Firestone Park is a small site (three acres). The educational program requires approximately 50 percent of the site area. There are, however, opportunities to connect a new classroom building to adjacent built assets. In this way, a facility can be designed to incorporate multiple community facilities and create a project based on shared resources. The benefit of new construction is that links can be physically established between the main school building, the recently built library, and the nearby community center. The library contains a 1,200-square-foot meeting space that could be shared with the school and with the community. Attaching the gym to the community center is an option that could be

developed to serve both the school students and the community. The existing parking area could become the new playground space and could also be available for neighborhood use after school hours.

The opportunity to integrate the school with these various community services offers the chance to

create a community learning center that can be a model for the city. A proposed new, two-story education building can be designed with these links to overcome the site size constraints.

Observations and Conclusions

Ron Bogle, President and CEO of the American Architectural Foundation, served as moderator and led the final discussion. Each resource person presented a brief summary of key ideas and observations with recommendations for school district and city officials concerning next steps—those actions necessary to move forward with planning and design decisions that will help create community learning centers.

Big Ideas

The resource team suggested a number of big ideas in concert with school and city interests. These ideas attracted consensus:

- Locate one magnet school in each cluster.
- Change Central Hower High School to a K–12 program.
- Provide preschool services at all schools.
- Locate a “cool school” in the downtown area.
- Devise an educational program in partnership with the zoo.
- Create partnerships between magnet schools and emerging industries.
- Develop a community learning center at NIHF that would share resources with nearby

institutions, such as athletic facilities at the University of Akron and performing arts space at the Akron Civic Theatre.

Concluding Remarks

It is crucial for the Ohio School Facility Commission, APS, and the city of Akron to build a more effective state and local partnership. The resource team strongly endorses collaboration through a partnership of the mayor, the city and APS to establish new ways to serve the citizens and, more importantly, Akron’s schoolchildren. The team recommended a public school foundation or trust to help implement the process of improving the local schools. Government entities must work together in a collaborative manner so that funding can be targeted in the most effective manner.

There was considerable discussion about renovating versus building new. Old, historic school buildings represent a community asset and serve as a physical legacy of the community. These buildings impart a sense of history, a deeper and richer legacy than can be established by new construction. The resource team believes this can be demonstrated by renovation of the Firestone Park Elementary School.

The community was encouraged to value its history by recognizing that rehabilitation is sometimes feasible and should be considered when defining a vision for the school system. APS and the Ohio School Facility Commission must build good buildings, whether new or rehabilitated. The system should not be biased against rehabilitation.

The city is advised to “go for the low-hanging fruit” but not stop there. There must be programs to elevate the educational mission, to do something that creates excitement and helps build flagship schools for the city. The thrust of new programs and new buildings should not merely be to correct existing problems; programs must be devised and buildings designed to address the needs of the 21st century. It is important to imagine exciting facilities, but the state must leverage that vision by integrating excitement into the educational program. The education vision must be the ultimate driver. Goals should be measured according to a performance matrix based on principles for effective schools. When it is time to solicit proposals, the RFP should require community learning centers, not schools, with stipulations for school-based partnerships to strengthen community assets. Standards must be customized to meet those needs.

The city and APS were advised to keep up the momentum and look ahead, not settle for short-term solutions. The learning process is ongoing. There is innate tension in the process of rebuilding. A systemwide project is a huge undertaking, even if only standard types of buildings are built. The team observed that OSFC seemed disappointed that progress has been slow and would like to see improvements occur more quickly. Engaging citizens who represent many different communities

takes time but can result in the support needed to create a vision for a better school system. Community learning centers cannot be built as merely a new type of school building. They need to reflect the multiple community services they may contain and thus need to look different from traditional school buildings. Furthermore, they need to reflect their multiuse functions and the fact that innovative educational programs require innovative facilities.

There is concern that people have lost faith in established institutions and that this attitude is what is most affecting citizen participation. It was suggested that perhaps 10 community organizers be appointed who will be encouraged to have a greater stake in the planning process. To build civic infrastructure, residents must care about their city. The resource team believes that people will participate if they think they can make a difference. It was further suggested that a communitywide meeting be held, starting with a presentation of innovative concepts and later separating into clusters for small-group discussions. There are many variations to these procedures, but the team emphasized the importance of designating leaders and convincing people that their voices will be heard.

It was strongly suggested that school and city officials travel to other jurisdictions to experience innovative school projects and see examples of full-service community schools. Officials should make a concerted effort to visit schools in all areas of the country so as to appreciate regional differences, characteristics of which may be appropriate to incorporate into a midwestern model for community learning centers.

Appendix A: The AAF Resource Team

Ronald E. Bogle

Washington, D.C.

(Moderator for Akron School Design Institute)

In 2002, Ron Bogle was named president and CEO of the American Architectural Foundation. With the appointment, Bogle brought to the position a career-long commitment to public service and his lifelong passion for community development, civic engagement, education, art, and architecture.

Today, Bogle continues to be an innovative leader. His professional interests include the impact of local community design choices and processes on community development, urban neighborhood revitalization, civic engagement, quality of life, and governance systems in educational institutions and municipalities.

At AAF, Bogle's efforts are squarely focused on creating and sustaining programs to identify best practices for the design of livable communities across the country.

Bogle's professional experience includes senior leadership appointments in the higher education, business, and nonprofit fields. A native of Oklahoma City, he served nine years on the Oklahoma City Board of Education and several years as the Board's president. While in Oklahoma, Bogle was a leader in two major initiatives that resulted in nearly \$1 billion in publicly funded support to strengthen the commercial and cultural viability of the city's urban center by replacing or restoring a wide range of civic facilities and spaces.

As part of a decade-long plan to strengthen urban neighborhoods and create a model urban school

district, Bogle co-founded and helped lead a communitywide initiative that resulted in \$700 million in taxpayer support to replace or renovate every public school facility in Oklahoma City. On a per pupil basis, the measure is believed to have been the largest public school financing initiative in the nation at the time. Former Oklahoma City Mayor Kirk Humphreys added, "Ron provided invaluable leadership behind the successful initiative to rebuild our entire school district, an endeavor rivaling any in the country for its innovation, scope, and scale of inclusive support."

In association with the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Bogle is a managing partner for the Mayors' Institute on City Design.

Drew Becher

Washington, D.C.

Drew Becher has more than 12 years of experience in planning and government leadership. He currently serves as the deputy director of the Neighborhood Planning and Development/Urban Design Division for the District of Columbia's Office of Planning. In 2004, before moving to Washington, D.C., he served the City of Chicago as an assistant to the mayor, as manager of finance and administration for Chicago Public Schools, and as chief of staff for the Chicago Park District.

Becher has played a key role in numerous government initiatives and has been recognized by cities across the country. In Washington, D.C., he initiated CapitalSpace, a comprehensive plan for the District's parks and open spaces, and is assisting in the development of a D.C. Department of

Environment. In Chicago, he created the “Welfare to Work” Landscaping Program.

As manager for Chicago Public Schools, he initiated a \$2 billion capital improvement program. The program included many innovative ideas, such as campus parks and co-location initiatives, so that schools will act as “mini community centers” for Chicago neighborhoods.

Becher also created the award-winning “Get in the Loop” campaign aimed at motivating homegrown Chicago businesses to expand into other neighborhoods. He originated Chicago’s Landscape Ordinance. Becher has done graduate work at DePaul University and has a bachelor’s degree in urban design and planning from the University of Cincinnati.

Thomas H. Blurock, FAIA

Costa Mesa, California

Tom Blurock has built a practice dedicated to the creation of better urban schools. Over its 20-year history, his firm, Thomas Blurock Architects, has completed nearly 200 school projects, most for inner city school districts with constrained budgets, poor socioeconomic conditions, grave security issues, and highly politicized decision making.

Building on Blurock’s expertise in public finance, educational programming, urban economics, and school security, his firm has been able to expand its services beyond those of a standard architectural practice to offer an integrated approach to educational architecture. These supplemental services have allowed him to assist other architects in creating better schools. The result of one such collaboration with Pritzker Prize winner Thom Mayne, FAIA, resulted in Diamond Ranch

High School, the most critically acclaimed project of its type in California and winner of a national American Institute of Architects (AIA) Honor Award for Architecture.

Many of Blurock’s designs have become prototypes for urban educational solutions. At the International School in Long Beach, he created a secure rooftop playfield that saved enough space to allow an elementary school to be built on a very small inner city site. The design for Pueblo School in Pomona involved converting moribund commercial buildings into an award-winning elementary school that anchors a multiuse community center, which is reviving an entire neighborhood. Los Angeles Unified has adopted Blurock’s classroom cluster design for small learning communities as the district standard.

As part of his urban school practice, Blurock has become an authority on school security, advocating and elaborating passive solutions. He was a featured speaker at an important national convention on school security (“Learning from Columbine,” Denver, 1999), and he has been widely interviewed (including an appearance on *NBC Nightly News*) as a spokesman for AIA on this critical topic. He wrote the article “School Security: Designing Safe Learning Environments” in the new compendium, *Building Security*, by Barbara Nadel, FAIA.

Blurock is a leader of the Committee on Architecture for Education (CAE), a national AIA knowledge community. He became active in CAE as a young practitioner in the early 1980s.

Blurock earned his master’s degree in architecture from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University and a bachelor of science in environ-

mental design from the University of Washington. His firm, Thomas Blurock Architects, is based in Costa Mesa, California.

Timothy J. Dufault, AIA

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Tim Dufault is a principal with Cuningham Group and has been responsible for the design, management, and construction of more than \$700 million worth of new and remodeled educational facilities. As the managing principal of Cuningham Group's Education Studio—35 people dedicated to creating effective learning environments for people of all ages—Dufault is responsible for bringing the resources necessary to each project to ensure success.

Dufault is responsible for coordinating all the educational design work for the firm's two offices. He is a 1986 graduate of North Dakota State University with a bachelor's degree in architecture. He is a member of the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI) and the Society of College and University Planners, as well as an active member of the AIA Committee on Architecture for Education.

Dufault continues to serve as a guest lecturer at major education conferences around the country, including the American Association of School Administrators, the AIA CAE, the National School Boards Association, and CEFPI.

Dufault believes that understanding and integrating the needs and beliefs of educators into the built environment is key to the success of any school. He has effectively used this approach to develop projects at both the elementary and the secondary levels.

Janet Fiero, Ph.D.

Brooklyn, Ohio

Janet Fiero is an associate of *AmericaSpeaks*, in Washington, D.C. *AmericaSpeaks* is a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in the public decisions that most significantly affect them by creating innovative deliberation methods that involve both citizens and decision makers. Through deliberation and dialogue, *AmericaSpeaks* helps individuals collectively come to judgment about the best course of action on a given public issue.

Fiero's current assignment is *Voices & Choices*, an unprecedented civic initiative that will involve tens of thousands of citizens and leaders across northeast Ohio in creating a shared action agenda to revitalize the region's economy. *Voices & Choices* is designed to challenge the citizens of northeast Ohio to think differently about the regional economy and to act in ways that set a new direction for the future. Citizens and leaders will be engaged in making tough choices about the economy, creating a prioritized regional agenda, and acting in concert to advance that agenda.

Fiero has worked on a variety of other projects on other issues including Washington, D.C.'s Citizen Summits; the Colorado Fiscal Policy Forum; the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission Summit; and the Tough Choices in Healthcare Town Meeting for the governor's office in Maine.

Judy Marks, Hon. AIA

Washington, D.C.

Judy Marks is associate director of the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF), a project of the U.S. Department of Education since

1997, providing information resources to people who plan, finance, design, build, and maintain Pre-K–16 school buildings.

Marks provides continuously updated content for the NCEF website, currently viewed by more than 113,000 visitors a month. She promotes the NCEF through presentations at conferences and workshops across the country and participation in numerous committees and advisory boards related to school facilities. She is a member of the board of directors of the National School Plant Management Association and an active participant in the Building Education Success Together (BEST) initiative, a collaborative group working to improve urban school facilities.

Marks has served on several design awards juries and selection panels, including the National School Boards Association Learning by Design Awards Program, the Schools as Centers of Community: A National Search for Excellence program, and CEFPI's School Building Week student design competition. Recently she participated in the planning committees for the 2005 AIA Committee on Architecture for Education conferences and for the AAF's National Summit on School Design.

She is the author of *EFL: A History of the Educational Facilities Laboratory* and contributed to the *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities*, published by the Association of School Business Officials.

From 1984 to 1997, Marks was the director of the AIA Library and Archives in Washington, D.C., as well as director of the AIA College of Fellows and director of the Young Architects Forum. She was

awarded honorary membership in the AIA in 1997, in recognition of outstanding contributions to the architectural profession.

Thomas H. Rogér

New Haven, Connecticut

Tom Rogér is vice president and project executive for Gilbane Building Company, where he has worked for 23 years. Rogér has more than 36 years of experience in managing construction of large building projects. His current assignment is serving as project director for "Kids First," which involves a 15-year, \$1.5 billion program for the complete reconstruction or renovation of public schools in New Haven, Connecticut. Rogér was the program director in charge of the complex public–private partnership of the \$92 million Learning Corridor project in Hartford, which involved Trinity College, Hartford Hospital, the city of Hartford, and the state of Connecticut. Rogér has also managed a number of other complex Gilbane projects at Williams College, Brown University, St. Lawrence University, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Rogér is a co-founder, and member of the Board of Directors, of Families of September 11. He is also a board member of the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, and is actively involved with the New York City 9/11 memorial and rebuilding process. As a result of this work, Rogér received the Award of Excellence from *Engineering News Record* and was named one of the top 25 industry news makers of 2004.

Rogér earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and economics from Brown University and a law degree from the University of San Diego. He is a retired member of the bar of the state of Massachusetts.

Adam Rubin

New York, New York

In his role as director of policy and research at New Visions for Public Schools, Adam Rubin works closely with the New Visions team, the New York City Department of Education, and the School Construction Authority to develop innovative solutions to school facilities challenges.

Over the past year and a half, New Visions has been able to develop the beginnings of a not-for-profit leasing program, a campus master planning strategy that incorporates the development of a new small schools footprint, campuswide solutions such as visual branding, and capital funding solutions by engaging local elected officials. The Department of Policy and Research acts as an internal consulting unit, helping the organization realize research projects and developing tools and resources to deepen practice and provide support for New Century high schools and all New York City schools.

Before joining New Visions in 2003, Rubin worked for more than 10 years in management roles in the nonprofit sector targeting education and economic development. He began his career teaching and collaboratively managing an education reform program for the Oakland, California public schools. He took that experience and founded a nonprofit working on issues of classroom reform and equity in the townships of Cape Town, South Africa, where he served as executive director. Returning to New York, he worked on economic development efforts in Long Island City as director of special projects, incorporating community development and commercial real estate marketing. He also founded and managed a consulting firm doing organizational development and strategy in the nonprofit sector.

Rubin graduated with a bachelor's degree in government and race relations from Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He also holds a master's of public administration from Columbia University.

Herb Simmens

Newark, New Jersey

Herb Simmens is a Blue Moon Urban Fellow with the Center for Architecture and Building Science Research at the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, New Jersey. He is in his second year of a three-year fellowship to work with school districts and communities on ways to create Urban Learning Villages—places where schools are planned, designed, and operated to provide a comprehensive learning environment for school-age children as well as all other community residents.

Simmens was director of the New Jersey Office of State Planning for nine years, where he was responsible for preparing the award-winning New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan—New Jersey's smart growth strategy. He also initiated the New Jersey Mayors' Institute of Design.

Simmens has been a town and county manager, as well as director of a nonprofit group whose mission was to advance sustainability on college campuses. He has a bachelor's degree from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in public policy and urban planning from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

Appendix B: Participants

Akron City Officials

Donald L. Plusquellic, *Mayor*
Marco Sommerville, *President, Akron City Council*
David Lieberth, *Deputy Mayor for Administration
and Chief of Staff*
Laraine Duncan, *Deputy Mayor for
Intergovernmental Relations and Education*
Mark Williamson, *Communications Director*
Warren Woolford, *Director, Planning–Urban
Development*
Jerry Holland, *Director, Public Service*
Tom Long, *Design Administrator, Planning
Department*

Akron Public School Officials

Sylvester Small, *Superintendent, Akron Public
Schools*
David James, *Executive Director, Business Affairs,
Akron Public Schools*
Paul Allison, *President, Akron Board of Education*
James Beal, *AIA, School Architect*

Ohio School Facilities Official

Jeff Tuckerman, *Senior Project Administrator,
Ohio School Commission, Summit County*

Consultant

Leo Jennings, *President, Progressive
Solutions Group*

Community Partners

Bernett Williams, *President and CEO,
Akron Urban League*
Dan Colantone, *President and CEO,
Greater Akron Chamber*

American Architectural Foundation

Resource Team

Ron Bogle, *President and CEO, American
Architectural Foundation, Washington, DC
(moderator)*
Drew Becher, *Deputy Director of Neighborhood
Planning and Development/Urban Design
Division for the District of Columbia's Office of
Planning, Washington, DC*
Tom Blurock, *FAIA, Thomas Blurock Architects,
Costa Mesa, CA*
Tim Dufault, *AIA, Principal, Cuningham Group,
Minneapolis, MN*
Janet Fiero, *PhD, AmericaSpeaks, Washington, DC*
Judy Marks, *Hon. AIA, Associate Director,
National Clearinghouse on Educational Facilities,
Washington, DC*
Tom Rog er, *Vice President and Project Executive,
Gilbane Building Company, New Haven, CT*
Adam Rubin, *Director, Policy and Research, New
Visions for Public Schools, New York, NY*
Herb Simmens, *PhD, Blue Moon Fellow, Center
for Architecture and Building Sciences Research,
New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ*

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Terry Seery, *Senior Program Officer*

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For more information about AAF's *Great Schools by Design* program and its School Design Institutes, please contact:

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