

School district mulls future of headquarters building

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Matt Best.
Courtesy photo

Like many buildings constructed back in 1950s, the Davis School District office at 526 B St. is in dire need of infrastructure repair.

With the estimated price of repairs and upgrades to be millions of dollars, the District is currently looking into selling or swapping the property, which also houses the Davis School for Independent Study, to secure a new location for the District office and DSIS.

Selling or swapping the property has been a topic of discussion among the board of trustees for around six months now. Steps forward have been talked about at school board meetings and among subcommittees, including a real estate subcommittee within the district.

“We’re taking another stab at whether or not we can find a property to move into and sell this property for something that has a relatively equivalent value,” said Superintendent Matt Best. “We’re just exploring right now and had requests for information submitted to us last month. We basically reached out to developers and the community asking if anyone had any ideas either of properties for us to buy, or ideas of how to develop this particular property and/or swaps. We received those and are in the process of reviewing them and starting the discussion with folks who may have some interest.”

Best went on to mention that district-office facility improvements — like many other districts across the state — are low on the priority list. However, Best also talked how the facility is shared with DSIS and looking for a new property to move into is important in providing those students a better school environment and a facility that’ll stand the test of time.

A recent press release by the district said that it has three main goals in this process: To maximize the financial return from the disposition of 526 B St, to secure a new and more appropriate home for DSIS and the District office and supporting the community’s efforts to provide additional housing, particularly in the downtown core.

“The board and I have talked about the importance of more housing in Davis. It’s something we feel we need to do our part in promoting as much good housing options as possible in town,” said Best.

“This is also our foray into thinking about workforce housing for our own employees. We’ve got that joint study going with the city to determine where our students and staff are living and what sort of houses and price points that might be. That will help us think about employee housing and also help the city think about what type of housing can continue to bring students into our district.”

As one may recall from a past board meeting when the property of 526 B St was the topic of discussion, local developer Jim Kidd proposed a state-of-the-art performance hall and facility for the arts that he’d fund.

“Anybody that wants to pay what the property is worth or swap for property or properties what this property is worth, we’re going to entertain all those offers,” Best said. “I think that’s part of the work we’re doing now to figure out who’s really serious about this engagement. We’re definitely not going to be giving the property away and whatever this property is used for afterwards, the owner will have to work with the city to figure out whether that’s acceptable to them.

“In terms of us, we’re open to anyone who wants to purchase this property. If they’re willing to provide fair compensation for it, whether that’s dollars or a swap, we’re open to talking about it. We’re just figuring out what the potential options are.”