

**Ambitious plans for new \$63.5 million high school unveiled**

By [Ben Hanstein](#) • Jun 3rd, 2009 • Category: [Features](#), [News](#)



FARMINGTON - On Tuesday evening, the Mt. Blue Regional School District's board of directors got their first look at the new high school construction project, estimated to cost \$63.5 million. Administrators and architects plan to change not just the bricks and mortar, but how education works in the district.

Directors, who would change the district's name from MSAD 9 to Mt. Blue RSD later in the meeting, had few questions after being presented with floor plans and the proposed budget for the first time. The building committee, which has been working with Lyndon Keck with PDT Architects, is expected to be on hand at the next meeting, when directors will likely have studied the material in detail and have more questions.



*A view of the new high school proposed by the building committee, from the north. The main entrance would be here, as would the two drop-off loops. The top picture represents an aerial view, from a southern direction.*

The new school would be 226,000 square feet, 35.8 percent larger than the current Mt. Blue High School, and situated on the same campus. Two wings of the existing building, the three-story wing in the high school and the rear wing of the Foster Regional Applied

Technology Center, as well as the gymnasium, would not be torn down and instead be incorporated into the new building.

Sixty-three percent of the current building would be used in the future, after substantial renovation. Everything else would be demolished in stages, with the new, larger school being built over a three-year period.

"This is not a paint-and-paper job," Keck told the board. He noted that the current building was 40 years old and poorly insulated, and that the driveways, parking lots and athletic fields would also be replaced.

The school would aim to blend high school classes with career technical education programs, such as those currently taught at the FRATC. The building committee, Keck noted, was interested in not only fully integrating the two, separate programs at the current site, but also involving individuals and businesses in the community.

"You won't have two institutions joined at the hip, which is what you have now," Keck said, "with a glass corridor that runs between the two. This is a new way to think about learning and a new way to think about thinking."

The administration and state are eager to build upon the success of FRATC, which now offers courses in such disciplines as composites, firefighting and alternative energy. Keck said that the greater level of collaboration between the high school, community and career technical programs would allow for a more personalized education. Students could learn real-world applications for their knowledge, while the community could call upon the minds and energy of the students.

The new building project would consist of three "learning communities," located in the three main wings of the facility, attached by a large, central hallway dubbed "Main Street" by the building committee. Along that hallway would be positioned the facilities shared by all three communities; the library, auditorium, gymnasium, food court, nurse and so forth.



*PDT Architects' Lyndon Keck (pictured here at an earlier meeting) has worked for months with the building committee. PDT Architects, based out of Portland, recently helped design Cony High School.*



*The current plan for the ground floor of the new Mt. Blue High School. The yellow strip in the middle is the “Main Street” hallway, while the blue represents labs and classrooms. The red rooms are facilities used by all students, while the grey boxes are support facilities. The main entrance is to the right of the diagram. Not pictured are the second and third floors, both of which are substantially smaller. The two wings towards the bottom both have second floors, while the lower-right one actually has a third floor as well.*

There would be a single entrance, as per the state Department of Education’s current requirements, which would be at the north of the building, facing the Seamon Road to the north. There would be three egresses onto the campus, with the architects planning to add both bus and parent drop-off loops. The plan adds roughly 60 parking spaces. There would be a total of seven athletic fields, all new. The building committee is exploring artificial turf as a possibility, as it is easier to care for and allows a more robust use of the fields. One of the seven fields would be far to the south, connected through a trail system for more secluded practices.

The school would also be attached to a public water and sewer through the Route 2 corridor, a first for the facility which previously used wells and a sewer treatment field. The building committee has been working with Farmington Village Corp., the local water department, to make those 1.4 miles of connections possible. A 400,000 gallon tank would be situated to the south of the school, to provide a gravity feed system.



The building committee hopes to seek final DOE approval in July and take the plan to the voters of Mt. Blue RSD in September. Assuming the plan is approved, construction would likely start in the summer of 2010 and the new building be fully complete by 2013.