



EAST COMMUNITY CENTER



# From School Closure to Community Impact

December 12, 2025



# Meet our Presenters

Chérie Garcia-Kuper, LPS Board of Education President

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# Outcomes

- Recognize the value of collaborative decision-making in repurposing educational spaces.
- Describe the process LPS used to identify community needs and assets.
- Consider how nontraditional educational spaces can serve as community anchors.
- Gain actionable ideas or frameworks for initiating or strengthening school-community partnerships.
- Develop understanding of how school districts can become catalysts for community building and resilience.

# Littleton Public Schools in 2021

- The district was experiencing declining enrollment.
- LPS passed a Bond in 2018
  - The Bond allowed the district to strategically replace its aging facilities in a way that also addressed transportation and school size challenges.



# Decision Making during Declining Enrollment

- LPS Board of Education decided to consolidate East Elementary School and Ralph Moody Elementary School on the Ralph Moody property and create a new elementary school.
- LPS Board of Education committed to developing a community center in the East Elementary Campus.
  - The Center needed to be self-sustaining without any new budget commitment.
  - The Center would be designed to strengthen the assets and support the needs of the North Littleton Community.



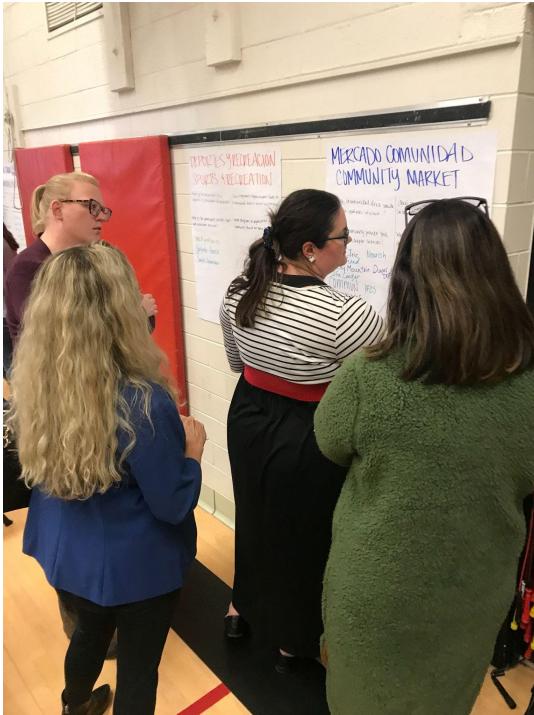
# Community Engagement Process

- LPS hired a community partner, Civic Innovation Lab, to guide community engagement strategies, develop a shared decision-making process, and facilitate the implementation of the decision-making process to determine what services to include in the East Community Center
- Over a series of four Community Meetings, various and diverse stakeholders co-created a shared vision and plan for the East Community Center that reflected and represented the North Littleton community.
- The activities implemented ensured all voices were heard and incorporated democratic processes, consensus-building, and cross-experiential collaboration.

# Community Engagement



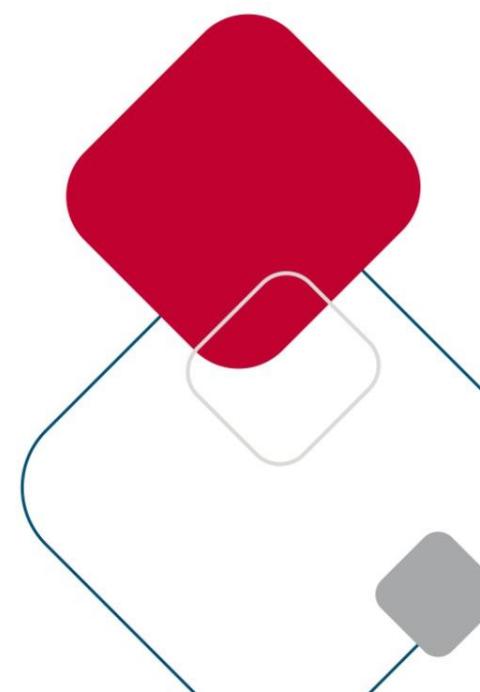
# Community Engagement Process



- 4 meetings
- Community members developed presentations for the district related to what services would be ideal for the Community Center
- Enhance community engagement by removing barriers
  - Childcare
  - Food
  - Language Justice services

# Development of the East Community Center

- Educational classes
- Small business support
- Wellness (health and mental health)
- Community market (food bank)
- Sports and recreation
- Community space and garden
- Resource navigation
- Childcare
- Afterschool and youth groups



# Timeline



# Development of the East Community Center

- Establish structures- steering committee and advisory committee
- Solicit interested partners
- Apply for grants for start up funding and to offset costs
- Identify anchor tenants and critical partners
- Develop lease agreement and operating principles
- Negotiate leases

# Financial Implication

- Grant funding for start-up
- District commitment to maintain the building
- Rent and fee revenue

**The East Community Center operates independently from the District in a sustainable manner and has since it was established!**

# Community Impact: Within the Last Year

- 40,000 entries into the center
- 120 special events (cultural, educational, resourcing)
- 11,800 individuals have access to food (actual people fed)
- Over 6,100 events of youth programming
- 500 individuals for mental health services
- More than 2,100 volunteers engaged



## Fly Over at Community Event



# Who are your community partners?



St. Andrew  
Market





# Lessons Learned



- Community Engagement is essential to build trust, transparency and collaboration.
- Anchor tenants and partnerships build sustainability and support.
- Thoughtful consideration for how a Community Center can operate like a school and how it cannot is critical - this requires intentional planning.
- Need for a continual development process as partners come and go in order to provide consistency and sustainability.



# Inspiration for the Future...

## The Little Learners Lab

**End in Mind - *Increase the percentage of students prepared to master their academic standards on the FIRST day of Kindergarten.***



# Questions?