

## **What to Do with the Old Berry Campus?**

This survey ran from March 16, until April 5, 2007.

142 Responses

Average time to complete survey was 3 minutes

### **What should the Hoover City Schools Board of Education do with the old Berry campus? Check all that apply.**

**18.5% Reopen it as a Middle School for the surrounding community**

**16.0% Make it a vocational/technical school**

**13.5% Sell it, if the price is right**

**10.1% Make it a middle AND high school IB program school (grades 6-12)**

**7.6% Make it a grades K-8 Magnet school**

**7.6% Make it a grades 9-12 Magnet school**

**7.6% House the IB program for high school**

**7.3% Other**

**5.6% Make it a smaller high school, with fewer program offerings**

**5.1% Make it home to high school Academies**

**1.1% Sell it, regardless of the price---it's useless as a school to Hoover Schools**

The following responses were under "Other":

- as middle only if goes on to Hoover
- Special needs program consolidation
- Make it a high school again, with fine arts
- Put the Crossroads school there
- Make it a High School for the Bluff Park and Shades Mountain communities
- The IB program is not suitable for all gifted students. Make it a magnet school for gifted students not in the IB program.
- community education; satellite campus; senior services; etc...
- Use it to replace Shades Mt Elementary. Then sell that property to a developer.
- I thought it would've been a great 9th grade building instead of building a completely new one. It's a wonderful school and it's a wonderful location. I think the football, track, basketball courts could be used in addition to the other middle schools as recreation league fields.
- make it a smaller high school but offer what the other high schools offer. It would certainly be less expensive to offer all the programs you get at HHS and SPHS than it would be to build another multi million dollar building. Why not have a 5A school. We don't have to be 6A
- a FINE ARTS Center for Hoover schools
- or a middle school that does not feed Spain Park; too far
- Make it a smaller high school, with program offerings tied to HHS
- keep as a school - it is a vital part of Hoover's history

- Make it a Fine Arts school for Hoover students similar to ASFA
- We could use it to run community programs?
- Vocational/Technical
- Just remain a school of some kind
- ESL and Crossroads
- Mirror the Richmond, VA program allowing gifted students to attend a single school.
- JUST DON'T SELL IT
- Partner w/City and Parks & Recreation as a multi-use facility
- Sell it to Shades Mountain Christian School
- lower price & sell to Shades Mountain Christian school
- Offer it (at a symbolic \$1.00/year to Honda or Mercedes to establish a research center (technical, marketing, human resources, etc.) to foster "advanced thinking" and cutting edge ideas in the Hoover community. Require some very strict standards of excellence for anyone who takes the offer.
- do not lower educational standards for select cultures

**Who should make the decision about what to do with the old Berry campus? Check all that apply.**

**28.5% The Community**

**20.7% The Superintendent**

**19.5% The Board of Education**

**18.3% All of the above**

**8.1% A special Committee appointed by the Board**

**2.4% The City Government**

**2.4% Other**

The following responses were under "Other":

- Community input. Legally the Supt and Board are the only ones who can legally make such a decision
- I wonder if the BOE has lost touch with their community. I'm not sure I trust their decision...it seems they are self serving rather than representative.
- Just be sure the community has a say
- TRY NOT TO BE SO POLITICAL
- Include the city & Parks & Recreation if partnership is a possibility
- no one in the city government

**Any further comments?**

Please take the time to look at all of the options for that campus. Don't just get rid of it so you don't have to think about it anymore.

Does not need to feed into Spain if made a middle school unless children that attend would already go to Spain

Ultimately this should be the recommendation of the Superintendent to the Board but a diverse committee should look at the potential use of Berry possibly as part of the bigger picture of growth and current and future needs for facilities.

We are past the planning stage; the time to act is now; a decision is required; there will never be the perfect solution in the eyes of the community; too much input can just add confusion; you can't please everyone so the only consideration is what can we fiscally afford that will benefit the children the most.

I will support any choice that shows thought, planning, and adheres to strategic goals set by the stakeholders of HCS.

I think we have let the wealthy parents run amuck in our school system. The reason we worked so hard to interview and select a leader is for him to make the hard decisions. The right decision is not always the most popular one but it is still the right one. I think that if Mr. Craig feels strongly one way or another on his own about what should be done with Berry we should support him. We have spent too many years and too many millions of dollars trying to make everyone "happy". The children and parents in and around Shades Mtn. are spending an absurd amount of time traveling for school and school functions. They have no sense of community with their schools (middle or high) because they are on the other side of town. Why does it not make the most sense to divide our city into north and south (or east & west) and send the children to those schools that are closest to them instead of making sure the richest communities have the newest schools? I think we have a tremendous opportunity to continue a great tradition of Hoover with the Berry campus instead of selling off our history to the highest bidder. I have great faith that Mr. Craig will make the best decision for all of the residents, students, and future students of Hoover. I look forward to seeing him make it!

This needs to be thought out in terms to long term plans, not just what the school board or city council feels is best for today.

The Board should have worked harder to make the deal work that was offered last year when SMCS wanted to buy Berry for \$13 million.

Let the building committee in agreement w/ Mr. Bray [sic] after collecting data on at least three options take findings to the Board.

Local government and boards should not be ruled by popularity polls.

A large part of Hoover now lives nowhere near the middle and high schools that they are zoned for, but do live very near to the old Berry campus. When Hoover is constantly having to build new facilities, it seems more than foolish to get rid of a fairly recently renovated building capable of housing many students conveniently.

I feel as a parent who purchased a home specifically in an area that would enable my children to attend Berry Middle school and were heartbroken when it was closed, the only right answer is to re-open it as a school for the community.

This decision was already made! Our new board did not like the old decision and now the facilities just sit there completely unused. This is poor stewardship! I'm afraid now that there will be ambivalence over a sale price. The \$13 million that was offered was a good price for a specific use property like this. Our community will be very fortunate to see anything like that amount of money for that property now. Either use it or sell it, but letting it sit there and rot is irresponsible!!!

Why is there not a place on this survey to designate what part of Hoover you are located? I think those that this decisions effects should have the most input.

Thank you,  
Shades Mountain Parent

Berry belongs to the Hoover community. It is part of OUR history.

Let the Supt make a recommendation to the BOE and the BOE do its job and make the decision that it feels is proper.

The Shades Crest/Bluff Park area of Hoover deserves to have its own middle school located closer. Busing children 1 hour each way is not fair to the children.

The board will make the final decision because that's how it works. But, I think that they should hear from everyone affected before they make that decision.

SME parent

It should be reopened to serve the surrounding community which no consideration was given when it was closed. By closing Berry Middle school the school system placed a burden on the parents of the city of Hoover who can least afford ( two parents who work ) it while catering to more affluent neighborhoods of our city. We also expect that the

reopened middle school be comparable to the other middle schools in our city. SMES Parent

I live in the Shades Mountain area. I would like to see the Berry Campus used in some capacity in the Hoover school system. It would be a shame to sell it.

As a parent in the Shades Mountain community it does not make sense to me that our children are sent all the way to Spain Park while communities closer to that area are sent to Simmons and Hoover. Also, it seems that the community would want both of our high schools to have outstanding athletic programs instead of just one high school being a powerhouse because there are more middle and elementary schools feeding into it.

In recent months, the neglect of the Shades Mtn portion of Hoover has been in the news. The closing of Berry as a middle school was another example of that neglect. I have lived on Alford Ave and now off of Tyler Road. Spain Park is a world away from our area. We need a middle school that would serve our neighborhood.

As the parent of a Shades Mtn Elementary 3rd grader - I'm already dreading the day we will have to leave our small neighborhood school neighborhood school and make the long commute to middle school. The commute will take away from our already-in-short-supply homework and family time. I would love to see my child attend middle school at the old Berry campus!

The school should serve the Shades Mountain community. It should be opened immediately. What a waste of resources to have Berry empty and sitting without serving the local students.

Surely this building and campus can serve some worthwhile purpose for the city of Hoover, whether it is for the education and well-being for children, adults, or senior citizens

Don't sell it to another city. If you are going to sell it, sell it to someone independent, such as Shades Mountain Independent Church.

We played our recreation league basketball games there this past season. I thought every time I pulled in the parking lot, that it was a waste for the community of Hoover not to be using it. I'm not from Hoover originally but I know it has lots of sentimental value to over half the population of this city.

I think it is ridiculous to keep multi million dollar schools (such as the 9th grade school) when we have a perfectly good facility sitting empty. That makes no fiscal sense at all.

Old Berry might need some updating but I just cannot believe that it couldn't be brought up to standards of the other high schools less expensively than building a new one! It is not in that bad of a location. If not as a high school, then a vocational school, a middle school. Use it for something! It is a travesty to just have it sitting there empty. Use it or lose it! Sell it to SMIC for a fair price if Hoover is not smart enough to utilize it ourselves

The academies at the high school are one class per day. It is not like a separate program. That one is not even an option. To put the IB program there would isolate those students even more. I feel some who might consider it won't if it pulls them away from everything else. This really needs to be considered.

from a concerned SME parent

Hoover City Schools should recognize that not all students will go on to a traditional 4-year college. A technical/vocational school should be created for those students who will not attend a 4-year college.

The choice "make it a smaller high school, with fewer program offerings" is not the best way to put it - the type of offerings need to be indicated. This particular wording makes it sound like a high school that no one would want to attend because there aren't as many things offered, right? If you mean make it a smaller high school with more specialized or advanced or selective offerings, that sounds much better. I know it would be impossible for a school that is much smaller size-wise to have all the offerings that Hoover High does, but who is to say that what is offered can't be high quality and very attractive to prospective students? That said, I think it would be a terrific idea to make the vacant campus a high school for the Shades Mountain, Bluff Park, and Green Valley student populations. It is in the middle - between the very far-flung campuses of SP and HH - just the right location to make sense. I am always hearing talk that the next high school is going to be built near Deer Valley - and forgive me, person who thought that up - but it seems ridiculous when you've got (the incredibly large) Hoover High right near that. I know the population that way is growing, but is it enough for another high school all the way out there?? Move these "old Hoover" area kids out of HH and put them in a good school near where they live. One that is already standing, for crying out loud, and can be made nice again. The stadium area is still in very good shape - back behind the school looks good. The front looks good. I hear work is needed on the inside, but I tell you, I would get in there and help paint, or clean, or whatever, if that's what it takes. As a parent, I can't help but think that that smaller school environment is a good one - if you give those kids good

teachers and good programs, it doesn't matter that the building is not new. Where that school is, I could volunteer some from where I work. The central location is a plus - please consider that. I chose a few other boxes on that question, but the smaller high school is my first choice by far. I hope there will be well-publicized community meetings regarding this - I'll be looking on my Simmons Update. Thanks for listening to a parent with two children in Hoover Schools. I am currently very happy with the education my kids are receiving at Green Valley Elem and Simmons Middle. My compliments to Mrs. Barber, Mrs. Campanotta and their co-administrators and faculty!!  
Mara Hamner

I think that the surrounding community of Bluff Park, Shades Mountain and perhaps Green Valley is comprised largely of families who purchased homes where they did so that their children could be educated in the smaller community schools that are offered in these areas of Hoover. I personally know MANY families who would LOVE to have their children attend Simmons Middle School and then follow this with a high school education offered at the Old Berry Campus. This would allow these children to remain in the smaller community/neighborhood school atmosphere that we, as parents, prefer for our children. I do however, feel that "fewer program offerings" sheds a negative feel over that choice in your selection menu. The option of a smaller school should still include programs such as AP course offerings, music and art programs, and sports (although on a smaller scale). The parents who want their children in a smaller school still want their children to be provided with opportunities to excel in a variety of fields! The focus has to be the children, and I believe that the option of a smaller high school for Bluff Park/Shades Mountain/Green Valley would be the best decision for them. An added benefit of this decision would be that it would help with the overcrowding that is taking place at HHS. It is certainly a better alternative than sending these children to Spain Park, which is on the other side of the world (or at least the city). The old Berry campus was a high school when I was growing up, and I feel that it should be an easy transition to make it one again.

As a teacher in the Hoover system, I see many children failing and giving up by 8th grade. Not every child is "college material", but every child deserves to be educated to make a good living and be a positive member of our society. WE NEED a technical school for these kids to teach them skills so they will not drop out...not everyone needs algebra and world history!! What these kids need is a skill. For example: math - learn to keep a checkbook and make a budget, understand interest, percent, and banking terms. In science, the plumber skills need to understand the simple physics of flow, heat, cold, and the "social studies" needs to be anger management, living with different cultures, etc. If we "charged" tuition to Homewood, Vestavia, and Mountain Brook for some of their student to attend, it

would help us pay for this school. The campus is centrally located so these schools could benefit from this also.

Berry is a wonderful facility and I hope that it will be used for something educational. It is wasteful for it to sit there and not be used.

As a mother of three children, two already in SMES, I would love to see the children in our community have a local school. It seems absurd to me that our children have to be bused over 10 miles to school when there is a great school less than 2 miles away.

We are losing TOO MANY kids because we do not have a vo/tech school. Hoover does not want to admit that we need it however, is it about the City or the kids?

This school is TOO GOOD to sit empty!!!! Numerous options available that would serve the community nearby!!!

Use Berry as an ESL starting place - students who speak little or no English will go there for one year to learn the basics of the English language and then be placed in their appropriately zoned schools. This will enhance their learning potential and not take additional class time away from the regular population. Also you could use the remaining part of Berry for an alternative school since Crossroads is restricting/limiting schools from sending problems to them due to limited space. We need to take the problem students to a place where they can learn and receive appropriate discipline and let our classrooms/schools be a place of learning.

Rezoning has to be addressed. The Bupmus area/Ross Bridge needs a new high school. Trace Crossing due to location must go to Hoover High. Forget about the football program and due what is best for the kids. Let Simmons and the new 9th grade/middle school on Hoover High campus feed Hoover High. Also please when a new high school is built call it something other than Hoover West or something. My kids are at Spain Park and often feel like you are not in Hoover if you are not at Hoover High.

The City Council needs to recognize that the citizens of Hoover want to have more say in who sits on the school board. School board members need to be elected rather than appointed. If the Council will propose this as a referendum on the next election ballot, they will take the "heat" off of them for bad decisions that have been made regarding school board composition.

Don't build a new school, use this one for SOMETHING!!!

THIS WAS A PERFECTLY GOOD SCHOOL, USE IT.

I don't know which party Real Estate Agent Rita Layne is working for but if she is still in the picture she needs to be out.

Each one of us has our own opinion of what should be done. Obviously, we can't all have it our way. The school system has a multitude of professionals who are capable of determining the needs of the school system. They have always included community input in their decision making. Hoover City Schools owns the property, and they have the right to make the decision to use the facility in the way that best serves the needs of the school system.

There is no reason for building a new third high school when HHS being too crowded and SPH with enough capacity to grow. Open old Berry as middle school and let those kids zones to SPH. Rezone some central part of the city and split the kids to make both high schools with reasonably equal number of kids. If both high schools go beyond their capacity, then seek for a third high school. Commit to renovating old Berry so that kids going to that school should feel that they are treated fairly. This will also eliminate overcrowding of new Berry in the near future. This requires a bold move from the Board and avoids the mistake of last rezoning.

The school should have not been shut down and moved to Spain Park. The people that live in the Shades Crest/Bluff Park area of Hoover now have to travel too far to take their kids to school and to attend functions.

I think it is sad that as bad as we need schools in Hoover that one was shut down. Children should not be made to travel so far to attend their school. Why have our school officials become so nearsighted?

IMO the BOE should have continued to negotiate with Shades Mtn. Christian School since they were very interested in buying the old Berry campus. That would have been a great solution for all! When the two new board members started last year, they appeared to deliberately "stall" those negotiations so SMCS would not have enough time to raise the needed funds. The Board could have had \$13 million last year that could have been earning interest all this time. Instead they've had the continued expenses associated with a building not in use.

The property should be sold to someone who can put it to good use before it deteriorates to a point where the costs of renovation are prohibitive and the value declines as well.

I think the original idea of closing the school was not wise. The continued waste of time in not using the facility is outrageous and has lowered my confidence level in the Hoover Board of Education.

As a member of the Community Planning Team, I suggested the same ideas, and recommended the Special Committee (even offering to contribute on all the efforts needed to make the research center a reality.) As you stated, no action was taken in that direction. I hope your survey will fall on enlightened and listening ears, as well as open minds. Good Luck. Afif

This had better be a good decision since Hoover City Schools are becoming the inner city school system just like Bessemer and Birmingham!!!!!!