

# Novel plan will put high school in 10-acre shopping mall

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A novel plan by school officials and developers may create a high school heaven, where students would have a 10-acre shopping mall and 20-acre park beside their new Fort Collins High School.

When Poudre R-1 School District officials began looking for a site for a new high school, they found that W.W. Reynolds also had designs on land at Timberline and Horsetooth roads.

Timberline Partners, controlled by W.W. Reynolds, owned the land and planned to build a mall there. Poudre R-1 wanted to build a school on the site.

Now developers and school officials have decided to do both, creating one of the first developments of its kind.

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"We're trying to break the mold. We absolutely will not build a conventional school," said school board member Jerry Dunn.

Students could work in the mall and learn anything from how to order napkins to how to take a customer's order, said John Brzeinski, principal of Fort Collins High.

If the school board approves the partnership, the \$30 million school would be built under the same roof as the mall. The city is being asked to sweeten the deal by creating a 20-acre park for students and residents.

School board members have been asked to close the deal — thus locking themselves into the partnership — Feb. 19. The 62.8-acre site would cost \$1.004 million. Voters approved a bond issue last November to finance the school, which would open in September 1995.

Some school officials and parents are baffled by the concept of housing businesses and classrooms under one roof, said school board member John Drennen.

"We're flying by radar a little bit," he acknowledged, but potential benefits to students justify the experiment.

Students and parents would linger a little longer at the complex, he predicted. "A parent attending an adult literacy class can stop off right afterwards at King Soopers, then pick up a kid who's at a tutoring class or wherever. Open your mind up a little bit."

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**Jerry Dunn, school board member**

Educators also predict these benefits:

■ Because the businesses would pay part of the tab, the school district would save \$250,000 to \$750,000 on water pipes, sewer lines and other essentials, said Kirk Douglas of Harlan, Myles & Douglas, a Denver real estate firm consulting for the project.

■ The school board would have the right to control students whether they're in the classroom or McDonald's. Administrators now can't control students when they leave campus, Brzeinski said.

Though it seems unusual to

place a school next to a burger joint, Timberline isn't exactly doing traditional business either, said Jerry Lee, Reynolds' vice president.

Almost never would a company let another group control land use on a prize parcel, Lee said. "It's scary to have somebody else have some control over property we already own."

But it could give businesses a chance to help students hone basic work skills, said Rich Feller, professor of career development at Colorado State University.

He said companies interested only in cheap student labor should be avoided, however. "Companies that want kids to chrome bumpers or sling burgers would not be good."

For the project to work, the district would need to recruit businesses that want to invest in stu-

dents for years to come, not just while profits are high, Feller said.

A similar business-education partnership has been launched in the Minneapolis area. Schools from five districts will have kids in kindergarten through third grade, plus 11th and 12th grades, take their classes in suites in the nation's biggest shopping center, the Mall of America, after it opens in August.

"Schools have to get hooked up to the real world," said Ginny Pease, a research assistant with the National Center for Research in Vocational Education at the University of Minnesota.

When the mall opens in August, parents who work there will benefit, too, by having their children nearby, said Arlene Bush, president of the Bloomington (Minn.) school board.