

THE REPUBLIC

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"We shall endeavor to make our paper the champion of the people of Bartholomew County and we shall advocate, irrespective of political considerations, all measures that have for their object the good of the community. In short, we hope to make our paper such as no intelligent person in the county can do without."

— Isaac T. Brown,
 Founding Editor, 1875

Businesses to cover cost of cardboard recycling?

BARTHOLOMEW County Council member Chris Ogle, who also serves on the Solid Waste Management District Board, framed the issue of recycling in basic economic terms last week.

During a discussion that eventually resulted in a decision by the board to seek proposals for conducting a financial analysis of the district's operations, Ogle observed that "our tax dollars are paying for the want-to's, not the have-to's."

Separating the definitions of the "want-to's" from the "have-to's" can be a tricky exercise. Typical of the concerns about the expenses incurred by the district is the cardboard recycling program that had been offered to local businesses at minimal or no costs.

That program is now at capacity, and businesses applying for the service are put on waiting lists.

There obviously is a demand for a service of this kind. Materials received by local businesses usually are delivered in cardboard containers. Some companies report that they fill one or more dumpsters several times a week with just cardboard.

There is a public benefit as well. The cardboard materials are diverted from the landfill, pushing further into the future the inevitable need for a new and very expensive landfill.

The cost of a new landfill is not just in dollars and cents. The siting process alone can exact an emotional toll on neighbors of potential sites and the community at large.

The Solid Waste Management District has had to cut off accepting additional clients for the cardboard service because there is only one truck designated for picking up the materials. Officials estimate that a second truck and crew could double the current capacity of materials picked up and diverted from the landfill.

But that brings into question the costs and financial benefits of operating the system.

One factor that comes into play is the return the district gets on the recyclable cardboard. That price fluctuates from year to year, but has been dropping recently. In 2001 the district received \$142,634 from sales, but last year that number had dropped to \$95,963.

While there is certainly a value on the service for the overall community in that it helps prolong the life of the landfill, it is becoming obvious that any expansion of this service is going to include substantial costs.

Someone is going to have to absorb the costs. The businesses that now use the service pay a one-time fee of \$100 for each Dumpster, but that is only if the Columbus City Garage has any available. When none is available, participating businesses have to supply their own. Other than that, the service is free.

It would seem appropriate that the users of this service pay a fee commensurate with the materials that are taken off their hands by the district.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- Letters must include the writer's name and a daytime telephone number for verification to be considered for publication.
- Letters should be kept as brief as possible.
- Because of space and legal considerations, The Republic reserves the right to edit any letters or articles and to limit comments.
- Please email your letters to editorial@therepublic.com or mail them to 333 Second St. Columbus, IN 47201.



From left: This presentation by Southern Illinois architecture student Tyler Cain is one of 17 visions he and his classmates created for a space on Washington Street between Sixth and Seventh as part of a class project. The Sprague Co. is seeking the city's help to build an \$11 million apartment complex between Sixth and Seventh streets on Washington Street. The actual building will be modeled on the design at right by Steve Risting, design principal with CSO Architects of Indianapolis.



Transforming Columbus City inspiration for class assignments

BY now most folks around Columbus should have a pretty good idea what an apartment building planned for the space on Washington Street between Sixth and Seventh will look like.

The conceptual drawing featuring a five-story building in daylight hours that appears on this page pretty much tells the story.

However, the other image that appears alongside it tells another tale.

Obviously there are distinct differences in the two structures. The one depicted in daylight is likely to be built. The other one isn't, at least not in the space on Washington Street.

The daylight building is a rendering of a design by Steve Risting, design principal with CSO Architects in Indianapolis. He was commissioned by the Sprague Co. to design a structure that would have both commercial and residential applications in front of the Cummins Inc. parking garage. Right now the space is an empty lot. Should plans for the building go forward — believed to be contingent on the city approving a plan to divert most of the property taxes the company would pay in its first 22 years to a bond issue — it's likely that the finished structure would mirror the daylight image above.

Risting is a pretty familiar figure in Columbus. He's already been involved in a number of other local projects such as St. Bartholomew Catholic Church, The Commons, the Cole Apartments and the new Cummins office buildings attached to The Commons. He's also the man who put together the eighth edition of a book about the city's building designs, "A Look at Modern Architecture."

Not so familiar is the designer behind the other concept pictured above. Tyler Cain has not completed structures to his credit. He's a student at Southern Illinois University.

His concept is one of 17 that have been prepared by fourth-year architecture students at Southern Illinois based on what they would do with the empty lot on Washington Street.

They have spent the past semester working on an assignment given them by Professor Shannon McDonald — to create a mixed-use artist housing complex that would encourage young people to relocate to Columbus.



Harry McCawley

The students will be in Columbus on Friday to present their individual concepts at the Indiana University Center for Art and Design.

This isn't the first time architecture students from colleges around the country have used Columbus as a guinea pig for class assignments.

Back in 1998 a group of students in landscape architecture at Ball State University presented their concepts for what Columbus' riverfront could look like.

In 2012 another group of Ball State students did mock-ups for how the old St. Bartholomew Catholic Church could be used in a new setting.

A year later, Iowa State University students worked with the Bartholomew County Historical Society in presenting designs for a museum dedicated to Columbus' industrial history.

The matter that sets this latest presentation apart from its predecessors is that the public will have an opportunity to participate in the evaluation of the students' works.

"We really want to encourage people to come into the center, look at these concepts and voice their own opinions," said Kelly Wilson, director of the IU Center for Art and Design. "In a sense, their reactions will be considered in grading the projects."

While the assignment given the students was not necessarily geared to the kind of clientele being envisioned for the Sprague Apartments, the students did have to follow real-life guidelines.

Risting, who had some input into how the course was structured, explained that the designs had to incorporate elements that were controlled by factors such as location and local ordinances.

"When they visited Columbus, they met with people like Jeff Bergman (city-county

Students showcase

WHAT: Presentation of plans by Southern Illinois University students on how downtown space might be utilized.

WHERE: Indiana University School for Art and Design, northwest corner of Third and Jackson streets.

WHEN: 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday

ADMISSION: Free

CONCEPT: The public is invited to drop in anytime during the program to look at the individual plans, talk with the student designers and comment on their visions

INFORMATION: 812-375-7550

planning director) to discuss how their plans could be affected by existing local laws," he said. "They also took into consideration the surrounding area and how their designs might fit in with the rest of the downtown."

There is no doubt that the student designs are geared to a young audience.

"They have developed their own program ideas as to how to encourage young artists to live in downtown Columbus," Wilson said. "Coffee bars, grocery store, galleries, nightclubs, skate-parks, Columbus archives, green-roofs, Victorian glass houses and urban gardens, to name just a few."

Everyone involved with the project stresses that these plans are purely conceptual. None of them will be integrated into the final plans for the Sprague complex, which are already well along in the development pipeline.

"The real idea is to encourage discussion, and develop ideas," Wilson said. "This group of students is just one of a number that we anticipate using Columbus as a laboratory for design."

The visions that will be on display to the public Friday could plant some seeds.

Who knows, it just might inspire a building elsewhere in Columbus sometime in the future.

Harry McCawley is associate editor of The Republic. He can be reached by phone at 379-5520 or email at harry@therepublic.com.

Ritz embraces A-F school accountability system

A breakthrough for education reformers came this week as staunchly anti-reform Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz embraced the state's A through F school grading and accountability system, even if she didn't realize it.

As state legislators put the finishing touches on a plan to expand Indiana's school choice voucher program, a Statehouse File.com report by Samm Quinn found that "about one in five students who received a voucher this year is using it at a school rated C, D or F on the state's accountability standards."

To be clear, some of those students left C, D, or F schools in order to attend other C, D or F schools.

Ritz, an opponent of school choice predictably told Quinn, "I don't think that's a good use of taxpayer dollars to send children to poor performing schools than the public schools they were attending."

Translation: if children are going to attend poor-performing schools, they are going to attend the poor-performing government-run schools to which they are assigned and not the poor-performing school their parents choose.

"This, believe it or not, is progress."

Ritz, heretofore, has opposed grading schools, or more specifically, assigning them yearly letter grades based on a number of factors that include test



Cam Savage

scores, graduation rates and, most important, how much students grow academically from one year to the next. Letter grades offer a level of transparency that Ritz and the teachers' unions find distasteful. So it was a major step for Ritz to acknowledge at all that low-performing schools exist.

Everyone knows what an A rating means. Everyone knows what an F rating means. Supporters of the A-F grading system rightly understand that a transparent system of accountability encourages entire school communities — parents, students, community members, teachers and administrators — to strive for high achievement.

Reformers believe school leaders will do everything in their power to improve struggling schools if they know they're being graded. And they must be because, thankfully, parents today have more options than ever before in choosing their child's school.

In some communities, like Indianapolis, public charter schools are an option for families. Thanks to Indiana's voucher program, families of qualifying

income levels now have the option to send their children to the private school of their choice, an option that rich families always enjoyed.

These are vitally important developments if you believe in the American tenet of competition. Competition will force schools and school corporations to hire the best teachers, offer the most important and desirable classes, and put a priority on academic achievement.

But not everyone likes competition, and here we are talking about the Indiana State Teachers' Association, the Indiana Federation of Teachers and our superintendent of public instruction, who was a long-time ISTA board member and union official.

The unions prefer that students be forced to attend the public charter schools — though not public charter schools — to which they are geographically and arbitrarily assigned. The more students assigned to these schools, the more teachers necessary to teach them. The majority of these teachers will become dues paying union members.

Competition threatens the system, and it's easy to see why they don't care much for accountability either. That is why a transparent school grading system is so important to those seeking to dislodge the entire education establishment from its relatively sedentary position. If you don't know you are sending

your kid to a lousy school, you are less inclined to look for other available options like public charters or private schools, which should be noted, are rarely unionized.

These reforms work hand in hand. The healthy competition driven by school choice will work best if parents have an understanding of which schools are good and which ones are not and are free to make their own choices about where their kids go to school. And we need to accept and embrace the notion that not every school is right for every student regardless of letter grade.

When Ritz took aim at the few voucher parents who moved their children to C, D, and F rated private schools (schools graded D or F for 3 straight years are prohibited from accepting voucher students), she inadvertently embraced the school grading system she has long deplored and hopes to eliminate.

So yes, it was good to see our superintendent of public instruction take a stand against poor-performing private schools. Now that Ritz has expressed concern for the 41 private C, D and F graded schools in Indiana, perhaps at some point she will turn her attention the state's 798 C, D or F rated traditional public schools.

Cam Savage is a principal at Limestone Strategies and a veteran of numerous Republican campaigns and the National Republican Senatorial Committee. He also worked at the Department of Education for former Superintendent Tony Bennett. He is a graduate of Franklin College. He can be reached at Cam@limestone-strategies.com.