Newport Harbor High School
Robins/Loats Replacement

Questions & Answers

1. Why a complete replacement for Robins-Loats and not a retro-fit?

   A retro-fit of the building would make it both dysfunctional and ugly. Most tellingly though, the cost to bring the existing structure up to current seismic, ADA, fire and State building code exceeds the benchmark for the Division of the State Architect's approval on a retrofit. In Robins-Loats case, there was even a possibility that the retro-fit would be more expensive than a new building, and it still might not be safe. Consequently, for the safety and concern of both staff and students, the building will be replaced to meet current code and provide facilities for a 21st century educational program. The architecture of the replacement building will mirror, as much as possible, the original.

2. Why could the bell tower not be retrofitted?

   The tower currently exhibits significant structural concerns and has been deemed to be unstable. Additionally, the cost and complexity to upgrade, reinforce, protect in-place even parts of the existing tower structure and the theater façade and tie them into a new structure are prohibitive. The new design incorporates a new bell tower with similar architectural details into the design. The tower will have the same size and profile as the original and appear very familiar, to the Newport Harbor community.

3. Will the new building be sensitive to the original design?

   The design will honor and replicate the existing architecture along with providing new and improved technology in the administration offices, science classrooms, library, food services and the new theater.

4. What is the time line for rebuilding Robins-Loats?

   Demolition will begin this summer (2007). Construction of the new building will begin in the Fall with an estimated completion date in late 2009.

5. Was the building considered for Historical preservation?

The building is not a registered historical site though it is dearly loved by all associated with it. The fact is, given its seismic flaws we cannot keep it. All avenues to renovate the existing structure have been exhausted over the last five years. The Division of the State Architect mandates for the safety of students and staff that the building be replaced under current building codes. The new design honors history and is visually very similar to the original. Additionally, the District has hired a professional photographer to document the existing buildings with respect to details such as the signatures in the bell tower. Certain elements of the existing building, such as some light fixtures, the dedication tiles and the courtyard mosaics, will be removed, preserved and incorporated into the new building.

6. Who conducted the engineering study of the tower, and what standard were used to determine the building seismically unsafe?

The building was evaluated by two separate structural engineering firms and reviewed extensively with the Division of the State Architect, the governing body for State educational facilities. The consensus was unanimous on the inability of keeping the existing building and the need to replace the structure.

7. What standards are used to evaluate seismic designs and condition?

The standards used to evaluate all aspects of school construction and/or renovations are those established by the Department of State Architecture (DSA) and applicable State laws and building codes, as well as the professional judgment of the architects and structural engineers who have worked on the project.