

Officials mull math, science center move

BCPS seeks funding for downtown relocation

Justin A. Hinkley • *The Enquirer* • September 30, 2010

Battle Creek Public Schools officials are expected to appeal next week for funding to move the Battle Creek Area Math & Science Center downtown.

A meeting is set for Tuesday between BCPS Superintendent Linda Hicks, Math & Science Center Director Connie Duncan and representatives of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Kellogg Co. The only item on that meeting's agenda, Hicks said: possible funding for the center's move from its current undersized Springfield location to a renovated downtown building.

The center's move was first proposed in late 2008 as part of a multimillion-dollar downtown improvement plan backed by economic developer Battle Creek Unlimited and the Kellogg Co. While much of that plan has been implemented, the Math & Science Center move has been stalled because of a lack of funding.

"I have no idea how this meeting is going to turn out," said Hicks, who was hired at BCPS in April. "But we need to start having these conversations. I'm not going to sit here and talk about this for another two years."

Officials with the foundation were noncommittal Wednesday afternoon.

"This is really just part of their regular, ongoing discussions as part of our overall commitment to the Battle Creek revitalization," said Kathy Reincke, foundation communications manager. "We're glad to be part of these conversations, but there's nothing really to share at this point."

A message seeking comment was left Wednesday afternoon with the Kellogg Co. media line.

While several downtown locations were considered for the center, Hicks said the former Cereal City USA building, owned by Kellogg, was "the only one left on the table."

BCU officials have said renovating the former cereal

museum would cost \$18.8 million to come from private funding.

A downtown Math & Science Center would serve two purposes, planners said: It would provide more space for the currently at-capacity high school programs there and would bring those students closer to the food science nexus developing as part of the downtown plan.

A food-testing company that contracts with Kellogg is wrapping up a \$14.5 million downtown development and the Global Food Protection Institute has also expanded downtown. Breakfast giant Kellogg is moving 600 employees from offices on the east side of town to downtown.

Hicks said she also hoped more students from the Math & Science Center's host district would attend classes there if the center were closer to Battle Creek Central High School downtown.

"This is just one way we can make even more connections to the community," Hicks said.

Justin A. Hinkley can be reached at 966-0698 or jhinkley@battlecreekenquirer.com.