

**Remarks for public comment portion of
CH-UH Board of Ed meeting, August 7, 2012**

I'm Patrick Mullen, executive director of Reaching Heights, a community non-profit dedicated to excellence in our schools and community engagement in their success. I'm here on behalf of Reaching Heights, and on behalf of another local non-profit, FutureHeights, which has as part of its mission to maximize community knowledge of and engagement in major decisions that will shape our community. The future of our district's school facilities is an issue of great interest to both organizations, and we're working together to find ways to move the facilities process forward during the time provided by the School Board by its July 17 vote against placing a bond issue on this November's ballot. To that end, we held an initial meeting last week, and I appreciate that board members and the superintendent took time to attend

Coming out of that meeting, I'm here tonight to urge the School Board to use the time we now have to actively lead the next phase of the facilities process in a way that can build community-wide confidence in and support for a facilities plan in 2013. First, I want to acknowledge all the work that's already been done by the district's administration, its consultants, and you on the Board. Thank you. Now we need to build on that work.

As you know, action next year is critical, because after next year, we will no longer qualify for an important piece of funding available to us as a Special Needs District, and probably won't qualify for the rest of the decade.

There are four actions I urge the board to take:

1. Resolve the Milliken issue. Building on the successful reuse of the Coventry building, it will increase confidence in the district's ability to re-use former school buildings, while providing a valuable use as a school to an important part of our community.

2. Actively engage both cities, their mayors and councils, and the Heights Library, in the facilities plan and other initiatives that affect the entire community. I likewise call on the City Councils to work more closely with you.
3. Re-open Plan C, the facilities plan adopted on July 3, for revision. Even supporters of a comprehensive facilities plan have significant questions about the plan's design. Simply using the next months to sell Plan C, without critically determining if it's the best plan for the entire community, isn't enough.
4. More fully involve the entire community in the facilities plan: why it's needed, what it will cost and how we'll pay for it, its design, and how it will improve teaching and learning in our schools. To that end, I recommend that the Board endorse the establishment of a Lay Facilities Committee, along the lines of the Lay Finance Committee. This group can facilitate the next phase of community engagement, building on all the hard work that's already been done, and drawing on professionals this area who have already expressed a willingness to help.

In summary, I'm calling on the Board to take ownership of the facilities process, fix the plan where needed, and sell it to the community. And I'm offering the help of Reaching Heights, FutureHeights, and many dedicated citizens to help make that happen.

Thank you.