

Community fights to keep Fair Park



Douglas Collier/The Times

Caddo Public Schools Superintendent Gerald Dawkins listens as Kevin Fortson claims Fair Park College Prep Academy and other area schools have been "strategically neglected" in the past during a Vision 2020 meeting Monday at Fair Park College Prep Academy.

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Tensions flared Monday night as alumni and residents went to Fair Park College Prep Academy to voice displeasure with Caddo Parish public schools' preliminary Vision 2020 plan, which calls for closing 12 schools, constructing four new schools and renovating remaining facilities.

"We're here tonight because we don't want our community to go down," Shreveport City Councilwoman Joyce Bowman said. "Closing a neighborhood school like Fair Park does nothing but bring down a community."

Built in 1928, Fair Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. If approved, Fair Park students would consolidate with Booker T. Washington New Technology High School and Woodlawn Leadership Academy.

"If you take the high school out of a community, nobody is going to come back here," Kevin Fortson said. "Nobody is going to move into the area. Don't take Fair Park." While many voiced displeasure with off-lining the school, other residents expressed concern about the overall state of

SEE **PARK**, Page 10

Park

■ continued from Page 1
the district.

"It would not matter if we closed 20 schools tomorrow," Frederic Washington said. "If the policies don't change, it's going to be the same no matter what school these kids go to."

Fair Park parent Sharon Crump said she is more concerned about her son's education than any facility.

"Forget the building," she said. "It's about our children. I want to know that my child will leave school having learned

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something."

Shreveport City Councilman Joe Shyne said there is too much history in the school to see its doors closed.

"We don't want to destroy history," he said. "We need to be spending money at Fair Park and improving the conditions at Fair Park rather than looking at closing Fair Park."

Superintendent

Gerald

Dawkins said no matter what happens with Vision 2020 his focus will remain on improving Caddo schools.

"Whether this plan ever passes, the most important thing before anything else is the 42,000 students who are going to show up to a Caddo Parish school tomorrow morning," he said. "I have no other goal than to provide the best education possible for our youngsters."

Following the community meetings, district officials will present an updated Vision 2020 plan Dec. 14 using information compiled from community feedback.