



August 15, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Building Solutions by way of sharing our experience with them as our Facilities Assessment provider.

The Berkeley School's Early Childhood Center was founded in 1963 at 2030 Francisco Street in downtown Berkeley, CA. The site began as one large single-family home (built 1914) converted to a preschool, and expanded to add two additional homes on adjacent properties (built 1941, 1943) and one converted wood frame garage (1951).

Eventually, The Berkeley School had a Kindergarten – 8th grade campus built in 2004 at 1310 University Avenue. This additional campus is comprised of one single-story classroom building and one two-story classroom and administration building, both designed around a fully-utilized centerpiece building: the registered historic landmark that is the old Santa Fe Depot building built in 1904.

To say that TBS had been throwing money at 'emergent' facilities needs with zero idea, for *years*, about what was under the hood, where the landmines were, so to speak, is an understatement! If you are a business officer reading this, does it sound familiar?

When I came to TBS to discuss the Director of Finance and Operations position in 2013, I knew there were two main things that can take a school down: personnel issues and facilities. I asked if a site assessment ever been done, were roofs caving in, was electricity to code, etc. The Head of School said, with a memorable look on his face, "No, and all of *that* is what keeps *me* up at night!" (Oh boy...)

Now, every school I'd ever talked to about site assessments either said they never had (sheepishly) or that they had and, well, they had stuck the report on a shelf because who on earth had the time or staff to understand it let alone do anything with it? Well, in 2017, TBS decided to go forward, spend money now to save money in the long run and commit, absolutely, to integrating the information we received about our site into our capital expenditure and deferred maintenance planning which, again, didn't exist! We issued an RFP for a site assessment. We had gotten the name of Building Solutions from an architect that was associated with our school but she only knew them by name. We got other names, too, including one particular local firm.

They and BS rose to the top for consideration. In short, there was no comparison. Building Solutions came out on top.

There were many but at least two main things that attracted us to Building Solutions:

- Extensive experience working with schools of various sizes
 - Familiarity with the nature of our industry evidenced in a general ease of communication and overall patience with the development of the scope of work. There was the necessary element of their educating us at times about the subject matter (Just what *is* a thermographic study anyway?) and the long wait times before hearing back from us. Probably one of the most amazing things we experienced working with BS: an absence of any “sell” or pressure of any kind.

- Sensitivity in pricing and contract scope
 - BS was respectful at every point of the fact that this was a large investment for our un-endowed school. For example, they encouraged us to add Capital Forecast Direct (CF Direct), the capital planning software, to be able to refresh the information year over year on our own. Also, in eliminating areas of the campuses that are maintained through third-party vendors, we were able to pay only for what we collectively agreed was needed.

As a California school, we were naturally concerned that with Building Solution’s being in Texas, we would be spending all kinds of money for staff to travel here, there would be a built in disconnect in communication and project management once we got going. Overall, the engagement would be hard to manage. Well, our fears were completely unfounded. First of all, we had a dedicated consultant from the beginning so all of our work was coordinated carefully and efficiently. We had no issue at all with any associated travel costs. Beyond reasonable and I’d even go so far as to say thrifty. Also, the model BS uses, namely, to engage local specialist companies to execute some of the work was economical.

After delivering the report, the last piece was Building Solutions’ getting us set up on CF Direct and training our small team of two users. Once the report is complete, the data is imported *by Building Solutions* into the software platform. The information won’t end up on the shelf. It’s right there in an easily sortable, reportable format. Our job is to keep it up to date and to pull and push data for planning every year.

The entire team at Building Solutions are top notch. They know their business and want to be of help – they really do! Will we engage Building Solutions again? We most definitely will as we may need in future. But that was needless to say, wasn’t it.?!

Best regards,

Amy Coty