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## LINKING SCHOOL SITING AND LAND USE PLANNING

### I. Introduction

#### A. Problem Statement

In 1999, according to the U.S. Department of Education, public and private K-12 school enrollment reached a record 52.7 million students. Student populations are projected to continue rising for the next six years, with public school enrollment increasing to 54.3 million by the year 2008. This trend is mirrored in Georgia, with growth expected to climb 7 percent between 1999 and 2010.

With millions of additional students entering our schools, a determined effort is being made to reduce class size in order to give children more individualized attention in the primary grades. Similarly, current research suggests that overall school populations of more than 800 may be detrimental to the learning process. The result is the growing need to build more and more classrooms and schools to meet the demand of the “baby boom echo.” However, this need for additional space comes at a time when school districts nationwide are faced with the challenge of replacing, repairing and updating existing facilities that are crumbling due to overuse and constant delays in regular maintenance. In 1996, the U.S. General Accounting Office put a price tag to this problem when it identified a \$112 billion need to repair and/or renovate the existing national school facilities infrastructure just to achieve a “good overall condition.”

*“With thousands of schools needing to be built and modernized in the coming decade, communities across this nation can design schools in ways that can make an enduring difference for generations. These buildings will have a profound impact not just on students, but on entire neighborhoods.”*

*Al Gore,  
Vice President of the  
United States  
October 5, 1988*

Collaboration between school boards and local government to resolve overcrowding presents challenges, especially for coordinating local comprehensive plans and school board plans. Local governments often approve new residential developments even though adequate school facilities are not available. School boards, attempting to fulfill their obligation of providing school facilities, may site new facilities at locations that do not complement the future residential and community development expectations of the local government. (Florida Department of Community Affairs, 2002)

This tool is intended to provide insight into the link between school siting and land use planning. Typically, decisions affecting school siting are made by semi-autonomous school boards acting independently of local governments. This can result in a missed opportunity to use new schools as catalysts for balanced development in sustainable communities. Working together, school boards and local governments can make long-range land use decisions that create win-win situations for the school district and the community by locating schools within the communities



they serve.

## B. What is the Link Between School Siting and Land Use Planning?

Not unlike roads, sewers and other community facilities, schools are a vital element of local infrastructure and they have a direct impact on how communities function. Traditionally, the decision-making factors that initially determine how and where to site school facilities are primarily economic. However, building new schools, particularly smaller, neighborhood-oriented schools, has important land use implications for residential growth patterns. Good schools are an important determinant in where people choose to live and where companies choose to locate. By building schools close to where people live, communities can encourage quality growth policies that lead to better neighborhoods and more livable communities.

This physical connection between school facilities and the community is well documented throughout planning literature. For instance, in their book The Urban Pattern (1980), Gallion and Eisner refer to one of the earliest definitions of a neighborhood developed in 1929 by Clarence Perry. Perry's definition identifies one of the key factors of the "neighborhood unit" as that populated area that would require and support an elementary school. The school would be located so that it would be unnecessary for any child to walk a distance of more than a ½ mile to school. The authors further document the idea of a school being the building block of a community in referencing N.L. Englehardt's definition of a neighborhood. Englehardt echoes Perry in stating that the neighborhood unit includes the elementary school, a small shopping district, and a playground. These facilities are grouped near the center so that walking distance between them and the home does not exceed a ½ mile.

A school that is physically located in the center of a community is more than just a convenient location for the school population. Robert Crowson, in his book School-Community Relations, Under Reform (1992), states that a school should strive to make an investment in the social capital of its immediate environment. The interests and purposes of the school are well served if the schools themselves create a sense of community and develop solid linkages with the families. In her book Designing Places for Learning (1995), Anne Meek states that one of the important new educational directions is making the school community a hub. Meek recounts that "the *American School Board Journal* reported that the construction of community recreation centers as part of schools is a solution for building community support for public education among a growing number of community residents who do not have children in school." The new educational centers should be designed to provide programs for the entire community, including childcare, job training, youth programs, and town hall meeting facilities. This community relationship encourages the use of the school year-round for both primary education and community functions. Neighborhood schools give the community an identity and cohesiveness that housing and recreational facilities alone cannot.

Over the last 30 years, school architecture placed walls between the school and the outside environment. In both a literal and a metaphorical sense, the new focus is on collaboration and cooperation between the school and the community. Schools should be viewed as having an ecological relationship with the surrounding families and neighborhoods and, therefore, should strive to integrate services to benefit the entire community (Crowson 1992).

The Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI) developed a valuable resource for the location and planning of educational facilities. Simply titled The Guide for

Planning Educational Facilities (1991), this document identifies the steps and considerations for educational facility planning from conception of needs through occupancy and use. Some of the recommendations related to school siting, land use and the community include:

- Because the design and use of the land on which a facility is located is as important as the facility itself, the site's potential as an educational and community resource should be understood and used.
- Sites for educational facilities should be located as near as possible to existing and proposed community facilities, including parks, recreational centers, galleries, libraries, and health centers for easy access to resources.
- Sites should be located near the center of the probable student population.
- It is desirable to locate school facilities within walking distance of the greatest number of students. Reasonable walking distances are:  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile for elementary schools, 1.5 miles for middle and high schools.
- Locations where future zoning might permit construction of factories, congested business centers, and noisy/hazardous transportation systems should be avoided.
- In urban areas, the educational facility and the neighborhood are intimately related. The school should not attempt to isolate itself from the community. When developing new school facilities, planners should determine needs and develop a site plan that is responsive to those needs.

Similarly, the link between school siting and land use planning was formally enunciated in June 1998, when a group of educators, facilities planners, architects, government leaders and interested citizens were invited to Washington D.C. by the U.S. Department of Education. They convened to discuss the process of planning and designing schools that would best meet students' needs as well as serve as centers of their communities. A product of that gathering was a set of planning and design principles for learning environments. These principles have since been confirmed by the National Symposium on School Design sponsored in October 1998 by the Vice President of the United States Al Gore, the U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and the White House Millennium Council. They also gained the endorsement of The American Institute of Architects, The American Association of School Administrators, The Council of Educational Facility Planners International, and The Construction Managers Association of America.

The six design principles assert that, in order to meet the nation's needs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must design learning environments that:

1. Enhance teaching and learning and accommodate the needs of all learners.
  2. Serve as centers of community.
  3. Result from a planning/design process involving all stakeholders.
  4. Provide for health, safety and security.
  5. Make effective use of all adaptable resources.
  6. Allow for flexibility and adaptability to changing needs.
- (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

### **C. What is the Role of School Siting in Achieving Quality Growth?**

A common theme in current educational planning is the notion of the school as the center of a community. A school achieves this either by serving a more integral role within the context of the whole community, or by extending the learning environment to take advantage of the full range of the community's resources. According to Steven Bingler, a New Orleans architect who specializes in helping communities plan for new schools, the most successful schools of the future will be integrated learning communities, which accommodate all the needs of the community's stakeholders. They will be schools that are open later, longer and for more people in the community. They will be utilized by everyone from senior citizens using the gym and health facilities during off-hours to immigrants taking evening English classes after work.

Specifically, Bingler suggests that there are two ways of integrating schools and communities: cohabitation and adaptive re-use – both of which are consistent with quality growth principles.

- Cohabitation – Within a community, there are numerous users that share similar needs. By providing for these needs in a central location or public facility such as a school or community center, a local government can reduce duplicative services. Take the city library for example; consider including the library, or part of the library in the new school building. Perhaps the local YMCA could incorporate into the school building and operations (a recent concept successfully accomplished in two Atlanta city schools). This concept is discussed in greater detail in the Appendix, which describes a strategic partnership between a Michigan school district, the Ford Motor Company and the Henry Ford Museum.
- Adaptive Re-use - Another way of integrating schools and communities is to find existing space in the community that can be adapted for school use, such as an empty hospital wing or a section of a museum, to give students a sense of the wider world that includes the community. This strategy looks upon the entire community as an educational resource. Why pay for new, freestanding school buildings when students can share space with libraries, museums and zoos? Bingler calls this the “hermit crab” approach: Fit the school into a structure that already exists.

As discussed earlier, including civic uses (such as a school) in the center of a community is strongly supported in land use planning literature. This concept is also supported in current quality growth trends, particularly with movements such as Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs). The Congress for the New Urbanism, a leading organization promoting quality growth concepts, espouses several principals related to growth and development. In regard to “the neighborhood”, one of nine principals states:

“Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.”

These approaches to school design and facilities planning contribute to many of the goals of quality growth, including:

- Reducing consumption of land;
- Making better use of existing infrastructure and lowering the costs of public services;
- Strengthening real estate markets and property values and renewing existing neighborhoods;
- Supporting unique cultural, arts, educational and civic functions.

- Reducing vehicle miles traveled and improved air quality by allowing walking and bicycling to school, thereby reducing the need for buses and parents driving to drop-off children.

## II. What to Consider

The emphasis of this tool is the need for coordination between local planners, elected officials,



and school board officials/staff in the decision-making and planning process related to school site selection and design. In many ways the challenges faced by these community leaders represent a classic “chicken and egg” dilemma. Locating a new school in a previously undeveloped area can serve as a catalyst for future growth. Similarly, residential development creates an inherent demand for new school facilities to serve a growing student population. At a minimum, the relationship between school siting and land use can be seen as integral to the long-term sustainability of a community.

A related issue is the need for ongoing comprehensive planning for school districts to ensure that educational facilities meet the constantly evolving needs of a community. Schools are not static institutions and thus must be assessed and evaluated regularly to determine that they serve the local population by providing quality facilities and up-to-date instructional programs. Similarly, local governments need to consider school facility locations and needs when updating their comprehensive plans. Neighborhoods should be planned to adequately

support the school’s population and designed to integrate the school into the neighborhood.

### A. What You Need To Do First

The first step for a local government planner in linking school siting and land use planning is to understand the environment in which school facility planning takes place. There are three primary organizational levels related to educational services:

- The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) is the state agency responsible for school regulations, including facilities management. The Facilities Services Unit of GDOE assists local school systems in developing long-range capital improvement plans, acquiring the funds needed to implement their plans, and reviewing their architect’s plans to construct adequate and safe school facilities. A direct link to the Facilities Services Unit is <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/facilities.asp>

- In addition, there are 16 Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA) throughout the state that provide resources and services to their member school systems. The services are tailored to the needs of the local school systems, but may include items such as training & in-service, printing, inter-jurisdictional cooperation between school systems, and assistance in complying with state mandated requirements. For a list of these agencies and contact information, visit the website <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/informationresources/resas.asp>.
- Individual school facility decisions are made by the local school board. The majority of school boards in Georgia are county based, but several cities have their own school districts. For a list of school districts and contact information, visit the website <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/informationresources/superintendents.asp>

The state education organizational structure is analogous to the comprehensive planning hierarchy with the Department of Community Affairs, Regional Development Centers, and Local Governments.

The GDOE requires each local school district within the State to complete and update a Local Facilities Plan. These plans establish an outline of local actions for the next five years and provide the framework for state funding of capital improvements. A summary of the Local Facilities Plan requirements can be viewed at <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/legalservices/160-5-4-.01.pdf>. GDOE outlines a general guide to the basic steps in plan development and the people who should be involved at each step as listed below.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>People Involved</b>	<b>Procedures for Implementation</b>
Facilities Study	Local Board of Education, Superintendent & Appropriate Local Staff, Education Services Director, Facilities Services Consultant, and Appropriate State Staff	Local Board of Education Resolution for Study filed with Facilities Services
System Orientation	Superintendent & Appropriate Local Staff, Education Services Director, Facilities Services Staff	Schedule with Facilities Services Consultant
Student Population Projections	Appropriate Local Staff & Facilities Services Staff	Projections provided by Facilities Services Unit
School Size & Organizational Study	Local Board of Education, Superintendent, Local & State Facilities Staff, Education Services Director, and Community Representatives if desired and invited by local system	Local Board of Education adopts System Organization and School Sizes
Instructional Program and Construction Needs Identified for Each School	System's Facilities & Curriculum Staff, School Administrators, Facilities Services Consultant,	Survey is completed for each school, including identification of programs, construction needs,

	and System's Architect	and cost estimates
System Needs Prioritized	Local Board of Education, Superintendent, and Appropriate Local & State Staff	Include as Summary for Facilities Plan
Survey Team Review	Appropriate Educators from State Approved List of Survey Team Members including Education Services Directors	Scheduled by Facilities Services Unit
Facilities Plan Adopted	Local Board of Education and State Board of Education	File with Facilities Services Unit

Source: GDOE at <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/plandevlopment.pdf>

In addition, the Facilities Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Education published “A Guide to School Site Selection”, located in the appendix of this tool and can also be obtained from their website at [http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/site2\\_a.pdf](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/site2_a.pdf)). This document is designed for use by local school systems in making preliminary determinations concerning the acceptability of school sites. The guide is useful in identifying the key criteria for site selection, such as site size, availability of utilities, safety hazards, environmental issues, and geographical factors. However, this guide and the chart above do not emphasize the basic need for coordination of facility planning and site selection within the context of local land use planning.

## **B. Relationship to Comprehensive Plan**

Georgia’s Comprehensive Plan legislation requires an element on Community Facilities, in which schools are included. Based on the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, this element must contain information related to facilities and equipment available for preschool, elementary, secondary, post secondary and adult education, and vocational training. Information related to these facilities should be addressed in each section of the Community Facilities Element including: Inventory of Existing Conditions, Assessment of Current and Future Needs, Articulation of Community Goals and an Associated Implementation Program, and Mapping of Community Facilities.

In addition to this existing requirement, amendments to the state planning requirements recommend an Intergovernmental Coordination Element. This is a new element for inventory and assessment of coordination mechanisms between the local government and other local, regional and state entities whose plans, programs or decisions have a substantial impact on local comprehensive planning and development, including local school districts. All local governments must ensure that the goals and related implementation program portion of its comprehensive plan are consistent with the relevant portions of the

coordination mechanisms and agreements associated with other applicable state programs and requirements.

While this is a good starting point for information sharing, it by no means addresses the comprehensive issues associated with linking school siting and land use planning. However, the Comprehensive Plan is useful in identifying the goals, objectives, policies and implementation strategies that will affect future growth in a community and thus can influence school siting decisions. More specifically, several of the elements within the Comprehensive Plan are helpful in providing baseline data, such as demographic projections and concurrent local planning efforts, which will form the backbone of a school district plan. Since Comprehensive Plans are required to be updated every five years, it is sensible to initiate school district plans, including future school site selection, on a compatible schedule to ensure coordination between local planning efforts.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs allows local governments to adopt optional elements in their comprehensive plans. This could include a school facilities element that would outline future growth objectives in terms of renovation and expansion of existing facilities and the siting and construction of new schools. Local governments and planning departments should work proactively with their school boards in the effort to create a schools element in the comprehensive plan to ensure compatibility and coordination related to desired future development patterns and growth strategies.

The Georgia Growth Strategies Reassessment Task Force has made several recommendations to encourage coordination among key players on local planning matters. In their report, "Georgia's Future: Beyond Growth Strategies," published in December 1998, the Task Force suggests that the state should:

1. Require any local or regional agencies that are recipients of state financial assistance (including school systems) to participate in the local comprehensive planning process and develop joint comprehensive plans with all city or county jurisdictions in which they operate.
2. Withhold state-administered funding and permits for any activities of local or regional agencies that are inconsistent with the local comprehensive plans for affected jurisdictions.
3. Require that state agencies make reasonable and prudent efforts to make funding and facility siting decisions that are consistent with applicable regional and local plans.

## **C. Administrative Issues**

### **1. Legal framework**

Georgia state legislation clearly places the authority for school facility planning with school boards and the authority for land use planning with local governments. Only a few states have taken the legislative actions necessary to require intergovernmental coordination between school boards and local governments (see case studies in the appendix) In Florida, for example, the newly required interlocal agreement of school facility planning establishes the legal mandate for intergovernmental coordination. Furthermore, the optional Public Schools Facilities Element enables local districts to establish the legislative basis for dealing with more controversial issues such as concurrency (a requirement that school capacity be available prior to approving additional impacts; e.g. more housing). Combined with other efforts, such as a school

siting ordinance and impact fees, the Public Schools Facilities Element can address land development issues associated with education, including neighborhood schools as a basis for building community, compatibility and supporting infrastructure.

## 2. Political concerns and public acceptability

Since state legislation clearly places authority for school facility planning with school boards, there may be some political resistance for involving local governments in this process. Local governments should ensure that they approach school boards in a cooperative effort to plan and share information, not with the appearance to circumvent or hinder the school board's facilities planning authority.

From a public acceptability standpoint, the decision-making process surrounding school facilities can be lengthy and controversial. This is particularly the case when issues of redistricting arise, causing stakeholders to become embroiled in socio-economic and sometimes racial debates. The process can become very politicized when the public and officials approach the plan with a narrow view of what the threats and opportunities are to their specific jurisdiction rather than planning for the good of the entire district.

Another challenge is that it can be difficult to sustain a long-term intergovernmental relationship in the political environment where the players change constantly. School board members and local government elected officials can change with each election, and administrators move on to other things. However, strong relationships and plans based on a consensus vision can transcend the limits of political terms of service.

## 3. Administrative complexity

The administrative complexity involved in school planning is a function of the size of the district and the scope of the plan. The number of facilities in the district and the amount of students served by those facilities are key determinants in the composition of the staff necessary to plan for the district.

## 4. Cost to implement

The cost to implement depends on the extent of coordination and efforts that a local government decides to undertake. The initial costs could be merely staff time required to begin discussions with school board staff to share information and understand the planning environments in which the school board and local government operate. As more detailed strategies are undertaken (such as a school siting ordinance or school impact fees, as discussed below), additional funding may be required to hire consultants to provide more technical support. For larger local government organizations, these more detailed tasks may be conducted by existing staff.

A related concern for school boards and local governments is the cost of implementing a school district master plan. This master plan can serve as the formal link between a jurisdiction's comprehensive plan and the ongoing need to maintain, update, and expand

its educational facilities. School districts faced with implementing a facilities master plan are typically faced with two kinds of costs:

- Administrative costs
- Capital improvement costs

*Administrative costs* are the costs of salary, benefits and related office expenses for additional program staff that are necessary to initiate and support the plan. For instance, there may be consultants needed, such as architects and engineers, to prepare design and construction documents to renovate, expand or build new school facilities. There may also be the need for a program manager to oversee the implementation of the facilities master plan.

*Capital improvement costs* are the financial outlays to accomplish the recommended facilities improvements for the district. The more renovated and new schools needed the higher the cost. Even when a facilities master plan recommends upgrading existing facilities without a lot of new construction, this can be even more costly than building several new facilities from the ground up. Many districts choose to fund this type of initiative through a bond referendum or special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST) initiative.

### **III. Implementation Guidelines**

The implementation process for linking school siting and land use planning includes a number of steps detailed below. However, the basic premise is that this all begins with open communication and coordination between the school board and local government. Once this is started, the process is well underway for improved school siting and land use planning coordination.

#### **A. Communication**

Communication between the local government and school board is the foundation upon which the school siting and land use planning link is based. This communication should occur between both the elected officials and professional staff.

*Elected Officials.* Communication between the school board superintendent and local mayor or county chairman should be established early in the process. Better yet would be cooperation and endorsement of these efforts by the full school board and city council/county commission. The elected officials should focus on agreeing on and publicly stating a vision for coordination. The elected officials should also authorize and/or direct applicable staff to communicate and share information.

*Professional Staff.* Communication between local government staff responsible for land use planning and school board staff responsible for school facility planning should be established and continue on a regular basis. For city based school systems, the local city planner should be the primary contact. For county-based school systems, a county planner should be the primary local government contact and efforts should be made to include affected city staff as well.

#### **B. Share Data**

At any given moment, there is a wealth of data available that may impact the decision to locate a new school or plan for a new residential development. A key to coordinating

decisions related to these activities is being able to review and discuss relevant data. Efforts should be made to coordinate the assimilation, review and update of this information on a regular basis.

In siting new school facilities, the school board should review and consider information such as:

- comprehensive plan, most importantly the Future Land Use Map
- zoning ordinance
- approved/planned subdivision
- community facility plans (parks, libraries, community centers)
- infrastructure plans (roads, water, sewer)

Likewise, in siting new residential developments and updating the comprehensive plan, local governments should consider data related to existing conditions of school facilities, student population projections, and planned new school facilities or renovations to existing facilities. Local governments should pay particular attention to the school board's School Facilities Plan.

*Student Projection Data*

One of the most important data sets to share between the local government and school board are student generation projections. This information directly impacts school facilities and results from specific actions by the local government when permitting new residential development. There are a variety methods and formulae for projecting student population. Ideally, the school board and local government would agree on the generation rates so that future planning and coordination efforts are based on similar numbers. A few examples of student projection ratios based on housing type are provided below.

The National Multi Housing Council (NMHC, 2001) reports that the U.S. has 106.4 million households and 51.1 million school-age children for an average of 0.48 children per household. However, the overwhelming majority of households (71 percent) actually have no children. When comparing owner households (single-family, condo and co-op owners) and renter households (single-family renters, renters in 2-4 unit buildings and apartment renters), results show that 70 percent of the nation's school children live in owner-occupied housing. NMHC uses the following student generations ratios:

<b>Housing Unit</b>	<b>Students Per Unit Total Housing</b>	<b>Students Per Unit Housing Built in 1990s</b>
Single Family House	0.51	0.64
Apartment/Condominium	0.31	0.29

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) considers student generation rates when reviewing developments of regional impact (DRI). Based on a series of interviews with local boards of education, ARC uses the following student generation rates during DRI review:

<b>Housing Unit</b>	<b>Students Per Unit</b>
Single Family House	0.725
Apartment/Condominium	0.287

Mobile Home	0.042
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The Fulton County School Board uses a more detailed student generation projection per housing unit that further differentiates the student by school facility as follows:

Housing Unit	Avg.		Avg. + 1 Std.	School Facility
One single-family unit	0.2514	to	0.5207	elementary school students per unit
	0.1451	to	0.3734	middle school students per unit
	0.1898	to	0.3498	high school students per unit
One multifamily of town home unit	0.2437	to	0.3767	elementary school students per unit
	0.1016	to	0.1724	middle school students per unit
	0.0860	to	0.1379	high school students per unit

Since student generation projections are based on housing units, it is important to use consistent and reliable demographic projections; particularly for future population and housing development. Some local governments may generate these projections. The Regional Development Center is also a good source of this data, as is local colleges and universities. At any rate, the local government and the school board should discuss and agree upon future population and housing forecasts that will feed directly into the school generation projections.

### C. Agree on School Location Goals

School locations can either contribute to destructive development patterns or help build great, livable communities. There are many factors that determine the location of new schools, including land costs, availability of suitable land, acreage requirements, and student population projects. Many times, these factors compete against each other, with the need for new schools being in locations with scarce, high priced land. As a result, schools are located on greenfield sites that can generate high traffic volumes, introduce new infrastructure (e.g. water and sewer), and spur unexpected development. On the contrary, other schools are located at the center of existing or emerging populations needs and integrated into the community. These schools serve as the center of the community, with the potential to conserve land, boost community cohesion, and enhance the health and well-being of the communities they serve. (South Carolina Conservation League, 2000)

Local governments working with the school board to plan for and agree on future school locations is the key to siting new schools that support quality communities. Local government staff should work with school board in creating the School District Plan to ensure future school plans consider relevant planning data and development patterns (as discussed above). Ideally, the school board and local government would establish an agreed upon set of location goals for new school and residential development that support each other and meet the joint needs of their constituents.

An example of school location goals established by Orange County, Florida (as stated in the School Siting Ordinance adopted in 1996) is as follow:

- Schools should be located to minimize average home-to-school travel distances based on both current and projected student enrollments.
  - Elementary school sites should be located on local streets or on residential collector streets entirely within residential neighborhoods and as close as practical to existing or planned residential neighborhoods.
  - Middle schools and free-standing ninth grade centers should be located on residential collectors or on arterial roads within or as close as is practical to existing or planned residential neighborhoods.
  - Middle schools and free-standing ninth grade centers should be located adjacent to residential neighborhoods where secondary pedestrian access is available on local streets.
  - High schools should be located on roadways with adequate capacity to carry student and parent traffic and suitable for high volume traffic during evening and special events.
- (Orange County, Florida: Ord. No. 96-31, § 2, 10-8-96)

#### **D. Agree on School Design and Use Goals**

Public school facilities play an important role in the overall life and growth of communities. The discussion below describes general design and use goals for new and revitalized school facilities. Not all approaches are appropriate for every school; schools should be designed for what is best for the citizens they serve, including the size, location and unique characteristics of the facilities. Efforts should be made between the school board and local government to discuss and agree on these goals to ensure consistent design and planning considerations are applied throughout the district.

*Size.* The Georgia Department of Education prepared A Guide to School Site Selection. This guides states that the “*minimum* acreage requirements of the State Board of Education are:

Elementary Schools – five acres plus one acre for each 100 children in full time enrollment (FTE).

Middle Schools – 12 acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.

High Schools – 20 acres plus one acre for each 100 students in FTE.

In developed areas, deviations from *minimum* acreage may be made by the site approval committee if the reduced acreage is considered appropriate. Although *minimum* acreages are established, large acreages are highly desirable. Also, those responsible for selecting sites must remain aware of development limitations imposed by certain physical factors of the acreage being considered. The size of the school may not be the only criterion affecting site size. The possibility of expansion, anticipated community use of the school or area, and the school program are other factors to consider” (Georgia Department of Education, 1999).

In recent years, there has been a move away from the large, consolidated schools to a return to smaller schools. In a report by the Public Schools of North Carolina (2000), it states much of the research that focuses on student achievement recommends student populations of no less than 300 and no more than 900. They define a small school as that indicated by research for effective enhancement of school climate and order which is within the boundaries recommended for enhanced student achievement. On average, this research indicates effective [small] school sizes to be:

Elementary: 300-400 students  
 Middle: 300-600 students  
 High: 400-800 students

Some of the advantages and disadvantages of smaller schools and larger schools are summarized below.

	<b>Smaller Schools</b>	<b>Larger Schools</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	School safety/violence prevention Personal touch with students Advances "Smart Growth" principles Potential improved learning Less bus distance/time Potential Walkable Schools Higher percent of student involvement in activities	Enhanced course offerings Less expensive per student for construction, operation, & administration More/higher-league athletics and student activities Can achieve diversity with normal bussing Less susceptible to family aging of neighborhoods
<b>Disadvantages</b>	Basics-only course offerings More expensive per student for construction, operation, and administration Fewer/lower-league athletics and student activities Difficult to achieve diversity without bussing Susceptible to family aging of neighborhood	School safety/violence problems Impersonal student/staff relationships "Institutional" rather than "community" feel Contributes to sprawl Potential reduced learning More bus distance/time Less percent of student involvement in activities

(Public Schools of North Carolina, 2000)

*Design Goals.* The following are general goals to design and locate school facilities that support livable neighborhoods and sustainable communities.

- Involve community stakeholders early and continuously in the planning process for new schools, additions and renovations to improve relations, enhance facility improvements and potentially improve funding.
- Locate schools within the urban or community fabric. Avoid developing larger sites with their own self-contained parking lots, drives and extensive, stand-alone playfields.
- Make use of existing infrastructure: water, sewer, pedestrian ways, transit systems, parking as well as nearby businesses (food service, office support, etc.) that can provide outside or contracted services and support a part of the school. This can be a substantial construction savings also.
- Design buildings that relate to the existing neighborhood fabric: as close to the street as adjacent buildings for friendliness/urban context.
- Use two or three-story where possible to promote density and compact development
- Develop facades/aesthetics that relate to its surroundings yet still say "school"
- Share/make use of other joint amenities: parks, libraries, restaurants, civic facilities, etc. rather than constructing duplicate ones.

(Public Schools of North Carolina, 2000)

Efforts should also be made to integrate existing school facilities into their surrounding neighborhoods. One of the most effective strategies is to make the surrounding communities

more walking by developing “safe routes to school.” In fact, recent studies show that only 13 percent of all trips to and from school are by foot or bicycle. With less kids on foot, there are more cars on the road. The California Safe Routes to Schools Initiative encourages parents, schools, law enforcement, planners, and traffic engineers to work together to make streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists along heavily traveled routes to school. Creating safer streets require:

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	Engineering approaches reduce speed, narrow crossing distances and improve children’s visibility and safety.	Design streets that calm traffic Install walkways and bike paths Improve safety where pedestrians cross streets
<b>Enforcement</b>	Enforcement increases awareness of and reduces the frequency of crime and traffic safety problems. Both citizens and local police can be enlisted to focus efforts around schools.	Post visible speed limits and school crossing signs Aggressively enforce traffic violations Foster “walking school buses” and neighborhood watch programs
<b>Education</b>	Education trans motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists about their rights and responsibilities Education promotes intermodal travel	Provide public traffic safety courses Teach safety programs in the classroom Promote walking and biking

(Safe Routes to Schools, 2000)

*Use.* Schools should be encouraged to open their facilities to other community uses. Creating joint-use agreements between the school and community maximizes school facilities and makes them true centers of the community. There are many benefits to this approach, including: it avoids costly duplication of facilities and structures; it allows underused schools to be used many more hours per day and year; it increases awareness, interest and willingness to fund schools because more citizens will be visiting and using the buildings for their own self-interests; and, it can save local taxpayers significant sums of money by requiring fewer/duplicative services and facilities. This approach to schools and community facilities is not, however, without pitfalls. It is imperative that all of the details for joint/shared use of the facilities be anticipated and carefully resolved.

The most common use of school facilities by community groups is the use of outdoor athletic facilities, the gymnasium and the auditorium. Potential joint-use agreements include school partnering for organization/services such as:

- Parks & Recreation: gym and playfields; potentially arts, vocational and multipurpose rooms
- Public Library: combine with school media center, computer labs, etc.
- Community College: adult education, GED, vocational courses, special interest courses, technology and computer courses
- Parking lots: shared with non-conflicting nearby business or agencies, such as churches, or other after-school-hours businesses.
- Transportation: municipal bus service for student transportation
- Performing Arts Council: auditorium and support spaces
- Health Dept: small clinic
- YMCA: youth athletic programs, summer camp, after/before school programs
- Church Groups: church education, worship
- Eldercare: use of kitchen, certain classrooms, art/activity spaces

- Meals-on-wheels: use of kitchen, loading dock
- Daycare Providers: before/after school, holiday & summer programs (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2000)

## E. Formalize the Agreements

Establishing formal agreements will ensure that continued communication and cooperation between the school board and local government occurs. Some examples of formal agreements and strategies to implement the school siting and land use planning link are:

- Create a school siting ordinance. A school siting ordinance can be created with the cooperation of the school board and local government. This ordinance identifies the specific school facility location criteria, including property size, building setbacks, acceptable future land use/zoning districts, and required infrastructure. This ordinance can also address design and architectural standards to ensure community compatibility.
- Adopt an interlocal agreement. An interlocal can be established between the school board and local government. The interlocal agreements binds both jurisdictions to meet the requirements specified in the agreement. Florida recently enacted legislation to require all local government to adopt interlocal agreements with their respective school boards to share information and coordinate school siting issues (see the case study and model interlocal agreement in the appendix).
- Adopt joint use agreements. Community use of school facilities can benefit both the school and local government. To formal the use of these facilities, and to address issues such as liability, scheduling, and costs, a join use agreement should be enacted. For example, Gwinnett County adopted joint use agreements with the local school board. This agreement allows the community to use all elementary and middle schools outdoor recreation facilities and gymnasiums when not in use by the school. The county parks and recreation department coordinates scheduling of these facilities for community use. The school board benefits by receiving use of most county parks and related facilities for no charge (not including aquatic facilities).
- Review impact of new development on school facilities. Local government can include an impact assessment on school facilities of new residential subdivisions/projects as part of new development review, zoning, or permitting process. Information related to new housing developments should be shared with the appropriate school board staff so that they could use the information to forecast student enrollment and plan for instructional needs. The school board could also be given a chance to review and comment on residential development in regard to their impact of student enrollment and school facility capacity. Gwinnett County considers school age projections based on current allowed development (based on zoning and future land use) and projections from proposed rezoning and/or land use change. It is unclear whether state law would support the denial of a project or rezoning based on its impact to school facilities.
- Review the Future Land Use Map when siting new schools. As early in the design process as feasible, but at least before commencing construction of a new public educational facility, the school board should be encouraged to determine consistency of the new school facility plans with the comprehensive plan and land development regulations. This requirement could be formalized as part of the interlocal agreement or school siting ordinance.

- Adopt school facilities element in comprehensive plan. The local government can adopt a school facilities element as an optional element to the comprehensive plan. This element would establish the goals of school siting with a direct link to land use planner. Although the school board would not be bound by this element, it would establish the basis upon which other agreements could be established.
- Hold joint school board and city/county council work sessions. Professional staff from the school board and local government are encouraged to establish an ongoing communication process. A strategy to get the elected officials more involved and vested in the school siting and land use planning link is to host a joint work session between the school board and local government elected officials. This would provide a formal time for the elected officials to discuss pertinent issues, address concerns and create common goals for continued coordination.
- Establish criteria to encourage/negotiate school site dedication for projects that create a significant amount of school age population. Based on current Georgia law, requiring the donation of land for a school facility may not be legally defensible. However, while not a requirement, past experience shows that developers are willing to support school needs and may donate land or other services to address school needs and create a community amenity/focal point. For example, during review of a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) where proposed development generates more than 500 students, ARC requires that the developer evaluate the possibility of providing land or other infrastructure to offset the impact on school facilities and existing capacity.
- Consider school impact fees. Under current Georgia impact fee law, established by the adoption of the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act (DIFA) enacted into law in 1990, school facilities cannot be financed with impact fees. In order to assess impact fees for schools in Georgia, this state law would need to be amended. Other states, namely Florida, have used school impact fees to fund new school facilities required by the impact of new development. The table below shows the funds generated in select Florida counties in the 2001.

School District	FY 2001 Collections
Broward	\$ 35,563,000
Citrus	\$ 600,000
Clay	\$ 168,086
Collier	\$ 9,000,000
Miami-Dade	\$ 18,000,000
Hernando	\$ 1,400,000
Hillsborough	\$ 1,562,250
Lake	\$ 1,500,530
Martin	\$ 1,089,894
Orange	\$ 22,456,253
Osceola	\$ 7,039,445

Palm Beach	\$ 9,000,000
Pasco	\$ 1,000,000
Seminole	\$ 3,500,000
St. Johns	\$ 1,469,765
St Lucie	\$ 1,000,000
Volusia	\$ 3,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 117,349,223</b>

Source: <http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/school.impacts.htm>

#### **IV. Lessons Learned**

This tool has provided the rationale and implementation guidelines for linking school siting initiatives to local land use planning. Fundamentally, this tool suggests that a school siting initiative benefits from a strong partnership between the board of education and the local government (specifically the planning department), to ensure consistency and coordination between the growth objectives of the school board and the desired development patterns for the community. In addition, below is a summary of other key issues addressed in this review of the relationship between school siting and land use planning:

Planning assumptions are a critical first step – Establishing a baseline of guiding principles or planning assumptions is critical to keeping the site selection process on track. This can be achieved by developing a clear picture of existing conditions (i.e. the current status of the district, shared beliefs, and a collective vision). To achieve a common knowledge based on current conditions, it is helpful to review such information as:

- Community demographic studies
- A district-wide strategic plan
- Local land use plan
- Comprehensive plan
- Learning goals, student achievement data, and graduation requirements
- State and national standards
- Attitudes and perspectives of stakeholders

Consider the vision. To achieve a common “future focus,” review such information as:

- Current research and best practices on effective schools and effective practices
- Future development trends and potential implications for students, schools, and communities
- Changing workplace needs and expectations
- Innovative models from other districts and communities

Rational data objectifies decision-making – As mentioned previously, nothing stirs impassioned debate quite like issues related to our children. School site selection and facilities planning can bring to light many of the most challenging and complicated issues facing our children and society as a whole. Issues such as equity, socio-economic status, race, class, and gender are among the minefields waiting to derail the process. The most effective way to address these issues is to objectify them as much as possible through the lens of rational data. Decisions made on the basis of fact are much easier to accept than those that stem from personal opinion or emotional response.

Community involvement is important – A successful site selection process draws on expertise from a range of professional disciplines and community representatives. At the professional level, it is important to include educators, architects, planners, engineers, demographers, and developers. The site selection process should also involve community stakeholders in from the beginning. These individuals would include: parents, students, business leaders, clergy, local government officials, community organizations and the media. By encouraging respectful and productive communication among diverse constituencies, a broad-based site selection process can result in a superior result than one developed solely by the local school board or any other

single group. Furthermore, an inclusive planning process can forge renewed commitment to our schools. People tend to support what they help create.

Planning raises the profile of public education and the involvement of affected parents, students and communities with the school system – A coordinated school planning and site selection process is a very effective mechanism for engaging the public and creating a sense of ownership in the educational system and network of public facilities that serve the community. When school siting is consistent with land use planning, it reinforces a community’s awareness of the value of precious resources and the benefits of collaboration between local entities. The amassed synergy of shared decision-making, problem solving and goal setting can build a strong foundation for collective responsibility and enduring support for schools. It can be a model on a small scale of how our society itself might become.

Planning facilitates partnerships for community use, joint facilities – When schools are viewed as centers for the whole community, a wide range of possibilities emerges and, along with these possibilities, a new set of needs. If, for instance, the school is to become a resource for lifelong learning – for retraining dislocated workers, teaching computer skills to seniors, connecting families to the information highway – then provisions will be needed, among other things, for ensuring that school facilities can be accessible “after hours.” The site selection process should consider land use conditions within the community as well as specifically about conditions in classrooms and schools.

School district plans can set the framework that allows site-specific planning and modification – The best plans are flexible and dynamic. A school district plan will provide the framework in which specific facility-based or site decisions can be made. While the district plan may not achieve a level of specificity that will prescribe unique individual actions at every school in the district, it should provide the decision-making framework for ongoing site specific planning and modification.

School facility planning can help shape development patterns – School facility planning should be considered a smart growth tool by virtue of the fact that locating a new school in a community or renovating and expanding one that is already there makes a physical investment in that place that will attract residents and all of the commercial support and services they require. Thus, school siting decisions and investment strategies should be coordinated with the future land use plan of a community. Good schools are often the single most important factor in determining where a family will live. Schools can be used to reinvigorate deteriorating neighborhoods and create a strong foundation for new communities.

Plans must be updated and monitored – Just as plans should be flexible and dynamic, they must be updated and monitored in order to remain valid roadmaps in an ever-changing environment. Most school district plans have a five-year lifespan, which is consistent with the schedule for comprehensive plan updates. These two planning documents should inform each other so that school siting decisions are supportive of a community’s growth and development objectives and visa versa.

## **Best Practices**

The following is a summary of “best practices” for school siting, planning and intergovernmental coordination contained in the *Primer on School Planning and Coordination* prepared by the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

These best practices focus on planning strategies to closely coordinate school locations with community growth patterns. In addition, they will guide schools to locations that foster community activities by integrating schools within neighborhoods near residential areas and close to other community facilities. These practices suggest that shared use and collocation for schools may result in cost savings to school districts and local governments.

### **Future Land Use Policies**

- Identify the future land use categories where public schools are an allowable use.
- Include sufficient vacant land at adequate sizes in the future land use categories to meet projected demand for new schools.
- Direct schools to locations proximate to residential areas, and where possible, contiguous to existing school sites.
- Use the school district facilities' work program to assess projected needs for schools.
- Use the educational plant survey to integrate new schools with existing facilities and planned schools with community development patterns.
- Incorporate into the comprehensive plan school siting criteria that reflects recommended best practices.
- Encourage the joint purchase, development, maintenance and shared use of schools with community facilities, such as parks, playgrounds, stadiums, libraries and community centers.
- Avoid locating new schools in coastal high hazard areas.
- Build safe schools; use public schools located outside coastal high hazard areas as emergency shelters.
- Annually monitor the future land use element for changes based on the educational facilities report each year.

### **School Siting Criteria**

- Locate elementary schools within neighborhoods with access on local streets. Elementary schools enhance the neighborhood and, in turn, the community.
- Locate middle and high schools to serve several neighborhoods within the larger community with access on collector or arterial roadways. Middle and high schools tie neighborhoods together and foster community.
- Evaluate potential sites for consistency with the comprehensive plan as early as possible.
- Select school sites with adequate size to meet the educational program requirements and community needs.
- Provide adequate infrastructure and services to school sites including: roadways, pedestrian access, potable water, sanitary sewer, stormwater facilities, and fire, police and medical services.
- Provide adequate safety through traffic control devices and access, and sidewalks and bikeways within two miles of the site.

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

Best practices for intergovernmental coordination suggest ways to integrate local government and school board planning activities to promote collaborative planning and decision making for public schools. School boards and local governments have different roles and responsibilities. The sharing of information and coordinating activities related to school siting can result in substantial benefits to the community as a whole.

- School boards participate on the Local Planning Agency in relevant land use decisions through membership on technical committees, or other means.

- Local governments participate on the school board's long-range planning and facility siting committees.
- Develop procedures to validate countywide total population projections.
- Distribute total student enrollment forecasts by student attendance zones using local government growth trends and development projections.
- Annually assess and review for consistency the educational facilities report which includes the district facility plans, and the local comprehensive plans.
- Annually assess and review the schedule of capital improvements to ensure local government facilities and services are provided to support existing and planned public schools.
- Assure consistency of school sites and development plans with local comprehensive plans.
- Execute the required interlocal agreement for collaborative planning and decision-making for public schools.
- Establish mechanisms for cooperative agreements to facilitate the shared use and collocation of schools and community facilities.
- Establish mechanisms to resolve disputes related to school planning and development actions of local governments and school boards.
- Periodically meet together to develop common visions for integrating community and public school development.

## **V. Additional Resources**

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#### Websites

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Council for Educational Facility Planners International: <http://www.cefpi.org/>

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education: <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/>

Florida Department of Community Affairs Department of Community Planning, School Planning webpage: [http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/school\\_planning.htm](http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/school_planning.htm)

Georgia Department of Education, Facilities Services: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/facilities.asp>

Maryland Smart Growth Models and Guidelines: <http://www.mdp.state.md.us/planning/m&gnew.html>

National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/>

National Center for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schoolhouse at San Diego State University: <http://schoolhouse.sdsu.edu/>

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF): <http://www.edfacilities.org/>

National Multi Family Housing Council Notes, Research Notes – Apartments and Schools: <http://www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?IssueID=215&ContentItemID=827>

National Trust for Historic Preservation. Historic Neighborhood Schools: Success Stories: [http://www.nthp.org/issues/schools/studies\\_intro.html](http://www.nthp.org/issues/schools/studies_intro.html)

New Schools, Better Neighborhoods: <http://www.nsbns.org>

Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia related to School Facilities and Capital Outlay Management: <http://www.ganet.org/rules/index.cgi?base=160/5/4>

U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/index.jsp>

## VI. Appendices

### Appendix A: Case Studies

#### **Case Study #1: Statewide Efforts – Florida, Maine, Maryland and New Jersey**

*The following case study discusses examples of state level requirements for school districts and local governments to consider the relationship between school planning and land use planning.*

Traditionally, there has been little state legislation that requires school boards and local governments to coordinate their actions or consider the implications of the school siting and land use link. However, a few states have recently begun to address these issues, as discussed below.

*Florida.* New legislation requires county and city governments, as well as school boards to join into “interlocal agreements” to plan for future growth. These agreements will allow for a more coordinated and active approach to school planning. They will maximize local opportunities to address school needs, provide for better sharing of information about school renovations and closures, and share school, county or city facilities. Through these agreements, local agencies will also work together to better address population projections and local emergency officials will also be better able to identify additional emergency shelter space within schools. The Legislature has appropriated \$550,000 to help implement this transition. Specifically, these interlocal agreements will address school siting, enrollment forecasting, school capacity, infrastructure, sharing of school board and local government facilities, dispute resolution and oversight, by adopting parallel requirements of both [Chapter 163, Part II \(state planning legislation\)](#), and [Chapter 1013 \(state education legislation\), F.S.](#) The legislation also makes provisions for an optional School Public Facilities Element that may be used to complement the interlocal agreements. A model interlocal agreement prepared by the Florida Department of Community Affairs is attached in the appendix of this tool

For more information, visit the Florida Department of Community Affairs School Planning webpage: [http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/school\\_planning.htm](http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/school_planning.htm)

*Maine.* The State Planning Office developed a multi-pronged approach to dealing with school facility siting. First, the State Planning Office partners with the Maine Department of Education to encourage communication and cooperation between local planning offices, municipal governments, and local school districts. School districts are encouraged to locate facilities in designated growth areas, as outlined by local planning agencies. At the same time, the State Planning Office has instituted a policy that requires school districts to be creative when assessing existing facility sites. The “ABC’s of Site Selection Brochure”, distributed to every municipality and school district, asks that facility planners:

- **Avoid Sprawl** through renovation or expansion in a central location,
- **Be Site Savvy** by locating ancillary facilities creatively (like playgrounds at a nearby park) as well as utilizing existing services and facilities to save money, and
- **Consult the Community** through tapping into community resources to help plan school expansion.

The State Planning Office, in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Office of Administrative and Financial Services ask that school districts complete a Site Selection Checklist and a Building Renovation/Expansion vs. New Construction Checklist when examining options. School districts are reminded that school siting decisions can cost or save money over the long term, and that a school’s location expresses local values and community pride. Older

schools are recognized for their significant role in the community. (The Governor's Smart Growth Task Force, 2001)

For more information, visit the Maine State Planning Office at: <http://www.state.me.us/spo/>

*Maryland.* The Maryland State Public School Construction Program continues to encourage that new schools be located in locally identified growth areas consistent with the 1992 Growth Act. Local education agencies are encouraged to renovate existing schools in established neighborhoods and communities, and construct additions to existing schools rather than develop a new school on a new site. The reopening and renovating of former public school buildings which were closed during reduced enrollment decades are also encouraged by the State program. In 1995, the Public School Construction Program reordered its project classifications to place emphasis on the renovation of existing buildings. The Interagency Committee on School Construction, which directs this program, added the "enhancement of a major system" to the definition of an eligible systemic renovation project. Thus, the Program has increased the proportion of school construction funds for improvements to existing schools.

For more information, visit the Maryland Public School Construction Program website at <http://www.pscp.state.md.us/>

*New Jersey.* The state legislature passed a law known as the "Education Facilities Construction and Financing Act" (EFCFA) during their May 2000 session. The intent of this law is to mandate that each district prepare and submit to the Commissioner of Education a long-range facilities plan that includes an educational adequacy inventory of all existing school facilities in the district, the identification of all deficiencies in the district's current inventory of school facilities, and the district's proposed plan for future construction and renovation. The plan must be prepared and submitted every five years. Furthermore, the law recognizes the fundamental connection between land use planning and school siting as referenced in passages such as, "The location of school facilities in the context of the communities which they serve is important to both the educational success of the schools and the development of those communities. It is highly desirable, particularly in urban communities where the State has indicated a particular concern respecting local development efforts, that the planning and construction of schools be integrated where possible into the economic and community development efforts of local governments and community redevelopment entities in order to promote more effective and efficient use of land, resources and expertise and to better assure the future viability of local neighborhoods and communities."

For more information, visit the New Jersey Department of Education School Facilities website at <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/educatio.htm>

**Case Study #2: Shared Educational Facilities – Henry Ford Academy, Dearborn, Michigan & East Lake Community Foundation (Drew Charter School), Atlanta, Georgia**

*The following case studies examine a unique approach to shared educational facilities and the benefits of partnerships between the public and private sector.*

## **Henry Ford Academy**

As public school systems throughout the country strive to come up with effective mechanisms to deal with crumbling buildings, declining test scores, shifting demographics and limited educational funding, the latest theories of school design are being turned inside out to tap into local community resources. One of the best examples of this approach is the Henry Ford Academy in Dearborn, Michigan, which opened in 1997. This public charter high school project is run independently under contract with several school districts in the area and is based on a strategic partnership of the Ford Motor Company, the Henry Ford Museum and the Wayne County Regional Service Agency. The partnership resulted in producing a state-of-the-art facility for one-third the cost of a stand-alone school. Located at the 80-acre Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, this innovative 9-12 grade school gives students access to the museum's 26 million documents and one million artifacts, including Thomas Edison's laboratory and a Buckminster Fuller house. The educational program also offers built-in mentorships with some of the most experienced museum curators in the country. Unique in its physical structure, the Henry Ford Academy furnishes students with a tangible hands-on learning environment.

The Henry Ford Academy is a premiere model of synergy resulting in economy and sustainability. The Ford Motor Company knows that the success of the future global workforce will require innovation and ingenuity. As for the museum, it was Henry Ford's dream that the artifacts he collected would be used to provide a broad-based education in both the academic and practical disciplines. The Wayne County school district is interested in exploring new models of learning and recognizes the important benefits of working with the corporate community, where most of its students will eventually apply the lessons of their educational labors. By working collaboratively, these partners have produced a compelling and exemplary learning environment at a cost savings to taxpayers of over \$4 million for facilities alone. This is largely due to Binger's efforts to utilize what already exists – the museum's employee dining area is now also a cafeteria, and students are also using its restrooms. Of course, this powerful idea of two institutions coming together was met with much skepticism early on by museum staff horrified by the idea that the kids would be eating their cafeteria and handling precious artifacts. However, so far their fears have not been realized, as the kids have demonstrated that they are among the best behaved in the cafeteria and that they care about the museum's objects as much as the curators do.

## **East Lake Community Foundation - Charles R. Drew Charter School**

Believing a quality school is the key to a healthy, revitalized neighborhood, the East Lake Community Foundation, in partnership with the Atlanta Public Schools, and parents in the community of East Lake opened Drew Charter School, the City of Atlanta's first charter school in August, 2000.

Drew Charter School serves children in grades K-8 and has an enrollment of approximately 800. The school serves the children who live in The Villages of East Lake and the surrounding East Lake neighborhood.

The school is a component of The Educational Village that was built by the Foundation in the East Lake community. In addition to the Drew Charter School, The Educational Village integrates the Sheltering Arms Child Development Center and family YMCA in one building. The school intends to establish a model public school that will help children of low-income families

reach new levels of academic achievement and at the same time serve as a magnet for drawing middle-income families back to the city.

For more information on Drew Charter School, please contact Karen Eldridge, the Principal, at 404-687-0001 or visit their website at <http://www.eastlakecommunityfdn.org/drew/>.

### **Case Study #3: Optional Public School Facilities Element– Orange County, Florida**

*The following case study examines one district's approach to linking school planning and land use through an optional element within their comprehensive plan.*

Like many Sunbelt states, Florida enjoyed unprecedented growth during the last three decades. While growth has presented positive opportunities for Florida, it has also brought serious challenges, not the least of which is the overcrowding of schools and the inability to catch up with the booming residential growth of the 1980s. In response to this situation, the Orange County Planning Department, in conjunction with Orange County Public Schools, drafted a Public Schools Facilities Element as an optional component of their Comprehensive Policy Plan.

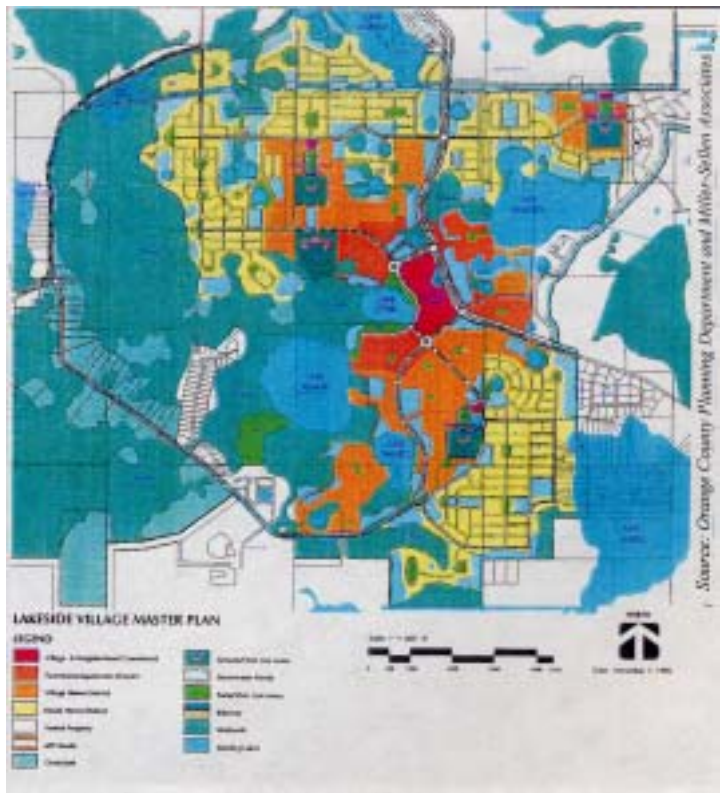
The Goals, Objectives and Policies section of the Orange County Public Schools Facilities Element addresses many of the strategic issues related to the important link between school siting and land use planning. A brief summary is provided below:

1. *Goal: Provide a community of support for the positive development and growth of all children.*  
Objective:
  - Strengthen family and children services.
2. *Goal: Make schools a cornerstone of community planning and design.*  
Objectives:
  - Enhance community/neighborhood design through the joint use of educational facilities.
  - Enhance community/neighborhood design through effective school facility design and siting standards.
3. *Goal: Provide safe and secure schools in healthy, well-designed neighborhoods.*  
Objectives:
  - Ensure security and safety of children.
  - Coordinate juvenile justice services with educational needs.
4. *Goal: Support School Board efforts to ensure that adequate capital facilities and technology resources are available to support the educational mission of public schools.*  
Objectives:
  - Support School Board programs to effectively and efficiently manage existing capital funds and resources.
  - Support supplemental and alternative sources for school capital funding.
  - Manage the timing of new development to coordinate with adequate school capacity.
5. *Goal: Promote and optimize intergovernmental cooperation for effective operation of the public school system in a multi-jurisdictional environment.*  
Objectives:

- Maximize the opportunities to share information.
- Clearly identify in the Future Land Use Element and in the Land Development Code the land use categories in which schools shall be an allowable use.
- Establish Expedited School Siting Processes.
- Ensure Effective Processes for Reserving School Sites.

Orange County realized that the only way to address the problems faced by their schools was to combine the optional Public Schools Facilities Element with other efforts such as a school siting ordinance and updated impact fees. Their strategy acknowledges the critical support and necessary partnerships with the development community, the community at large, the Orange County Board of Commissioners and the Orange County School Board. The result has been a coordinated approach related to land use and school siting which includes encouraging a mix of land uses, including civic uses, and reserving school sites and donating them, if necessary, to attract new schools.

Horizon West Concept Plan



One Orange County project in particular has received numerous accolades for its innovative planning concepts. Known as Horizon West, this project utilizes schools as the cornerstone for its residential neighborhoods. Orange County conceived the Horizon West concept to create a long range planning vision that utilizes the neighborhood as a building block to achieve growth in a complete, compact and integrated urban form. Through a series of public meetings, the Horizon West Village Land Use Classification was created for southwest Orange County. The “Village” concept provides for development within separate, distinct, master-planned villages.

The prototypical village will contain up to four neighborhoods, each with an elementary school located in the neighborhood center. The neighborhoods will be focused around the village center, which may include

a middle school. It is anticipated that by 2010 the first Horizon West village will be completed and include three elementary schools and one middle school site.

**Case Study #4: New Schools to Encourage Reinvestment– Chattanooga, Tennessee**

*The following case study examines one district’s approach to linking school planning with downtown revitalization efforts by encouraging more residents to downtown with new schools*

This case study was first published in *Planning*, American Planning Association, July 2002.

Schools usually follow a path blazed by homebodies. Most taxpayers are familiar with the phenomenon: acres of new greenbelt subdivisions, and a school board scrambling to find the money to build academies for the kids who live there.

Some cities are writing an opposing scenario. They are building schools downtown, not to meet the demand of current residents, but to attract a more diverse population than the usual downtown denizens — empty nesters and 20-somethings. Memphis, for example, is about to complete a new public elementary school in a developing urban village next to its downtown AAA baseball stadium and within easy walking distance of the historic Peabody Hotel.

Chattanooga is going Memphis one better. Two new public elementary schools are opening downtown next month, and private donors are carrying half the cost. The last two elementary schools in downtown Chattanooga closed 17 years ago.

Two years ago, the Department of Education of Hamilton County (pop. 308,000), which serves Chattanooga, decided to build a K-5 magnet school downtown to serve about 400 children who were being bused several miles out. Chattanooga's urban revivalists had a more ambitious plan.

"We're putting a big emphasis right now on getting more housing downtown and getting a mixture of people to live in it, including families with children," says Karen Hundt, director of Chattanooga's Planning & Design Studio. "That means you need schools."

"If we built just one," Hundt says, "it would be pretty much filled the day it opened, and with mostly poor kids. School superintendent Jesse Register said he didn't want a 'school of poverty.' And we wanted some growing room for subsequent downtown residential development." The solution: Build two magnet schools downtown.

**Private funders pitch in.** The Department of Education could not supply the additional \$8 million cost of a second school. But that was no problem for civic leaders who, in the last two decades, have made Chattanooga a model of can-do activism and private philanthropy.

The RiverCity Company, a nonprofit dedicated to downtown development, led the fund-raising with assistance from Jack Murrah, president of the local Lyndhurst Foundation. According to RiverCity executive vice-president Ann Coulter, three anonymous individuals collectively pledged \$4 million. Lyndhurst and the University of Chattanooga Foundation, a group providing private support for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, made up the other half. "That's what's most unique," says Joanne Smith, Hamilton County director of magnet schools. "Getting the private sector to pay for a public school."

To ensure a diverse student population and fill the classrooms until dwellings catch up with desks, the school system devised a special student enrollment plan. Top priority for admission to the magnets goes to downtown residents, then to children of downtown workers. "That way we'll get a much broader mix of parents and students," Hundt says, "because downtown workers come from all over."

Site selection for the schools was driven by the need to find land at a low price or no cost at all. One of the schools, the Herman H. Battle Academy of Teaching and Learning, is located on city-owned property in Chattanooga's Southside, a once-blighted industrial and marginally residential area.

Targeted for major reinvestment due to its proximity to the central core, the 600-acre revitalization district is the second staging area for downtown redevelopment. It follows the success of the Tennessee Aquarium, now 10 years old, and the riverfront surrounding it. One goal of the Southside Plan, adopted by the City Council in 1997, was to increase residential use in the area from 27 to 66 acres, adding about 200 units. The new school is a logical step in rebuilding the neighborhood.

Battle Academy's building — two stories, 84,000 square feet — rests on a 3.3-acre site, considerably smaller than the typical eight- to 13-acre campus of a Hamilton County school in the suburbs. The tight site required TWH Architects to build up rather than out. Student recesses will be staggered because of the smaller playground, which will also serve after hours as a public park.

**Tight sites.** Battle Academy also required multiple entrances. To hold the urban corner, TWH incorporated what project architect Trey Wheeler calls a "celebratory entrance, which probably won't be used a lot. Then we needed a drive-up entrance out back, a bus drop one block back, and a separate preschool entrance." In response to Chattanooga's push for more sustainable development, TWH used day lighting — lots of glass and sloped ceilings to minimize dependence on artificial light. A roof garden provides insulation, and a water recycling system filters storm water run-off to irrigate street trees and other landscaping.

The second school, the Tommie F. Brown Academy of Classical Studies, stands on a still smaller parcel — 2.5 acres owned by the University of Tennessee. The site's triangular shape caused architects at Derthick Henley Wilkerson to raise the 81,500-square-foot building to three stories in an L-shape, according to project architect Bill Wilkerson. Brown Academy stands next to an abandoned rail corridor slated for conversion to a greenway that will become part of the playground. Parking will be shared after school hours with the neighborhood, mostly university student housing.

The university was willing to dedicate its property to Brown Academy because its officials see both elementary schools providing field experience as part of the university's educational program. Mary Tanner, dean of the College of Education, says her faculty has collaborated closely with Hamilton County to select principals and design curriculums.

One unexpected benefit of the preschool, Tanner says, is that "it's a magnet for teachers with young children, who can bring their kids to work. Teachers are even leaving other schools in the system to sign up for the downtown schools, which should help with teacher retention."

*Christine Kreyling*

*Kreyling is a freelance writer in Nashville.*

## **Appendix B: Model Interlocal Agreement for Public School Facility Planning**

The following model interlocal agreement was created by the Florida Department of Community Affairs to assist local governments and school boards meet state planning requirements regarding joint planning. The Florida Legislature adopted regulations in 2002 that require local governments are school boards to enter into interlocal agreements that address school siting, enrollment forecasting, school capacity, infrastructure, and sharing of school board and local government facilities, dispute resolution and oversight.

The following model interlocal agreement is geared to urban communities and can also be viewed at the following website:

<http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/modelagrmt.urban.htm>.

A model interlocal agreement for rural communities can be found at:

<http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/modelagrmt.rural.htm>.

### **MODEL INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITY PLANNING**

(Urban Version)

*This model agreement is intended to suggest items and issues for inclusion in actual interlocal agreements and is designed to meet the requirements of Sections 163.31777 and 235.193, Florida Statutes. It is not likely that every suggested provision will be appropriate for every county, and each provision should be tailored for the situation in each county.*

This agreement is entered into between the \_\_\_\_\_ County Commission (hereinafter referred to as "County"), the City Commission or City Council of the Cities of \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter referred to as "Cities"), and the School Board of \_\_\_\_\_ County (hereinafter referred to as "School Board").

WHEREAS, the County, Cities and the School Board recognize their mutual obligation and responsibility for the education, nurture and general well-being of the children within their community; and

WHEREAS, the County, Cities, and School Board recognize the benefits that will flow to the citizens and students of their communities by more closely coordinating their comprehensive land use and school facilities planning programs: namely (1) better coordination of new schools in time and place with land development, (2) greater efficiency for the school board and local governments by placing schools to take advantage of existing and planned roads, water, sewer, and parks, (3) improved student access and safety by coordinating the construction of new and expanded schools with the road and sidewalk construction programs of the local governments, (4) better defined urban form by locating and designing schools to serve as community focal points, (5) greater efficiency and convenience by co-locating schools with parks, ballfields, libraries, and other community facilities to take advantage of joint use opportunities, and (6)

reduction of pressures contributing to urban sprawl and support of existing neighborhoods by appropriately locating new schools and expanding and renovating existing schools; and

WHEREAS, Section 235.193, Florida Statutes, requires that the location of public educational facilities must be consistent with the comprehensive plan and implementing land development regulations of the appropriate local governing body; and

WHEREAS, Sections 163.3177(6)(h)1 and 2, Florida Statutes, require each local government to adopt an intergovernmental coordination element as part of their comprehensive plan that states principles and guidelines to be used in the accomplishment of coordination of the adopted comprehensive plan with the plans of the school boards, and describes the processes for collaborative planning and decision making on population projections and public school siting; and

WHEREAS, Sections 163.31777 and 235.193, Florida Statutes, further require each county and the non-exempt municipalities within that county to enter into an interlocal agreement with the district school board to establish jointly the specific ways in which the plans and processes of the district school board and the local governments are to be coordinated; and

Whereas, the School Board, the County, and the Cities enter into this agreement in fulfillment of that statutory requirement and in recognition of the benefits accruing to their citizens and students described above;

NOW THEREFORE, be it mutually agreed between the School Board, the Board of County Commissioners of \_\_\_\_\_ County and the City Commissions of \_\_\_\_\_ that the following procedures will be followed in coordinating land use and public school facilities planning:

#### Section 1. Joint Meetings

1.1 A staff working group of the County, School Board, and Cities will meet on a \_\_\_\_\_ basis [*quarterly, semi-annually or other basis*] to discuss issues and formulate recommendations regarding coordination of land use and school facilities planning, including such issues as population and student projections, development trends, school needs, co-location and joint use opportunities, and ancillary infrastructure improvements needed to support the school and ensure safe student access. Representatives from the Regional Planning Council will also be invited to attend. [*The agreement should establish the party or parties, such as the County Planning Director or School Board Superintendent, responsible for making meeting arrangements and providing notification.*]

1.2 One or more representatives of the County Commission, the governing body of each City, and the School Board will meet \_\_\_\_\_ [*semi-annually, annually or other*] in joint workshop sessions. A representative of the Regional Planning Council will also be invited to attend. The joint workshop sessions will be

opportunities for the County Commission, the City Commissions or Councils, and the School Board to hear reports, discuss policy, set direction, and reach understandings concerning issues of mutual concern regarding coordination of land use and school facilities planning, including population and student growth, development trends, school needs, off-site improvements, and joint use opportunities. [*The agreement should establish the party or parties, such as the County Manager or School Board Superintendent, responsible for making meeting arrangements and providing notification.*]

## Section 2. Student Enrollment and Population Projections

2.1 In fulfillment of their respective planning duties, the County, Cities, and School Board agree to coordinate and base their plans upon consistent projections of the amount, type, and distribution of population growth and student enrollment. Countywide five-year population and student enrollment projections shall be revised annually and provided at the first staff working group meeting described at subsection 1.1.

2.2 The School Board shall utilize student population projections based on information produced by the demographic, revenue, and education estimating conferences pursuant to Section 216.136, Florida Statutes, where available, as modified by the School Board based on development data and agreement with the local governments and the Office of Educational Facilities and SMART Schools Clearinghouse. The School Board may request adjustment to the estimating conferences' projections to reflect actual enrollment and development trends. In formulating such a request the school board will coordinate with the Cities and County regarding development trends and future population projections.

2.3 The School Board, working with the County and Cities, will use the information described in Section 3.3 to allocate projected student enrollment into sub-county planning sectors so that the district-wide projections are not exceeded. The planning sectors will be established by mutual consent of the school board and local government staff. The allocation of projected student enrollment will be determined at the first staff meeting described in subsection 1.1.

## Section 3. Coordinating and Sharing of Information

3.1 Tentative District Educational Facilities Plan: On \_\_\_\_\_ of each year, the School Board shall submit to the County and each City the tentative district educational facilities

plan prior to adoption by the Board. The plan will be consistent with the requirements of Section 235.185, Florida Statutes, and include projected student populations apportioned geographically, an inventory of existing school facilities, projections of facility space needs, information on relocatables, general locations of new schools for the 5-, 10-, and 20-year time periods, and options to reduce the need for additional permanent student stations. The plan will also include a financially feasible district facilities work program for a 5-year period. The Cities and County shall review the plan and comment to the School Board within \_\_\_ days on the consistency of the plan with the local comprehensive plan, whether a comprehensive plan amendment will be necessary for any proposed educational facility, and whether the local government supports a necessary comprehensive plan amendment. If the local government does not support a comprehensive plan amendment, the matter shall be resolved pursuant to Section 8 of this agreement.

3.2 Educational Plant Survey: At least one year prior to preparation of the Educational Plant Survey update, the staff working group established in subsection 1.1 will assist the School Board in an advisory capacity in the preparation of the update. The Educational Plant Survey shall be consistent with the requirements of Section 235.15, Florida Statutes, and include at least an inventory of existing educational facilities, recommendations for new and existing facilities, and the general location of each in coordination with the land use plan. The staff working group will evaluate and make recommendations regarding the location and need for new, significant renovation or expansion, and closures of educational facilities, and the consistency of such plans with the local government comprehensive plan and relevant issues listed at subsections 4.3, 6.6, 6.7, and 7.1 of this agreement.

3.3 Growth and Development Trends: On \_\_\_\_\_ of each year, local governments will provide the school board with a report on growth and development trends within their jurisdiction. This report will be in tabular, graphic, and textual formats and will include the following:

- (a) the type, number, and location of residential units which have received zoning approval or site plan approval;
- (b) information regarding future land use map amendments which may have an impact on school facilities;
- (c) building permits issued for the preceding year and their location;

(d) information regarding the conversion or redevelopment of housing or other structures into residential units which are likely to generate new students; and

(e) the identification of any development orders issued which contain a requirement for the provision of a school site as a condition of development approval.

#### Section 4. School Site Selection, Significant Renovations, and Potential School Closures

4.1 The School Board will establish a Public Schools Advisory Committee for the purpose of reviewing potential sites for new schools and proposals for significant renovation and potential closure of existing schools. Based on information gathered during the review, the Committee will submit recommendations to the Superintendent or designee. The Public Schools Advisory Committee will be a standing committee and will meet on an as needed basis. In addition to appropriate members of the School Board, the Committee will include at least one staff member of the County and a representative from each of the Cities *[alternatively, within counties where the number of cities would make the size of such a committee unwieldy, the agreement could specify how one or more city representatives would be selected to represent city interests on the standing committee and membership could then be expanded on an as needed to include additional staff from any city in or near where a school is proposed.]*

4.2 When the need for a new school is identified in the district educational facilities plan, the Public Schools Advisory Committee will develop a list of potential sites in the area of need. The list of potential sites for new schools and the list of schools identified in the district educational facilities plan for significant renovation and potential closure will be submitted to the local government with jurisdiction for an informal assessment regarding consistency with the local government comprehensive plan, including, as applicable: environmental suitability, transportation and pedestrian access, availability of infrastructure and services, safety concerns, land use compatibility, consistency with community vision, and other relevant issues. In addition, the issues identified in subsection 4.3 of this agreement will be considered by both the local government and Public Schools Advisory Committee as each site or school is evaluated. Based on the information gathered during this review, for new schools the Committee will make a recommendation to the Superintendent or designee of one or more sites in order of preference. For significant renovations and potential closures, the Committee will make appropriate recommendations.

4.3 The following issues will be considered by the Public Schools Advisory Committee, the School Board, and the Local Governments when evaluating new school sites and significant renovations and potential closure of existing schools:

a. The location of schools proximate to urban residential development and contiguous to existing school sites, and which provide logical focal points for community activities and serve as the cornerstone for innovative urban design, including opportunities for shared use and collocation with other community facilities;

b. The location of elementary schools proximate to and within walking distance of the residential neighborhoods served:

c. The location of high schools on the periphery of residential neighborhoods, with access to major roads;

e. Compatibility of the school site with present and projected uses of adjacent property;

f. Whether existing schools can be expanded or renovated to support community redevelopment and revitalization, efficient use of existing infrastructure, and the discouragement of urban sprawl;

g. Site acquisition and development costs:

h. Safe access to and from the school site by pedestrians and vehicles;

i. Existing or planned availability of adequate public facilities and services to support the school;

j. Environmental constraints that would either preclude or render cost infeasible the development or

significant renovation of a public school on the site;

k. Adverse impacts on archaeological or historic sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places or designated by the affected local government as a locally significant historic or archaeological resource;

l. The site is well drained and the soils are suitable for development or are adaptable for development and outdoor educational purposes with drainage improvements;

m. The proposed location is not in conflict with the local government comprehensive plan, stormwater management plans, or watershed management plans;

n. The proposed location is not within a velocity flood zone or floodway, as delineated in the applicable comprehensive plan;

o. The proposed site can accommodate the required parking, circulation and queuing of vehicles;

p. The proposed location lies outside the area regulated by Section 333.03, F.S., regarding the construction of public educational facilities in the vicinity of an airport.

4.4 At least 60 days prior to acquiring or leasing property that may be used for a new public educational facility, the School Board shall provide written notice to the local government with jurisdiction over the use of the land. The local government, upon receipt of this notice, shall notify the School Board within 45 days if the proposed new school site is consistent with the land use categories and policies of the local government's comprehensive plan. This preliminary notice does not constitute the local government's determination of consistency pursuant to section 235.193(12), Florida Statutes.

## Section 5. Supporting Infrastructure

5.1 In conjunction with the preliminary consistency determination described at subsection 4.4 of this agreement, the school board and affected local governments will jointly determine the need for and timing of on-site and off-site improvements necessary to support each new school or the proposed significant renovation of an existing school, and will enter into a written agreement as to the timing, location, and the party or parties responsible for constructing, operating and maintaining the required improvements.

Section 6. Local Planning Agency,  
Comprehensive Plan Amendments,  
Rezoning, and Development  
Approvals

6.1 The County and Cities will include a nonvoting representative appointed by the School Board on the local planning agencies, or equivalent agencies, to attend those meetings at which the agencies consider comprehensive plan amendments and rezonings that would, if approved, increase residential density on the property that is the subject of the application. The Cities and County may at their discretion grant voting status to the school board member.

6.2 The School Board will appoint a representative to serve on the County's staff development review committee, or equivalent body. In addition, the School Board representative will be invited to participate in the Cities' staff development review committees, or equivalent body, when development and redevelopment proposals are proposed which could have a significant impact on student enrollment or school facilities.

6.3 The County and the Cities agree to give the School Board notification of land use applications and development proposals pending before them that may affect student enrollment, enrollment projections, or school facilities. Such notice will be provided at least \_\_\_\_\_ days prior to approval of the application. This notice requirement applies to amendments to the comprehensive plan future land use map, rezonings, developments of regional impact, and other major residential or mixed-use development projects.

6.4 Within \_\_\_\_\_ days after notification by the local government, the School Board will advise the local government of the school enrollment impacts anticipated to result from the proposed land use application or development proposal, and whether sufficient capacity exists or is planned to accommodate the impacts. School capacity will be reported consistent with State Requirements for Educational Facilities.

6.5 If sufficient capacity is not available or planned to serve the development at the time of impact, the School Board will specify how it proposes to meet the anticipated student enrollment demand; alternatively, the School Board, local government, and developer will collaborate to find means to ensure sufficient capacity will exist to accommodate the development, such as, developer contributions, project phasing, or developer provided facility improvements.

6.6 In reviewing and approving comprehensive plan amendments, rezonings, and development proposals, the county and cities will consider the following issues:

- a. School Board comments;
- b. Available school capacity or planned improvements to increase school capacity;
- c. The provision of school sites and facilities within planned neighborhoods;
- d. Compatibility of land uses adjacent to existing schools and reserved school sites;
- e. The co-location of parks, recreation and neighborhood facilities with school sites;
- f. The linkage of schools, parks, libraries and other public facilities with bikeways, trails, and sidewalks for safe access;
- g. Traffic circulation plans which serve schools and the surrounding neighborhood;
- h. The provision of off-site signalization, signage, access improvements, and sidewalks to serve schools; and
- i. The inclusion of school bus stops and turnarounds.

6.7 In formulating community development plans and programs, the County and Cities will consider the following issues:

- a. Giving priority to scheduling capital improvements that are coordinated with and meet the capital needs identified in the School Board district educational facilities plan;

- b. Providing incentives to the private sector to identify and implement creative solutions to developing adequate school facilities in residential developments;
- c. Targeting community development improvements in older and distressed neighborhoods near schools; and
- d. Working to address and resolve multi-jurisdictional public school issues.

#### Section 7. Collocation and Shared Use

7.1 Co-location and shared use of facilities are important to both the School Board and local governments. The School Board will look for opportunities to co-locate and share use of school facilities and civic facilities when preparing the District Educational Facilities Plan. Likewise, co-location and shared use opportunities will be considered by the local governments when preparing the annual update to the comprehensive plan's schedule of capital improvements and when planning and designing new, or renovating existing, community facilities. For example, opportunities for co-location and shared use with public schools will be considered for libraries, parks, recreation facilities, community centers, auditoriums, learning centers, museums, performing arts centers, and stadiums. In addition, co-location and shared use of school and governmental facilities for health care and social services will be considered.

7.2 A separate agreement will be developed for each instance of co-location and shared use which addresses legal liability, operating and maintenance costs, scheduling of use, and facility supervision or any other issues that may arise from co-location and shared use.

#### Section 8. Resolution of Disputes

8.1 If the parties to this agreement are unable to resolve any issue in which they may be in disagreement covered in this agreement, such dispute will be resolved in accordance with governmental conflict resolution procedures specified in Chapter 164 or 186, Florida Statutes.

#### Section 9. Oversight Process

9.1 The School Board, the County and each City shall appoint a citizen member to serve on an oversight committee to monitor implementation of the interlocal agreement. Committee members shall be invited to attend all meetings referenced in Sections 1 and 4 and shall receive copies of all reports and documents produced pursuant to this interlocal agreement. The committee shall appoint a chairperson, meet at least annually, and report to participating local governments, the School Board and the general public on

the effectiveness with which the interlocal agreement is being implemented.

*Note: Local governments and schools boards may wish to consider adding the following optional provisions to address the site plan review process:*

Section \_\_\_ Site Plan Review

*\_.1 As early in the design phase of the site plan as feasible, but at least 90 days before commencing construction, the School Board will request a formal consistency determination from the local government with jurisdiction over the use of land. The local government will determine in writing within 45 days after receiving a request and the necessary information from the School Board whether a proposed public educational facility is consistent with the local comprehensive plan and land development regulations.*

*\_.2 If a school site is consistent with the future land use policies and land use categories that allows public schools, the local government may not deny the site plan application but may impose reasonable development standards and conditions in accordance with section 235.34(1), F. S. The local government may consider the adequacy of the site plan as it relates to environmental concerns, health, safety and welfare, and effects on adjacent property. (s. 235.193(13), F. S.) [This agreement should identify the issues the local government will consider for evaluating the adequacy of the site plan and the development standards and conditions that will be imposed by the local government, such as comprehensive plan policies related to land use, site location, compatibility, on-site and off-site infrastructure improvements pursuant to section 5 of this agreement, zoning regulations, environmental requirements, and roadway access standards.]*

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Interlocal Agreement has been executed by and on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ County, the Cities of \_\_\_\_\_, and the School Board of \_\_\_\_\_ on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, School Board

\_\_\_\_\_

Chairman, Board of County Commissioners

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Mayor, City of

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Mayor, City of

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Mayor, City of

## Appendix C: A Guide to School Site Selection by the Georgia Department of Education

[http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/site2\\_a.pdf](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/site2_a.pdf)

August 1999

### **FOREWORD**

This guide contains information developed to comply with the National Flood Insurance Program Rules and Regulations and Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-2-260(c)(4); § 20-2-260(c)(7); and § 20-2-260(d)(6) that require the Department of Education to “adopt uniform rules, regulations, policies, standards, and criteria respecting all locations, construction, equipping, operating, maintenance, and use of educational facilities” and “to review and approve proposed sites and all architectural and engineering drawings and specifications on construction projects for educational facilities”. The attached form “Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval,” is designed for use by local school systems in making preliminary determinations concerning the acceptability of school sites. It will be used by the School Site Approval Committee when making decisions concerning school site evaluations during the official approval process. A copy of the guide and form can be obtained from the Facilities Services Unit’s website located at “[http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/site2\\_a.pdf](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/site2_a.pdf)”. For a copy of the Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval Form only, please visit the Facilities Services website at “[http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/siteform\\_a.pdf](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/siteform_a.pdf)”. A copy of the guide and form can also be obtained by contacting the Facilities Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Education. Requests for approval of all proposed sites for educational facilities should be directed to:

Director of the Facilities Services Unit  
1670 Twin Towers East  
205 Butler Street  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5050  
Telephone Number (404) 656-2454

## **A GUIDE TO SCHOOL SITE SELECTION**

### *A Good School Site is Important*

A good, well-developed site and a well-equipped, functionally designed school plant is a basic physical tool for a quality education. Without one or the other, the educational program may suffer. Current school programs include many activities that must be carried on outside the walls of the physical plant. Well-planned and properly developed outdoor areas are essential to support outdoor activities, provide vehicular circulation, adequate and convenient parking and also be conducive to the safety of children. The site is an integral part of the total school plant and may enhance or inhibit the achievement of a school’s educational objectives. Environment is an influential factor in the lives of young children. Therefore, the school site should contribute positively to the health, safety and social aspects of a child’s life at school. Choosing a good site is one of the important early steps in overall planning. Success or failure in this initial step will be reflected in every subsequent stage in the developmental process. For these reasons, the choice of a school site requires careful study, including a thorough and objective evaluation. Much thought should be given to the basic principles involved in good site selection. These principles, when studied in the light of their relation to the local situation, should provide a basis for the objective selection of the best site available. Undue consideration given to the value or acquisition cost of a school site can be false economy, and often has proven to be very expensive.

## Criteria for Selection of School Sites

### *Size:*

The *minimum* acreage requirements of the State Board of Education are:

- Elementary Schools - five acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.
- Middle Schools - 12 acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.
- High Schools - 20 acres plus one acre for each 100 students in FTE.

In developed areas, deviations from *minimum* acreage may be made by the site approval committee if the reduced acreage is considered appropriate. Although *minimum* acreages are established, large acreages are highly desirable. Also, those responsible for selecting sites must remain aware of development limitations imposed by certain physical factors of the acreage being considered. The size of the school may not be the only criterion affecting site size. The possibility of expansion, anticipated community use of the school or area, and the school program are other factors to consider.

### *Utilities:*

Utilities essential to the operation of a modern school plant must be available. Electricity and telephone services are essential to the operation of a school plant and must be accessible to the proposed site. The desirability of public water and sewage service to a school site cannot be over emphasized. The cost of installing private systems, along with the continuing maintenance costs, plus environmental considerations all but eliminate consideration of private installations. Only in cases of overriding circumstances will site approval be granted at locations which cannot be served by public sewage systems.

### *Safety Hazards:*

The school site should be free of conditions and installations which endanger the life, safety and health of children. If one or more of the potential hazards identified on page 5 of this document exists on or near a proposed school site, further consideration should be given to (a) evaluating other sites where these potential hazards do not exist, or (b) determining how the potential risk posed to students and faculty by an existing hazard could be minimized. Costs associated with implementing risk reduction measures should be considered when making a final decision regarding a proposed site. Any proposed school site adjacent to an airport, or in the final approach or departure pattern of aircraft should be evaluated carefully. The site should be a reasonably safe distance from the flight pattern to avoid the danger of falling aircraft. Also the site should be far enough from airports and flight patterns to offer reasonable protection from interfering noise levels.

School sites should be located a reasonable distance from lakes, streams, or bodies of water that could be considered unsafe to children due to depth or other conditions. Whenever possible, sites adjacent to heavily traveled streets and highways should be avoided. Also, school sites in locations subject to industrial pollution may present risks to students and faculty with respiratory problems.

### *Environmental Factors:*

The school site should possess physically desirable characteristics and be located so surrounding areas reflect characteristics conducive to the development of attitudes and responses in children considered to be socially, culturally and educationally desirable. Whenever possible, the selection of a school site in an area zoned for commercial or industrial development should be avoided. The school location should be insulated from business and industrial development. The routes to and from the school site should not expose children to

hazardous environmental materials or safety hazards. The location of a school site should be acceptable to the school patronage community from the standpoint of general environmental surroundings and vehicular accessibility.

*Geographical and Related Factors:*

The school site should provide convenient accessibility, be supportive to an efficient transportation system, be accessible to community services needed by the school and be appropriately located with respect to other schools and the population to be served. All school site approvals must be accompanied by a letter of assurance that the site is not in a flood plain or the Coastal High Hazard Area. This letter of assurance must be from the Flood Plain Management Coordinator of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. To obtain the letter of assurance, write the Flood Plain Management Coordinator, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and enclose a county highway map, indicating the school's location. The letter should describe briefly the location, giving information such as the direction from a particular point (a town or city), distance, name of roads or highway numbers and other appropriate location description and acreage. The Flood Plain Management Coordinator's address is:

Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
Floodplain Management Office  
7 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive  
Suite 440  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

*Site Development:*

The physical characteristics of the school site should be such that the cost of grading, drainage and development will be relatively low. The evaluation of a site as it relates to physical development is a technical task, requiring the knowledge and experience of a qualified professional. The investment required to obtain a professional evaluation for physical development may result in considerable future savings.

*Criteria for Selection:*

A Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment will be required for each school site. The Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment shall follow the methodology of the ASTM Practice E 1527-97. A Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment Report must be attached to each completed "Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval Form" submitted to the Department of Education for review and approval. If any one or more of the following hazards is located on or near (up to a three mile radius) a proposed school site, a Risk/Hazard Analysis shall be required in addition to the Phase I – Environmental Site Assessment:

- (1) Electrical transmission lines rated at 115KV or higher;
- (2) Oil or petroleum products transmission lines and storage facilities;
- (3) Hazardous chemical pipelines;
- (4) Natural gas transmission and distribution lines larger than ten inches in diameter with a pressure of 200 psi or more;
- (5) Propane storage facilities;
- (6) Railroads;
- (7) Major highways;
- (8) Airport approach or departure paths;
- (9) Industrial/manufacturing facilities:
  - (a) Using or storing hazardous substances as defined under Title 40 CFR 262;
  - (b) Emitting hazardous air pollutants as defined under the "Clean Air Act" and/or

- (c) 1990 "Clean Air Act Amendment" – Risk Management Plan Sec. 112(r)
- (10) Lakes, rivers, dams, reservoirs, or other bodies of water;
- (11) Potential flooding because the property is located within the 100 year flood plain or dam breach zone;
- (12) Nuclear waste storage facilities;
- (13) Munitions or explosives storage or manufacturing.

A Risk/Hazard Analysis must be completed by a registered, professional engineer licensed to do business in the State of Georgia and shall include the following information at a minimum:

- (1) Identification of each hazard;
- (2) An evaluation of each hazard;
- (3) Options for mitigating each identified hazard (if appropriate);
- (4) A statement from the engineer based on his or her professional judgement and the findings of the Risk/Hazard Analysis regarding the suitability of the site for a school.

The Department of Education reserves the right to request information in addition to that provided in the Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment and/or the Risk/Hazard Analysis. Additional information may be needed prior to reaching a decision regarding the appropriateness of a proposed site if any of the above named hazards exist on or up to the area located within a three mile radius of the proposed school site.

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PRELIMINARY SCHOOL SITE EVALUATION AND  
SCHOOL SITE APPROVAL FORM**

Sections I through VI of this form are designed for two purposes:

- (1) For use by local school systems when considering property for school sites and requesting approval of a proposed school site.
  - (2) To summarize information regarding this site for use by the Site Approval Committee.
- Section VII is to be used by the School Site Approval Committee for official approval of a school site.

**I. SCHOOL SYSTEM IDENTIFICATION AND CONTACT PERSON**

School System:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Superintendent: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Person to Contact (designee): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FAX Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. LOCATION OF PROPOSED SITE**

Address of Proposed Site (if available) and/or legal definition of the property:

\_\_\_\_\_

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Acreeage in proposed Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Does this acreage meet the minimum requirements? (Circle One) Yes No

Please attach an explanation or rationale if the answer to the above question is "No".

Clear Title Obtainable? (Circle One) Yes No

### III. PROPOSED SCHOOL TO BE LOCATED ON THIS SITE (BASIC INFORMATION)

Name of Proposed School: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Grades: \_\_\_\_\_ Approximate Number of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Instructional

Units Proposed: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this the maximum size planned for this School? (Circle One) Yes No

Is this school being designed for future expansion? (Circle One) Yes No

Estimated date school is to be completed and occupied:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

If expanded, maximum number of instructional units proposed in the future:

\_\_\_\_\_ I.U.

### IV. UTILITIES AVAILABLE ON THE PROPOSED SITE

*(If Utilities are not currently available on the site, please indicate when utility providers anticipate delivery of utilities to the site.)*

#### CURRENTLY AVAILABLE? WHEN AVAILABLE? OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS

(a) Electricity Voltage: \_\_\_\_\_ Phase: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Natural Gas Line Size: \_\_\_\_\_ Line Pressure: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Telephone

(d) Cable

(e) Water Public Line Size: \_\_\_\_\_ Line Pressure: \_\_\_\_\_

Attach FLOW TEST results (See Note Below)\*

Private Line Size: \_\_\_\_\_ Line Pressure: \_\_\_\_\_

Attach FLOW TEST results (See Note Below)\*

(f) Sewage Public/Private

\*Please attach a copy of the FLOW TEST results from the water hydrant nearest to the site.

Show the distance from the closest hydrant to the site.

#### MISCELLANEOUS SITE INFORMATION

*(For each item, circle the appropriate response. If Other is selected, please enter appropriate response.)*

(a) Property Zoned Residential Industrial Commercial Other: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Adjacent Development or Existing Community Design Residential Industrial Commercial

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Traffic Conditions Around Site Congested Moderate Light Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- (d) Topography Steep Rolling Gently Sloping Flat
- (e) Grading for Building Excessive Moderate Minimal
- (f) Rock Excavation Unlikely Some But Not Excessive Excessive
- (g) Area Available for Parking Adequate Space Limited Space Inadequate Space
- (h) Vehicular Access to Site Excellent Potential Development Restricted Development Difficult
- (i) Area Available for Athletic and Recreation Area Development Adequate Limited Inadequate

VI. System Request for Site Approval

The \_\_\_\_\_ School System requests approval of the proposed school site identified on this form. An initial investigation has been conducted, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment has been conducted, and if required a Risk/Hazard Analysis has been completed. After considering the findings from all studies completed and evaluating the potential school sites available for this school, the \_\_\_\_\_ Board of Education is submitting the required information and requesting approval of this proposed school site by an appropriately convened Site Approval Committee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Board Chairperson (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of School Superintendent (Date)

ATTACHMENTS:

The following documents must be submitted to the Facilities Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Education before a Site Approval Committee can be convened to evaluate your system's request for approval of a proposed school site:

- (1) Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval Form with Sections I-VI completed;
- (2) A copy of the letter of assurance from the Flood Plain Management Coordinator of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources stating that this proposed school site is not in a flood plain or Coastal High Hazard Area;
- (3) A copy of the rough plat of the proposed school site;
- (4) A copy of the Flow Test results taken at the potable water hydrant nearest to the school site;
- (5) A copy of the Phase I – Environmental Site Assessment; and
- (6) A copy of the Risk/Hazard Analysis – Only if required.

Once this documentation has been received, a Site Approval Committee will be convened at the earliest possible date to evaluate your system's request for approval of the proposed school site. The Committee is authorized to request any additional information on any criteria (section) when, in the judgment of the committee, such information is needed to complete the evaluation of the proposed school site.

VII. Site Approval Committee

The following members of the Site Approval Committee have evaluated the information submitted by the \_\_\_\_\_ School System for this proposed school site. The site was visited by the committee on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. (date). Based on our visual inspection of the site and evaluation of the documentation submitted by the school system:

- THIS SCHOOL SITE IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.
- THIS SCHOOL SITE AND DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED BY THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ARE APPROVED WITH COMMENTS (See Attachments).
- THIS SITE IS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.

Remarks:

Consultant, Facilities Services Unit \_\_\_\_\_  
(FS Consultant's Signature) (Date) Representative,  
Department of Human Resources \_\_\_\_\_  
(DHR Representative's Signature) (Date)  
Director, Facilities Services Unit \_\_\_\_\_  
(FS Director's Signature) (Date)