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Local Governments and Schools: A Community-Oriented Approach

Over the last sixty years, school facility investments have shifted toward buildings with larger capacities and school locations that are more distant from the people they serve. This trend is of particular concern to local government managers and staff seeking to support economic growth, improve environmental and public health, ensure socially equitable development, and preserve a high quality of life.

The land use and facility planning efforts of local governments and school districts have become increasingly separated in most communities. Their lack of coordination may contribute to the trend toward larger, more distant schools and associated economic, environmental, and social impacts.

This guide provides local government managers with an understanding of the connections between school facility planning and local government management issues. It offers strategies for how local governments and schools can bring their respective planning efforts together to take a more community-oriented approach to schools and reach multiple community goals—educational, environmental, economic, social, and fiscal. Eight case studies illustrate how communities across the U.S. have already succeeded in collaborating to create more community-oriented schools.

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This is a Smart Growth Network publication, produced under a cooperative agreement between the International City/County Management (ICMA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

About the Smart Growth Network

The Smart Growth Network (SGN) is a national network of more than 4,300 people and organizations working together to facilitate smart growth in neighborhoods across the United States. SGN was designed to encourage development that serves the economy, community, and environment, all at the same time.

Membership in the network is completely free. To learn more and to join, visit www.icma.org/sgn/join.cfm.

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Local Governments and Schools: A Community-Oriented Approach

In recent decades, concerned citizens and local government leaders across the country have called for planning and zoning policies designed to make development in their communities more sustainable. These growth management policies—often called "smart growth" policies—emphasize compact, infill, and transit-oriented development, as well as the preservation of open space and community character. They help protect the environment while stimulating economic growth. They take advantage of existing infrastructure and, thus, save tax dollars. And they create more choices for community members in terms of transportation, housing, and socioeconomic diversity.

Many communities that have implemented smart growth policies have experienced an enhanced quality of life, economic growth, and improved environmental outcomes. Yet, many other communities that seek to implement similar policies face an important challenge: fitting school facilities into the smart growth equation.

Over the last sixty years, school facility investments have shifted toward larger buildings and school locations that are more distant from the people they serve. This trend is of particular concern to local government managers and staff seeking to support economic growth, improve environmental and public health, ensure socially equitable development, and preserve a high quality of life. It is also of concern to parents and educators who seek high-quality education for the community's children. And it concerns local government leaders and school board members charged with providing high-quality services to the community while keeping tax rates low.

School Facility Planning: Trends and Impacts

As school enrollment continues to rise throughout the country—and many older facilities fall into disrepair—school construction is booming. Public school enrollment in the U.S. reached a record high of 49 million in 2004 (the most recent year for which data was available) and is projected to reach 53 million by 2016 (see Figure 1).[2] In a recent national survey, 18 percent of public school principals reported that their schools were over capacity. (Eight percent reported their schools were over capacity by 25 percent or more.[3]) Meanwhile, existing public school facilities are, on average, more than forty years old and in need of repair and modernization.[4] School districts are responding to these and other factors, such as

Definitions: Sustainability and Smart Growth

The classic definition of *sustainability*—"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"—was first articulated in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development. ICMA considers sustainability to be central to the professional management of local government, with three interdependent elements: environmental stewardship, economic development, and social equity.[1]

Smart growth is the application of sustainability to development—development that serves the environment, the economy, and the community, all at the same time. Smart growth links development decisions with quality of life so that new developments are community assets rather than liabilities. The following principles guide smart growth development decisions:

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

The Smart Growth Network partner organizations developed these principles in 1996. Visit http://www.smartgrowth.org to learn more.

a movement toward smaller class sizes, by building new, expanded, or updated school facilities. In early 2007, *American School and University* magazine projected that nearly 40 percent of school districts in the U.S. would complete a construction project by 2009.[5] (See sidebar for a discussion of how population changes may impact school enrollment.)

Since the 1950s, average school size (measured by enrollment capacity) has grown and school facilities have becoming increasingly distant from the neighborhoods they serve (see Figures 2 and 3). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that from 1930 to 2001, public school enrollment in the U.S. nearly doubled, from 26 to 48 million,[6] yet the number of public school buildings decreased 60 percent in the same period, from 247,000 to 93,000.[7] These statistics indicate a shift from an average of 105 students per school building to 516 students, across all grades. As average school size has grown, schools have also been built farther from where people actually live. This trend is related not only to the growth in average enrollment size, but also to a variety of policies and practices (discussed later) that encourage large site sizes and discourage renovation or expansion of existing schools.

As one of the largest capital investments that most local governments and school districts make, school facilities and related infrastructure have a significant, long-term impact on the communities they serve—not only in terms of the quality of education, but also the

Population Changes and School Enrollment

School enrollment is cyclical, varying by region and over time. While new facilities may be necessary to meet current enrollment levels now, the demand for school facilities may decline in the future. The 2000 Census revealed that only one-third of all households had children, down from more than half in 1950. This figure is expected to decline further to about one-quarter by 2025, at which point nearly 30 percent of households will be a single person.[9] (Social researchers attribute this demographic shift to longer life expectancies, the aging of the baby boom generation, and younger adults who delay having or do not have children.)

It is not clear how immigration will impact these projections; however, should they hold true, an increasingly smaller percentage of homeowners in any given community will have direct ties to local schools. One way that school districts and local governments can help ensure continued support for education and investments in school facilities is to build schools that help anchor a community's identity and provide services for all residents—not just those with children.

economy, the environment, public health, transportation, social equity, community cohesion, and local finance.

Schools that are distant from the populations they serve necessarily result in increased traffic congestion and paved surfaces, and associated air and water quality concerns. Fewer children are able to walk or bicycle to school—an important consideration as childhood obesity rates rise rapidly.[8] And, of particular importance to communities striving toward more sustainable development patterns, schools built far from the neighborhoods they serve are a contributing factor in outward migration from existing cities and towns, which in turn contributes to sprawl and can cause disinvestment that hurts local economies. (See "How School Facility Planning Impacts Communities" on page 6.)

Getting Back to Community-Oriented Schools

The trend toward building schools away from, rather than within, the neighborhoods they serve is not universal. Some school districts, cities, and towns have opted instead to continue or return to the tradition of community-oriented schools. Community-oriented schools are generally more sustainable and better for both students and the community. (See "How School Facility Planning Impacts Communities" on page 6.)

Figure 1.

Public School Enrollment Rises in U.S., 1930–2015

☐ Elementary (grades K–8) ■ Secondary (grades 9–12)
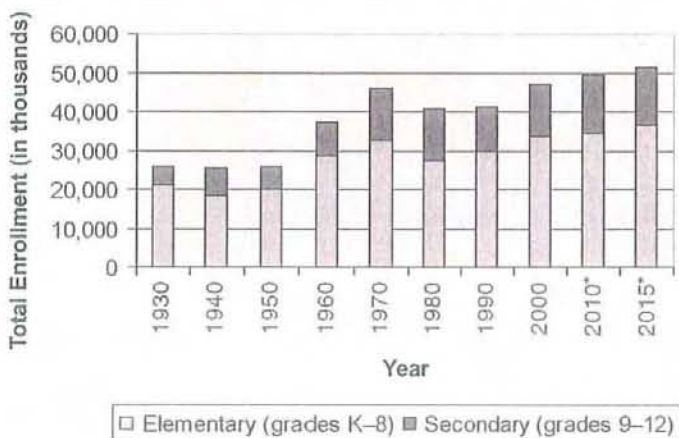
*Data for 2010 and 2015 are projections.
Source: Digest of Educational Statistics: 2006

Characteristics of Community-Oriented Schools

Community-oriented schools are generally more sustainable and in line with smart growth principles than larger schools or those built at the edges of established cities and towns. In a 2003 article for the *American School Board Journal* titled "Build 'Smart,'" Barbara McCann and Constance Beaumont outlined characteristics of "Smart Growth Schools." These characteristics, paraphrased below, also describe community-oriented schools. Smart growth schools:

- Are small in size and thus fit gracefully into the neighborhoods they serve

- Encourage broad community involvement in school facility planning

- Provide high-quality education

- Are located within a neighborhood and are safe for children to walk or bike to

- Act as a neighborhood anchor and support community use of the school facility after school hours

- Are well designed and fit the scale and design of the surrounding neighborhood

- Make good use of existing resources, including historic school buildings, whenever possible[10]

These characteristics are compatible with the U.S. Department of Education's "Six Principles of Facilities Design," which state that the learning environment should:

- Enhance teaching and learning, and accommodate the needs of all learners

- Serve as a center of community

- Result from a planning and design process involving all stakeholders

- Provide for health, safety, and security

- Make effective use of all available resources

- Allow for flexibility and adaptability to changing needs[11]

These principles have been endorsed by the Council of Educational Facilities Planners International, the American Institute of Architects, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Construction Managers Association of America, among others.

Community-oriented schools may be new or renovated facilities, or existing buildings adaptively reused as schools. They are small enough to ensure safe and successful learning environments for all students; are integrated into the community fabric, also serving as community centers; and are located within the neighborhoods they serve. By enabling students to walk or bike to school, these schools reduce congestion and related pollution, improve children's health by increasing their physical activity, and capitalize on existing infrastructure investments. (See sidebar for more characteristics of community-oriented schools.)

State and local policies—as well as how local governments and school districts interact with each other—influence decisions about where and how school facilities are built, maintained, and used. The land use and facility planning efforts of local governments and school districts have become increasingly separated in most communities. Their lack of coordination may contribute to the trend toward larger, more distant schools and associated economic, environmental, and social impacts.

The current national boom in school construction, although challenging, offers an unprecedented opportunity for local government and school leaders

Figure 2.

Average Public School Size Increases in U.S., 1919–2004
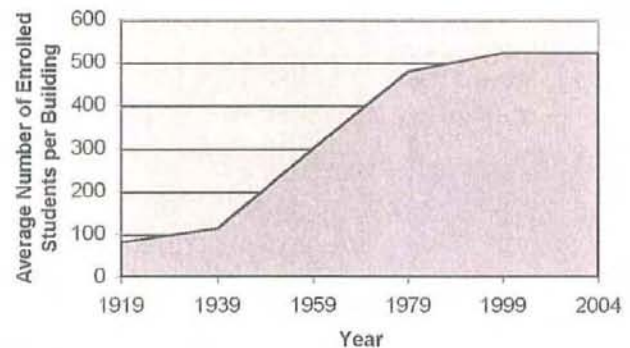
Source: Digest of Educational Statistics: 2006

to improve the quality of schools and communities together. By applying the principles of sustainability and smart growth to schools and coordinating their planning efforts, local governments and school districts can create community-oriented schools that provide a good education while also achieving broader community goals and making better use of tax dollars.

How School Facility Planning Impacts Communities

School facility planning and construction trends should concern local government managers because the location, size, and use of public schools have tremendous impact on the communities they serve in terms of:

- **The economy**. High-quality schools located in neighborhoods can buoy property values, support local businesses, and serve as catalysts for revitalization. Moving schools out of neighborhoods or failing to maintain them can cause disinvestment.

- **The environment and public health**. School location impacts students' modes of transportation to and from school, and therefore air and water quality. Building schools close to the neighborhoods they serve can help students get much-needed physical activity, thus combating obesity and other health issues.

- **Traffic congestion**. Schools contribute to local traffic congestion during peak hours, causing problems for parents, staff, and residents; endangering pedestrians; and hurting the economy (in terms of lost hours of productivity and wasted fuel).

- **Community cohesion**. In many cities and towns, schools serve as community anchors that support greater community interaction, engagement, and pride.

- **Social equity**. The socioeconomic makeup of neighborhoods is reflected in a community's schools, and has important implications for academic equity.

- **Quality of education**. Academic success, teacher satisfaction, parental involvement, attendance rates, graduation rates, and student safety are greatly influenced by school size and use, including the degree to which it is integrated into broader community life.

- **School and local government finance**. School location and use impacts transportation, infrastructure, service costs and, in turn, tax rates.

The Economy

High-quality schools located in neighborhoods can buoy property values, support local businesses, and serve as catalysts for revitalization. Moving schools out of neighborhoods or failing to maintain them can cause disinvestment.

It has long been accepted that the quality of local schools influences property values. But research indicates that the location of local schools does, too. An analysis of two neighborhoods in Jackson, Michigan, for example, found that the average property value of homes within a half-mile of an "open, stable" elementary school rose at a higher rate than that of homes within a half-mile of a closed elementary school. The analysis estimates that had the closed school remained open, the city, county, and school district would have received approximately $2 million more in property taxes over ten years.[12] A study of villages in New York found that small villages with schools had considerably higher housing values than those without.[13] And a study of predominately rural communities in Iowa found that those that lost their local high school due to consolidation tended to lose population more quickly than those that retained their school.[14] Declining population can have a major impact on local property values and, consequently, property tax revenues.

Developers want to build near schools—and families that can afford to tend to move closer to new schools. New schools are often perceived as "better" than older schools, regardless of where they are located, because they are perceived as more high-tech, stable, or less crowded. Thus new schools built

Figure 3.

Children Now Travel Further to School in U.S.: 1969 vs. 2001
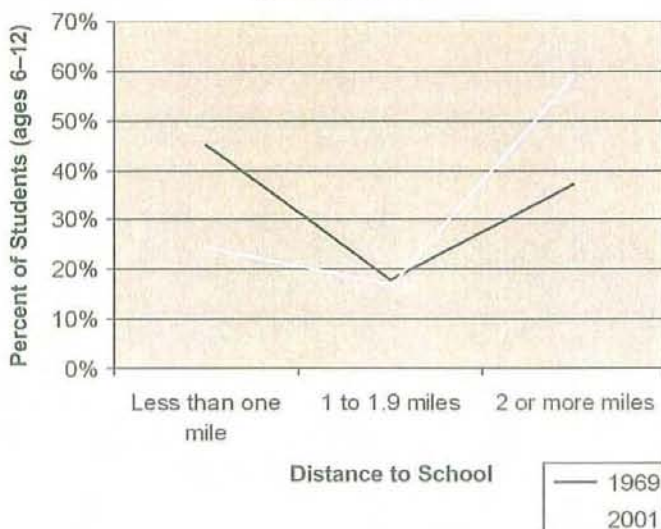
Source: Nationwide Personal Transportation Study: 1969 and National Household Transportation Survey: 2001

on the edges of established cities and towns can contribute to outward migration and disinvestment.[15] A study conducted by the Michigan Land Use Institute found a strong correlation between schools built at the edges of communities and the conversion of open space into suburbs throughout the state. For example, a high school built at the outskirts of Lansing has prompted the relocation of families from older neighborhoods in Lansing and East Lansing to newly developed subdivisions near the school.[16]

School closings and subsequent population shifts can also threaten the viability of local businesses and downtowns. School districts are large employers in most communities, and the purchasing power of schools and their employees is considerable. A study of six counties in rural Minnesota found that school district payrolls accounted for between 4 and 9 percent of the total payroll in those counties. Purchases by the school districts and their employees accounted for up to 13 percent of total retail sales.[17] The loss of those revenues can be significant, particularly for locally-owned businesses.

Renovation of an existing school or construction of a new school in an established neighborhood can stimulate revitalization. A recent research review found evidence that "new or well-maintained [school] facilities help revitalize a neighborhood."[18] A general rule of redevelopment efforts is that public investments—from libraries and clinics to parks and recreation centers—will attract private investment. Schools should not be left out of this equation.

The Environment and Public Health

School location impacts students' modes of transportation to and from school, and therefore air and water quality. Building schools close to the neighborhoods they serve can help students get much-needed physical activity, thus combating obesity and other health issues.

Building or maintaining schools in existing neighborhoods, rather than on the edges of established cities and towns, helps preserve undeveloped open space, including agricultural and working lands, and wildlife habitat. This open space is important for preserving water quality because it provides natural filtration and storage for stormwater. Conversely, schools built on undeveloped land at the edges of established cities and towns not only reduce open space but also create more impervious surfaces—roads, driveways, parking lots, and roofs—which result in increased stormwater runoff, further degrading water quality. The trend

Figure 4.

Private Vehicles Are Now the Primary Mode of Transportation to School in U.S: 1969 vs. 2001
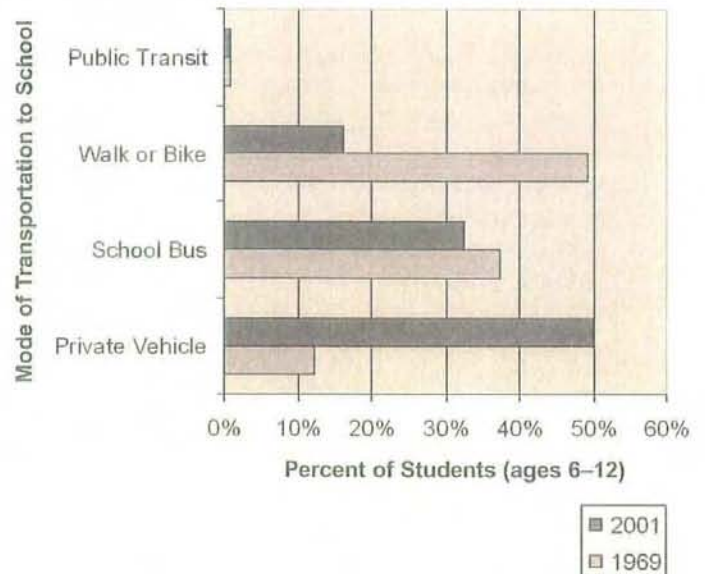
Source: Nationwide Personal Transportation Study: 1969 and National Household Transportation Survey: 2001

is exacerbated by the residential and commercial development that often follows construction of a new school in an undeveloped area.

Less than 15 percent of U.S. students walked or biked to school as of 2001—as opposed to 48 percent in 1969 (see Figure 4).[19] Parents report that the primary reasons their children do not walk to school are either because they live too far away (62 percent) or the walk is too dangerous due to traffic (30 percent).[20] The decline in walking and biking to and from school poses two problems: increased vehicle travel and decreased student physical activity. The former, like all congestion, contributes to air and water pollution and carbon emissions that impact climate change. And the latter is thought to be a major contributor to the rapid rise in youth obesity rates.

A study conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified a correlation between schools, travel modes, and air pollution. The study found that students with shorter walk and bicycle times to school are more likely to walk or bicycle, as are students traveling through pedestrian-friendly environments. Consequently, schools located in close proximity to students' homes and in pedestrian-

friendly neighborhoods reduce traffic. The EPA study showed a 15 percent reduction in related air pollution and a 13 percent increase in walking and bicycling to school associated with such schools.[21]

Nationwide, a variety of factors, including decreased physical activity among school-age children, is leading to unprecedented levels of obesity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one-fifth of children and youth aged 6–19 years are overweight.[22] With this rise in childhood overweight and obesity, pediatricians have seen increased cases of asthma and formerly adult health problems, such as Type II diabetes and high blood pressure, in children.[23] By not walking or bicycling to school, children miss out on an easy opportunity for daily physical activity. Furthermore, children in schools with larger enrollments and those who are dependent on a bus to get to and from school are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, including athletics.[24]

Many community-oriented schools also provide recreational and/or exercise facilities and other community services within walking distance of residents' homes. Such schools may further help reduce driving and related emissions, while also increasing physical activity among residents of all ages.[25]

Traffic Congestion

Schools contribute to local traffic congestion during peak hours, causing problems for parents, staff, and residents; endangering pedestrians; and hurting the economy (in terms of lost hours of productivity and wasted fuel).

Traffic congestion is an ongoing concern for local governments, cited frequently by citizens as their most important quality-of-life issue,[26] and vehicles traveling to school are a source of that congestion. Little data is available that measures how trips to and from school contribute to congestion in the U.S. However, the National Household Transportation Survey (NHTS) found in 2007 that 7 to 11 percent of non-commuting vehicle trips made during the peak morning traffic period were trips to school.[27] (This study does not include "incidental trips"—those that are short stops on the way to another destination—and so excludes trips where parents or others drop a child off at school on their way to work, for instance. Local-level data seems to echo this trend. For example, the Marin County Congestion Management Agency estimates that 21 to 27 percent of peak morning traffic in the California community is school-related.[28]

Traffic congestion poses a threat to child, pedestrian, and driver safety and aggravates drivers, school staff, and residents living near schools. It increases commute times and decreases time that adults and children can spend working, learning, playing, or relaxing together. It also impacts local economies. A recent study determined that congestion nationwide cost the U.S. economy $78 billion in 2007, due to 4.2 billion lost hours of productivity and 2.9 billion gallons of wasted fuel.[29]

A number of factors influence traffic congestion around schools, including busing policies, traffic management, and the overall physical infrastructure surrounding facilities.[30] However, the largest factor in congestion is the number of vehicles around schools, which is directly related to the mode of transportation children must take to get to and from school. Approximately one half of school-aged children get to and from school by car. As previously discussed, this is due in large part to distances between homes and schools, and routes that are not pedestrian friendly.[31] Thus the best solution for congestion problems around schools is a planning and design solution: locate schools closer to the neighborhoods they will serve and ensure that students' routes to and from school are safe for walking and bicycling.

Community Cohesion

In many cities and towns, schools serve as community anchors that support greater community interaction, engagement, and pride.

School facilities that are integrated into neighborhoods can contribute to stronger community identity and cohesion. Rural communities in particular benefit from having schools integrated into the community fabric, as they provide a meeting place and community center. When neighborhood schools are closed or relocated away from the populations they serve, they cannot fill this role. A study of eight small towns in rural North Dakota found that communities that had a school close due to consolidation realized a decline in citizen participation in local organizations and activities. Citizens also rated their "quality of life significantly lower than did residents of communities that had retained their local schools."[32]

School facilities that are co-located (see definition on page 18) with government or community services, or that offer recreational or cultural opportunities, bring residents of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds together. This interaction helps build relationships and increase diversity and cohesion,

which strengthens neighborhoods and promotes civic engagement.[33]

Another way to boost civic engagement is through more transparent approaches to school facility planning. One research review notes that "as schools have consolidated and grown larger, decision making authority has been transferred from local communities into the hands of state officials and school administrators. Local citizens have increasingly less say over such matters as curriculum, educational standards, budgets, and teacher qualifications, and are less and less involved in the day-to-day school operations."[34] Between 1930 and 2002, as the U.S. population doubled, participation on school boards fell from 1 million to fewer than 200,000 people.[35] By engaging the community in planning new school facilities, citizens may become more engaged in broader school decision-making processes.

Social Equity

The socioeconomic makeup of neighborhoods is reflected in a community's schools, and has important implications for academic equity.

The construction of newer schools on the edges of established cities and towns contributes to the socioeconomic segregation of both communities and schools—as discussed earlier, families with means tend to move closer to new or suburban schools, leaving lower-income families behind. Further, neighborhood-based schools tend to be segregated, because the neighborhoods they serve are segregated. When schools are segregated, school quality and academic performance in impoverished neighborhoods decline. Studies show that the socioeconomic composition of a school has a substantial impact on education, particularly for poor children.[36] As one expert states, outward migration "leave[s] urban schools with fewer resources, material or intellectual, to serve communities of increasing levels of concentrated poverty."[37]

The quality of school facilities serving impoverished neighborhoods is one such limitation. Nearly $600 billion was spent on the construction and renovation of school facilities between 1995 and 2004 in the U.S. According to a report examining school districts' capital investments, however, "these billions of dollars spent on facilities have not been equally available to affluent and low-income communities and for minority and white students."[38] The report finds that, over the last decade, schools serving impoverished neighborhoods received about half as much funding for building improvements as schools serving wealth-

ier neighborhoods. And schools serving predominately low-income students were more likely to fund basic repairs, while schools serving predominately affluent students were more likely to make more significant educational enhancements, such as adding science or computer labs.

It is difficult for school districts to ensure the academic success of students in impoverished and blighted communities. It is also challenging for these same cities and towns to attract and retain new residents and businesses—most people don't want to move to communities with poorly performing schools. The long-term solution to these interconnected problems is to advance economically integrated communities in coordination with community-oriented schools. To that end, local governments and school districts should align their efforts in these two areas and address these problems together; establishing high-quality, community-oriented schools can be a catalyst for revitalization and the development of mixed-income neighborhoods.[39]

Until a community's neighborhoods become more economically and socially diverse, even community-oriented schools will remain segregated. However, research has shown that schools with smaller enrollments (one of the hallmarks of community-oriented schools) promote equity in education, bringing achievement levels of lower-income students closer to higher-income students, regardless of any segregation that may be occurring. Smaller schools can help counteract the effects of poverty on achievement for minority and lower-income students, while larger schools have a significantly more negative impact. A study of schools in Georgia, Montana, Ohio, and Texas, for example, found that reductions in school size led to proportionally greater achievement levels for lower-income students. It also found that "smaller schools reduced the negative effect of poverty on school performance by at least 20 percent and by as much as 70 percent in both urban and rural schools."[40]

Quality of Education

Academic success, teacher satisfaction, parental involvement, attendance rates, graduation rates, and student safety are greatly influenced by school size and use, including the degree to which it is integrated into broader community life.

Some school districts and researchers have argued that large, consolidated schools create economies of scale, reducing the cost of education per pupil,

Large Schools or Small Schools—Which Cost Less?

Researchers continually disagree on which cost less: large schools or small schools. The difference generally lies in how one calculates the cost of education. If the cost of education is calculated on a per-pupil basis, dividing the cost by the number of students served by the school, then larger schools typically cost less. However, if the cost is calculated on a per-graduate basis, dividing the cost by the number of students that the school graduates, then smaller schools are more cost effective, because they generally have a higher graduation rate.[46]

Benefits of Small Schools and Joint-Use Schools

A 2001 research review, titled *Smaller, Safer, Saner, Successful Schools* and conducted by the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, concluded that:

Smaller schools, on average, can provide

- A safer place for students
- A more positive, challenging environment
- Higher achievement
- Higher graduation rates
- Fewer discipline problems
- Much greater satisfaction for families, students and teachers

Schools that share facilities with other organizations can offer

- Broader learning opportunities for students
- High-quality services to students and their families
- Higher student achievement and better graduation rates
- A way to stretch and make more efficient use of tax dollars[47]

expanding course options, and improving technology.[41] However, studies that examine the cost of education *per graduate*, rather than per pupil, find that schools with larger student populations actually cost more than schools with smaller populations (see sidebar for further explanation of this concept). This is because smaller schools generally have higher graduation rates.[42] As one expert puts it, "smaller schools were found to successfully educate students at a lower cost than larger schools."[43] In large part, this is because student-teacher ratios are lower and levels of parental involvement are higher in schools with smaller student populations.

Regardless of the cost, research demonstrates that small schools have a positive impact on academic achievement and graduation rates, particularly for at-risk, minority, and low-income students (see "Social Equity" on page 9). A study by the U.S. Department of Education concludes that "it is clear that reducing the size of schools can increase student participation, reduce dropout rates, enhance academic achievement, and enhance teacher efficacy."[44] Further, studies show that not only do small schools have a higher graduation rate than larger schools, but they also have a higher percentage of graduates that continue on to postsecondary education. Students in smaller schools tend to participate more in extracurricular activities and miss fewer classes than students at larger schools. And they report a heightened sense of belonging and are at lower risk of being victims of violence and vandalism.[45]

Schools that are integrated into community life, by virtue of their location or joint use by community service providers, also have access to additional community resources to enhance the learning environment. School facilities co-located with or close to libraries,

museums, and other cultural institutions, communities services, and employment opportunities can offer expanded services and learning opportunities for students.

School and Local Government Finance

School location and use impacts transportation, infrastructure, service costs, and, in turn, tax rates.

Despite the promise of economies of scale, large schools built at the edge of cities often realize greater costs related to transportation, administration, maintenance, and security than do smaller, more centrally located schools.[48] They also tend to see diminishing returns. One study notes that "while some costs, particularly administrative costs may decline in the short run, they are replaced by other expenditures, especially transportation and more specialized staff."[49] Transportation in particular can be costly for school districts whose school facilities are located increasingly farther from the neighborhoods they serve. The state of Maine, for example, found that school transportation costs statewide increased six-fold between 1970 and 1995—despite a 27,000-student decline in enrollment during the same

period. The state attributed this trend to changing development patterns and the construction of new schools at the edges of established cities and towns.[50]

For local governments, there are often many additional costs associated with schools built farther from city and town centers. The extension of services and infrastructure, such as roads and sewer and water lines, to undeveloped areas are often not included in the budgets of school construction projects. Such extensions ultimately result in increased service fees and taxes for taxpayers and business and property owners.[51] A 2004 study found that new school construction statewide has caused a significant increase in property taxes for Michigan homeowners and businesses, increasing related debt from $4 billion in 1994 to $12 billion in 2004. The extension of infrastructure and services to a new school facility resulted in increased fees and taxes that generally equaled or exceeded the millage that paid for the school.[52]

The location of schools in previously undeveloped areas and the extension of services and infrastructure to support them facilitate new residential growth. Often, this growth occurs in areas that the local government has not targeted for growth. The Michigan study notes that new school facilities constructed to address overcrowding caused rapid population growth and residential development in the neighboring area. Ultimately, the growth priced young families out of the market, resulting in declining enrollment within just ten years—a boom-and-bust cycle. In the meantime, the outward migration prompted school closures within established cities, threatening property values, local businesses, and the tax base.[53]

Factors Affecting School Facility Planning

Local government managers and staff who seek to address the impacts of school facility planning on communities must first understand how state and local policies and practices affect school facility maintenance, siting, and design.

State Policies That Impact School Facility Planning

State departments of education have played a major role in the national trend toward larger, more remote schools through the establishment of minimum acreage requirements and funding formulas that favor new construction over renovation.

Until recently, the Council of Educational Facilities Planners International (CEFPI)—the professional association for school facility planners, designers, and builders—included minimum acreage recommendations for public school facilities in its *Guide for Planning Educational Facilities*. The recommendations called for ten acres for elementary schools, twenty acres for middle schools, and thirty for high schools, plus one additional acre for every one hundred students. The basis for the guidelines was never explained and did not appear to be based on research. By 2003, twenty-seven states had adopted these or similar recommendations as a requirement for awarding state funding for new school facilities or simply as guidance on how many acres local districts should look for when selecting locations for new schools.[54]

Since 2004, CEFPI's revised *Guide for Planning Educational Facilities* no longer includes the minimum acreage recommendations for school sites. Recognizing that a "one size fits all" approach is dated and can work counter to a variety of goals, the new guide encourages communities to analyze their needs in order to make appropriate siting decisions. Some states have begun to rethink minimum acreage requirements. Since 2003, for example, South Carolina, Rhode Island, and Maine have eliminated minimum acreage requirements. (Maine has even mandated maximum site sizes.) However, many states still have not changed their policies and requirements.

Another influential factor in school facility planning is state funding formulas that favor new school construction over renovation of existing facilities.[55] Many states mandate that, should the cost to renovate or expand a new school exceed a specified portion (often two-thirds) of the cost to build a new school, then new construction is required if the district is to receive state funds.[56] These cost formulas rarely take into account all the costs of new construction—including site acquisition; maintenance or disposal of the existing facility; new infrastructure, including roads and sewer and water lines; increased transportation costs; and maintenance and operation of a larger site—not to mention the unquantifiable value of the role that the existing facility may play in the life of the community.[57]

It is important to note that, even in states where minimum acreage requirements and restrictive school funding formulas are in place, a waiver often may be obtained if the school district makes a strong case. City leaders in Casper, Wyoming, succeeded at changing state laws that affected school planning by appealing to the state's governor and legislature. (See the case study on page 19 for more information.)

Local Policies and Practices That Impact School Facility Planning

Local building codes and zoning policies, as well as school district policies and practices, may contribute to the trend of building large, new schools on the edges of established cities and towns rather than within neighborhoods.

Some states exempt schools from local government zoning regulations; in others, local review may be limited. Even in those communities where schools are subject to local planning regulations, building codes and zoning laws may be barriers to building community-oriented school facilities. Many jurisdictions have building setbacks, building height limitations, and parking space requirements that make building on small sites difficult, not for only schools but also other commercial, residential, and mixed-use development. Potential sites within an existing neighborhood may not be zoned for school use. And building codes could make the renovation or expansion of an older facility cost- or time-prohibitive.[58] Local planning jurisdictions that seek more community-oriented schools should examine how local building codes and zoning laws may impact school facility planning. Arlington County, Virginia, for example, recently adopted a capital improvements process to ensure that all public buildings, including schools, meet broader community goals and are held to established design standards.[59]

A number of additional factors may work against the choice to renovate rather than replace an older school facility. School districts facing budget deficits tend to defer maintenance of school facilities. As they fall into disrepair, these schools are less likely to be considered viable for renovation or expansion.[60] The idea that newer and bigger is better often sways school boards and facilities committees, particularly when a consultant or architect—who may stand to benefit more from new construction—tells the board that renovation is the more costly option.[61] It may also be the case that the school district or architect does not have sufficient experience with facility renovation or expansion. Resources are now available to help school districts calculate all costs associated with renovating or constructing a school facility, to help ensure these calculations are complete and balanced. (See *Appraisal Guide for Older & Historic School Facilities*, listed in the Resources section on page 34, for example.)

It is important to recognize that, in many communities, school districts are working quickly to get ahead of booming enrollment. School districts may believe they have no choice but to build a large

Definition: Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances

Adequate public facilities ordinances (APFO) provide local governments with additional authority in planning and permitting developments—the power to deny or delay a proposed development if existing infrastructure and services cannot sufficiently support it. Relevant infrastructure and services include water and sewer, roads, public safety, and schools. Generally, the goal of APFOs is to ensure that existing residents' quality of life is not compromised by overburdened public infrastructure and services.

APFO programs require developers to plan for infrastructure and service needs before receiving plan and permit approvals. For instance, in the case of schools, developers may be required to help fund an existing school construction project, donate land for a new facility, or construct a new school facility. Local governments that seek more community-oriented schools should establish a mechanism to ensure that developers' contributions are in line with the community's vision for its schools.

school, since the process of acquiring land, planning and designing the site, gaining approvals, and constructing the new facility can take years.[62] If local planning jurisdictions can help streamline and expedite this process, as well as help plan new school locations ahead of development, school districts may be more inclined to consider different approaches to school siting and design.

Adequate public facilities ordinances (see sidebar for definition) can help address overcrowding in schools, but they do not necessarily promote community-oriented school facilities. A developer may provide a school site that is far from the neighborhoods the school will serve or that is on a road that students cannot safely travel by foot or bicycle. These circumstances can put pressure on the local government to accept the "free" site rather than using tax dollars on a more appropriate site. Local governments that seek more community-oriented schools should establish a mechanism to coordinate with school districts to ensure that when developers contribute funding or donate land for school construction, that the location, size, and design of the school fit the community's vision.

(See "Better Together" on page 14 for more ideas on how local government policies can impact school facility planning.)

Increasing Coordination between Local Governments and School Districts

It is not surprising that many local governments and school districts fail to coordinate their planning efforts: in most states, school districts and local governments are distinct entities with separate taxing powers, decision-making bodies, and missions. School boards are typically focused on a single subset of the community—its children and adolescents—and the task of improving academic performance as measured by standardized test scores. Local governments, on the other hand, are mandated to serve the interests and protect the health and well-being of the community as a whole.[63] (See the case study on Stonington, Connecticut, on page 26 to learn more about these differences in perspective.)

Further, local government officials and planners and school officials and planners often do not understand each other's planning processes. Comparing the results of three separate surveys conducted in California in 2007 of professionals involved in school planning and siting, researchers concluded that "local government officials and planners typically do not have detailed knowledge of the state-regulated school planning processes and timelines school districts must follow. Similarly, school districts often do not have detailed knowledge of local land use planning policies and practices. This creates and supports isolated silo planning practices."[64] (See sidebar for steps toward understanding how school facility planning works in your community.)

School facility planning decisions are generally made by school boards and driven by economics—

Understanding How School Planning Works in Your Community

The following steps will help you and your planning director, commissioners, and staff better understand how school facility planning works in your community:

1. Ask to review a copy of the school district's facility master plan.
   - Are the district's school plans in sync with the community's comprehensive plan?
   - Are the school planners and town planners using the same demographic and infrastructure data?

2. Get a handle on how school investments are planned in your jurisdiction.
   - Raise questions about the relationship between your community's local capital improvement plan and the school district's plans.
   - Get one of your planning commissioners or staff to join the school district's advisory committee on school construction—consider leveraging the local government's role as a transportation agency to get a seat at the table.

3. Find out what state and local policies or rules drive school investment decisions in your town.
   - Some rules are actually just policies or guidelines and can be more flexible than most people realize.

4. Support the maintenance of your community's existing school facilities.
   - How does the school district allocate money for maintaining and upgrading existing schools?

5. Educate school board members and planning commissioners on the implications and opportunities related to school spending.

- Help the school board evaluate offers of land donations for schools by developers. Work with school staff to analyze the proposed site and negotiate improvements in location or design.

6. Think creatively, and never underestimate fiscal arguments.
   - Work with school districts to put together school bond proposals that also meet broader community needs. The integration of community resources and services with a school's educational program can strengthen support from citizens, even those with no school-age children.

7. Be proactive in reviewing school projects brought before the planning board. If the board does not have a formal review function, consider taking the time to provide an informal, advisory review of the school project.
   - Does the project provide bike racks for students to lock their bikes?
   - Are there existing or planned sidewalks, not only at the site, but also connecting to adjoining neighborhoods?
   - How will the project meet the greater goals of the community while meeting the district's needs? Are there redundant or enhanced services?
   - Where will students and teachers live, and how will they arrive each day?
   - How does the community access the facility, and does the project account for student safety?[69]

where they can get the most land for the lowest price. These decisions often occur without consultation with local government staff or consideration of the local comprehensive plan. A study of school facilities decisions in Michigan, for example, found that only 9 percent of school boards had formal or extensive consultation with local officials about proposed facilities improvement initiatives, while 75 percent had informal or brief consultation and 16 percent did not consult local government officials at all. Twenty-six percent of these decisions were made without any consideration of the local comprehensive plan.[65] As a town planner in Massachusetts asserts, this behavior has resulted in school superintendents and boards that "regularly ignored or bypassed local master plans, capital improvement plans, and even zoning in the siting and operations of their facilities."[66]

Likewise, local government planning and development decisions are sometimes made without regard for how new residential development will impact enrollment in existing schools. The approval of large-scale residential development can push school districts to make rushed and ill-informed decisions about new school facilities in order to address overcrowding. Municipal capital planning and economic development efforts also fail frequently to incorporate school facilities.[67]

A recent review of school facility planning research concluded that "there appears to be uniform agreement [among researchers] that local governments are not doing a good job of planning for schools, having abdicated that responsibility to school districts over the last several decades, and there exists a substantial disconnect between school boards and local governments in their facilities and infrastructure planning, respectively."[68] This disconnect has critical implications for communities, particularly those that are struggling to manage growth and its impact on the economy, environment, social equity, and quality of life.

Better Together

A lot is at stake if local governments and school districts are unable to bridge the divide. As communities grow and local government and school district budgets are stretched thin, collaboration will become increasingly vital to meeting the needs of the entire community. As one private-sector planner states, "the community is served best if its individual components work as an interdependent whole rather than a series of unrelated parts."[70]

Perhaps the most direct and immediate outcome of local government–school district collaboration is increased resource efficiency. When local governments and school districts share rather than duplicate resources, they each save money and produce greater results together than they would alone.[71] Collaboration may also lead to closer ties between development and new school capacity, according to one researcher, as well as better links between schools and adjacent neighborhoods, co-location and joint use of schools with other facilities, and better alignment of local comprehensive and school facility plans.[72]

So why does the local government–school district disconnect persist? A 2006 summit on "Intergovernmental Collaboration for School Siting" brought together county, municipal, and school board officials from four counties in North Carolina to address barriers, opportunities, and ideas related to collaboration.[73] Participants identified five key barriers to collaboration:

- **Lack of trust.** Participants viewed a lack of trust as a "prominent barrier to effective collaboration" that impacts communication, enrollment projections, and existing relationships.

- **Politics.** Participants expressed that politics often negatively impacted the objectivity and consistency of information and decision-making processes.

- **Time constraints.** Overloaded local government and school district leaders and staff find it difficult to make time for the meetings required for collaborative school facility planning.

- **Lack of communication.** Agencies' failure to communicate and understand each other's mission and goals makes it difficult to establish a common direction.

- **Lack of commitment.** Without strong commitment from all parties, collaboration cannot be successful.

These obstacles are difficult to overcome because, as the summit facilitator summarizes, "currently, few institutional mechanisms or incentives are available for the key stakeholders that control decisions about local land use, school funding, and school planning to coordinate their thinking and their actions."[74]

Thus the first steps toward bridging the disconnect and eliminating barriers to collaboration are for local government managers to establish a process for local government–school district collaboration and communication; to develop a shared vision and plan for the community and its schools; and to identify policy changes that will support collaboration and the shared vision.

1. Establish a Process for Collaboration and Communication

Local government managers and staff should work with school district superintendents and staff to establish an on-going, institutionalized process for collaboration and communication. Collaborative processes should include a protocol for the sharing of objective data about future development and school enrollment. To ensure objectivity, local governments and school districts should establish a mutually agreed upon decision-making process. Together, these measures will help increase trust between leadership and staff, improve information and data sharing, and ensure that collaborative efforts do not fall victim to changes in leadership, staff, or politics.

Local governments and school districts that succeed at collaboration report that their success hinges on regular meetings and communication between the two entities. This typically takes the form of monthly or quarterly meetings among staff to discuss intersecting concerns, including facility planning and planned developments, but sometimes expanding to such topics as emergency response, community services, and transportation. Local governments have also included school district staff in the comprehensive plan and capital facility review processes to seek opportunities for resource-sharing, joint use, and other community-oriented school approaches. (See "Community-Oriented Appproaches to School Facility Planning" on page 16 to learn more.)

It is important to note that collaboration is unlikely to occur without leadership from the top, which requires good working relationships among local government managers and leaders and school superintendents and board members. One planning consultant offers the following advice to help local government leaders initiate collaboration with school district leadership:

Invite the school board to an informal get-acquainted session. Make it clear you honor their leadership in developing and carrying out the community's educational agenda while stressing your responsibility to plan for the entire city's welfare. Show them your plans in process and invite their comments. Ask them about their short and long-range facility and property needs. Talk about common issues and concerns and how they can be solved in a cooperative, cost-effective fashion. After laying the groundwork, choose one project on which you can act jointly and direct your staffs to do everything possible to make it a success.[75]

It may also be useful to emphasize that, although it may take more work and resources in the beginning, collaboration will ultimately ensure more effective use of the staff and resources of both agencies to meet their respective and shared goals.

2. Develop a Shared Vision and Plan

City and school district leaders and staff should establish a shared vision, as well as goals and objectives, to further institutionalize and support collaboration. The process of identifying a common vision will help all parties better understand each other's perspectives and the factors at play in community and school facility planning, as well as further enhance objectivity and trust.

Development of the shared vision should include a discussion of how the school district's needs intersect with the community's needs. This will help identify policy gaps and obstacles that local governments and school districts can seek to address. Communities can take this one step further by bringing local government staff into the school facility planning and design process and even fully integrating school facility plans with capital improvement and land use plans. Likewise, engaging school district leaders in local planning discussions will help them understand the community's vision for growth and development and provide them an opportunity to weigh in on how schools fit into that vision.

In states where optional elements are permitted in the comprehensive plan, the local government could collaborate with the school district to incorporate a schools element into the comprehensive plan. The schools element can address how the renovation, expansion, and construction of school facilities supports growth and development objectives, and it can outline a process for local government–school district coordination around site selection, infrastructure, and planning.[76] (See the Durham County, North Carolina, case study on page 25 for a detailed example of how schools can be incorporated into comprehensive plans.)

3. Establish Policies and Incentives That Support Community-Oriented Schools

Local government managers should evaluate how building codes, zoning laws, and planning processes impact collaboration between local governments and school districts and efforts to create community-oriented schools. As discussed previously, these policies may have the unintended effect of making community-oriented approaches to school facility planning more difficult to implement.

Following are some specific measures and areas of planning that local governments have addressed to enhance collaboration and promote community-oriented schools:

- Give the school district priority in planning and permitting to help shorten construction times and reduce costs. This could be contingent upon the school district meeting certain location and design objectives.

- Work with school districts to identify future school sites so they may be purchased while they are still available and affordable.

- Put measures in place to ensure school capacity and school transportation are considered in the review process for residential developments. (For example, see the Orange County, Florida, case study on page 23.)

- In cases where the local government has an adequate public facilities ordinance, establish a review mechanism to ensure that developers' solutions to school capacity issues are in line with the community's vision for its schools.[77]

- Establish a land-banking program to facilitate land donations by developers for new schools. This could enable the local government to better influence where future schools will be built.

- Ensure that building codes encourage rather than inhibit renovation of existing school facilities.[78]

- Eliminate regulatory barriers and create incentives to encourage joint use and co-location of school and community facilities.

- Develop a mechanism for assessing how effectively and efficiently community resources are integrated and find ways to reward projects that perform well.[79]

- Offer bonus funds to school districts that incorporate community-oriented school approaches in their planning efforts. (For example, see the Orange County, North Carolina, case study on page 27.)

- Establish incentives, such as density bonuses, for developers that address school capacity by incorporating land for schools in residential development proposals.

- Incorporate intergovernmental coordination around school facilities in the comprehensive plan, master transportation plan (required in some jurisdictions), and capital improvements plan. (For example, see the Durham County, North Carolina, case study on page 25.)

Community-Oriented Approaches to School Facility Planning

It is clear that the best school facilities for both students and communities are those that are community-oriented, because they help local governments and school districts meet multiple objectives. There are a number of strategies that cities and school districts working together can employ to advance a more community-oriented approach to school facilities:

1. Locate New Facilities within New or Established Neighborhoods

As discussed above, smaller schools that are integrated into the neighborhoods they serve are better for students and the community than larger schools in outlying areas. School districts can build new facilities in an established neighborhood by identifying infill sites, adapting existing facilities, or locating on public land. Infill sites (those within already developed areas) may be smaller, but they fit the context of the neighborhood and facilitate more walking and bicycling.

In 1998, Richardson Independent School District began construction of an elementary school on the last undeveloped piece of property in an established neighborhood of multi-family apartment complexes in Dallas, Texas (pop. 1,232,940).[80] Students from the neighborhood were being bussed forty to fifty minutes each day from their homes to thirteen different schools. Now the Forest Lane Academy of Arts and Communication serves some 615 students, nearly 95 percent of whom walk to school from the immediate neighborhood. Since the school opened in 1999, it has become an attraction for new renters and a catalyst for revitalization of the area.[81] (See also the Glendale, California, example on page 17.)

There are challenges associated with building schools in existing neighborhoods. Infill sites are generally smaller than sites available at the less-developed edges of cities and towns; constraints created by site size may be addressed by building multi-storied schools or by sharing nearby community facilities instead of building separate libraries, gymnasiums, or athletic fields. If infill sites are not available, building on an existing site may require demolishing houses. In such cases, community engagement will be critical to the success of the project.

School facilities can also be integrated as anchors for new, walkable neighborhoods. For example, the Witch Hazel Village in Hillsboro, Oregon (population 87,732) is a 318-acre community that employs smart

growth principles, such as compact design, mixed land uses, and walkable neighborhoods. Once completed, the community will accommodate 5,000 new residents. Hillsboro School District collaborated with the city to purchase twenty acres of land in the center of the village to build co-located elementary and middle schools. The site is adjacent to the civic plaza and connected to the village by sidewalks, serving as a focal point and meeting place. The elementary school, which opened in 2003, currently serves about 500 students, many of whom walk to school from the surrounding village neighborhoods. The middle school will open in 2009 and will have a capacity of 1,000 students.[82]

2. Capitalize on Existing Facilities and Infrastructure

School districts can maintain school facilities on their existing sites by renovating or expanding rather than replacing the school building. This saves the district on costs related to site acquisition, demolition or maintenance of the abandoned facility, and transportation. It also helps to maintain community cohesion and takes advantage of existing infrastructure investments made by the local government. Deferred maintenance and lack of technology upgrades at existing schools will result in fewer families choosing to locate in a community over time. Maintaining and upgrading existing schools will often help stem dropping enrollments and keep neighborhoods and downtowns vibrant.

In Manitowoc, Wisconsin (pop. 33,635), the school board acted on citizens' desire to keep a neighborhood elementary school on the site of an existing school building—which, though it was run-down, was central to the neighborhood and within walking distance of the middle and high schools—rather than build a new school on the edge of the city. The new state-of-the-art facility, which opened in 1995 and serves 450 students, was built on 3.7 acres for $5 million. The board saved millions by utilizing the existing site and building a compact, two-story facility. Fixtures from the old building, including the fireplace, a frieze, and a cement sign, were incorporated into the new building as a reminder of the school's history.[83]

When deciding where to locate new schools, school districts can make use of underutilized facilities in the community—former city administration buildings, libraries, even commercial buildings—through adaptive reuse. Again, this delivers savings to both the school district and the local government. In Pomona, California (pop. 154,271), a vacant warehouse adjacent to a

virtually empty shopping mall has been transformed into an elementary school (grades K–8) and a high school. The 9.8-acre "Village @ Indian Hill" educational complex, which opened in 2000, has been the linchpin for redevelopment and revitalization of the mall into a mixed-use, transit-oriented village.[84] A nonprofit organization was established to manage leases for the remaining 250,000 square feet of the mall, creating an endowment for the schools' academic programs.[85]

3. Share Facilities through Joint Use or Co-location

School facilities are typically open only during school hours, eight to ten hours per day. Meanwhile, local governments construct, maintain, operate, and staff separate facilities that provide duplicate services during an expanded timeframe. Schools, local governments, and community service providers can leverage their resources to build or renovate shared facilities through joint use or co-location (see sidebar on page 18 for definitions). Sharing facilities helps both the local government and the school district provide more services in better facilities—at a lower cost and on less land. They also elevate the school's role as a community center, creating a connection for residents who don't have children in school, and offering students enriched educational and workforce development opportunities.

In suburban Glendale, California (pop. 199,463), the city and school district collaborated, with community input, to build a joint-use facility called the Edison School and Pacific Park. The 10.1-acre, joint-use facility incorporates a multi-use gymnasium, a recreation room, meeting rooms, computer labs, classrooms for the elementary school, a joint city and school library, playing fields and parks, a community center, and a small health center. The project cost $17.9 million—the city and school district claim that combining the facilities and sharing the cost saved them $5 million in land acquisition, construction, and operational costs. Since the site was an existing park, redevelopment of the site into a multi-storied school had a minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood. The city and the school district developed a master agreement addressing maintenance and operation of the facility and all its components.[86]

As the percentage of the voting population with school-aged children declines, school districts may have more success garnering community support for school facilities that serve the entire community.

School officials in Gaylord, Michigan (pop. 3,744), for example, believe that without a cooperative, community-oriented approach to planning the rural city's high school, the bond that funded the building would not have passed referendum. The school district engaged the community in developing the master plan for the school, which was built in 1996 and serves 1,200 students from the region. The result was incorporation of a performing arts center and classrooms available for community use, as well as provisions for senior activities, daycare, and health clinics. School officials also attribute an increase in volunteerism and support for students and education to the collaborative effort.[87]

Agencies and organizations sharing joint-use or co-located facilities should establish a memorandum of understanding or other agreement outlining roles and responsibilities for hours and types of usage, maintenance, staffing, insurance, and liability. (See "Additional Resources" on page 33 for a Web site link that provides sample agreements.)

In Lincoln, California (pop. 39,566), joint-use agreements around parks and schools lead to greater coordination between the city and school district around planning school facilities. (See the Lincoln, California, case study on page 21 for more details.)

4. Create Safer Environments for Students to Walk or Bike

Across the country, communities are taking action to create safer routes for students to walk or bike to school. Partnerships to create safer pedestrian environments for students can be a stepping stone to broader collaboration between school districts and local governments. Typical strategies to increase pedestrian safety and access around schools include:

- Educating children about safe pedestrian skills
- Generating enthusiasm among parents and children about the issue
- Mapping and publicizing designated safe routes
- Engineering for traffic calming and pedestrian safety
- Patrolling routes and chaperoning children as they travel to and from school
- Increased enforcement of traffic laws

One organized approach to creating safer pedestrian environments for students is the national Safe Routes to School initiative, which started in the Bronx in 1997 and has expanded across the nation. Communities that participate in the program direct state

Definitions: Joint Use and Co-location

Joint-use facilities are owned, maintained, and operated by two or more entities, whereas *co-located* facilities are typically sited together but owned and operated independently. Usually the stakeholders in such facilities sign a memorandum of understanding outlining roles and responsibilities, such as hours of usage and division of maintenance responsibilities.

Joint-use and co-located facilities that work well with schools include libraries, athletic and recreational facilities, YMCAs and YWCAs, performance and rehearsal spaces, health clinics and social services, adult education and workforce development, youth and senior centers, and daycare and tutoring providers.

and federal grants, local funds, and other resources to educating parents and children about pedestrian safety, encouraging children to walk or bicycle to school, and employing enforcement and engineering strategies to calm traffic and increase pedestrian access around schools.

Arlington County, Virginia (pop. 199,776), for example, supports its Safe Routes to School initiative with county funds, including more than $2 million in capital improvements funds from transportation bonds. The initiative, launched in 2001, also receives state and federal grants. County transportation and environmental services staff worked with school administrators and staff to identify improvements to be made around the county's thirty-two public schools that would facilitate more pedestrian-friendly environments for children. The county government has followed up with pedestrian and traffic improvements, such as replacing or installing signage, crosswalks, sidewalks, curb and median extensions, and school-zone signals. County police monitor traffic at some schools and conduct walking and bicycling safety courses for students.[88]

In Albany, Oregon (pop. 46,213), the city manager chairs the city's Safe Routes to School committee, giving the local government a direct and active role in promoting walking and bicycling to schools. (See the Albany, Oregon, case study on page 29 for more details.)

5. Make Schools a Focal Point of Neighborhood Revitalization

Local governments and community development organizations can incorporate school construction or renovation into plans to revitalize established neigh-

borhoods. A new or renovated school in a depressed neighborhood sends the message to current and potential residents, investors, and developers that the local government and community are committed to turning the neighborhood around.[89] It can also generate pride and ownership among community residents, catalyzing clean-up efforts, and provide much-needed space for workforce development, homeownership training, and mental health and social services.

In 2003, the Midtown Neighborhood Empowerment Council in Neptune, New Jersey (pop. 28,000) received funding from the State of New Jersey's School Renaissance Zone program to build Midtown Community School. The school was identified in the township's Midtown Neighborhood Master Plan to "act as a catalyst for community reinvestment, serve as a source of community pride, and provide essential community services for all Township residents." The new school building, which opened in 2005, replaced an outdated facility and was built on a seven-acre vacant lot to accommodate 800 students, 80 percent of whom walk to school from their homes in adjacent neighborhoods. In response to community input, the new school incorporates a number of social service programs, including a community center, tutoring programs, and a health and dental clinic. To complement the school's revitalization, the local planning agency has worked with citizens and community groups to encourage redevelopment and affordable housing. For example, the township's Strategic Revitalization Plan identifies the transportation corridor on which the school is located as a gateway to the town's main street and has designated it as a mixed-use zone. Redevelopment and rehabilitation of the corridor and neighborhood is now underway.[90]

In Cincinnati, Ohio (pop. 332,252), the school district and local government are working together to establish schools as community learning centers, providing neighborhoods with a focal point for revitalization. (See the Cincinnati, Ohio, case study on page 30 for more details.)

Case Studies in Local Government–School District Collaboration

To successfully manage community growth and quality of life, local government and school leaders must bridge the gap between local planning and school facility planning to facilitate community-oriented schools.

Some communities have embraced the challenge and pioneered innovative and exciting ways to bring school and local government planning and services together. They have found that sharing a vision—and resources—results in facilities and services far superior to what either entity could have accomplished alone. They have created community-centered schools that have anchored community revitalization efforts and established much-needed neighborhood centers. In doing so, they have also increased the number of children walking and biking to school, which reduces congestion and air and water pollution, and improves children's health by increasing their physical activity.

Overview of Case Studies[91]

- **Casper, Wyoming**'s city manager and staff found that persistence pays off when dealing with state and school district policies that stand in the way of community-oriented schools.

- In **Lincoln, California**, personal relationships and joint-use agreements paved the way for greater collaboration around school facilities.

- **Orange County, Florida**'s policy of school concurrency established a formal system of local government-school district collaboration in this fast-growing county—and spurred state reforms.

- **Durham County, North Carolina**, incorporated a Schools Element in its recent comprehensive plan revision to require smarter school siting and collaboration.

- When the former town manager of **Stonington, Connecticut**, began working for the school district, he realized how different local government and school board perspectives really are.

- **Orange County, North Carolina**, found that financial incentives make the difference when it comes to school location and design decisions.

- In **Albany, Oregon**, the city manager has been instrumental in expanding the city's Safe Routes to Schools program.

- Local government and school district leaders in **Cincinnati, Ohio**, see an inextricable connection between school quality and community vitality.

Casper, Wyoming–Influencing School Planning Decisions against the Odds

Casper, Wyoming, is the second-largest city in the state. City manager Tom Forslund has worked for the city for twenty-one years, and for most of that time there was no real impetus for the city to partner with the school system on decisions about the location

of schools. "For the first eighteen years that I was with the city, it was a non-issue—there were no new schools due to slow economic growth," he says. The city and school district had a moderate level of collaboration: regular meetings, some partnership around co-location and joint use of school and park facilities, and joint funding of special programs.

Then, in 2001, a state Supreme Court decision required equitable funding of school construction statewide. Funding for school construction and much of school operations was transferred from the local level to the state, to ensure that all counties received equal funding for schools. The state has made available sufficient funds to rebuild, renovate, or expand most schools in the state.

State Funding Leads to School Facility Overhaul.
The school district in Casper plans to replace or renovate many of its thirty-eight schools in the next ten years—despite declining school enrollment in recent years. Decisions about where the schools will be built, how big they will be, and what they should look like are all influenced by the state's school construction standards. In 2002, the state created a School Facilities Commission that adopted minimum acreage requirements, ranging from four acres for elementary schools to twenty acres for high schools, plus one acre for every one hundred students. Unfortunately, only a few tracts of developable land in Casper's core are large enough to meet those standards. Further, a 1965 state law mandated that any land used as a park for ten years or more may never be used for another purpose, effectively prohibiting schools from expanding onto adjacent city park land. Since transportation is also funded by the state, bussing costs are not a factor the school district considers in identifying potential sites. Taken together, these factors created an environment in 2001 that favored putting most of the new or rebuilt schools at the edge of the city, rather in the core.

In July 2005, the school district brought plans for the first new school to be built under the new state funding program before the city council for zoning approval. The district had already purchased the site, which was located next to a major highway and partly outside of city limits. The site required major infrastructure improvements: extending sewer and water into the site, bringing stormwater infrastructure across the highway and into the site, and paving access roads. The district had not budgeted for off-site infrastructure expansion, and the city could not afford the improvements. City officials approved the

City of Casper, Wyoming
Population (2006):[92] 52,089
Annual Population Growth Rate:[93] 1.5 to 2 percent
Setting: Rural city
Form of Government: Council-manager
School District: Natrona County School District #1
Funding: Significant state funding; separate budget and independent taxing authority
Municipalities Served: 5, plus outlying areas
Number of Schools:[94] 35
Total Enrollment: 11,890

site contingent upon the school district developing a plan to address the infrastructure issues. Ultimately, the school district abandoned the site because it was unable to meet the stipulation.

City officials quickly realized that the school district and the city had divergent perspectives on the school construction program. The school district was focused on building high-quality facilities that would support strong academic programs. The city was concerned with the big picture—how these facilities would impact city services, existing neighborhoods, and the greater community. "Ultimately, we realized the school board was making planning decisions for the growth of our community that would impact us for ten to thirty years," recalls Forslund.

Persistence Pays Off.   Forslund and his staff conducted research to learn more about school siting standards, how school location impacts local planning and development, and how other communities were handling the issue. By 2006, the city had identified the following goals to communicate its perspective on school construction to the school district and community:

• Keep existing schools in place, if possible.

• If the school cannot be kept in place, use available infill sites.

• Promote walkability—not only for student health, but also to control congestion.

• Promote attractive new construction that complements the architecture and history of existing neighborhoods.

To achieve these goals, city officials started working to educate the school administration and school board members about the impacts of school siting on the greater community. They likewise sought to increase the awareness of residents, primarily through neighbor-

hood meetings, with the goal of cultivating advocates of neighborhood schools. They also lobbied on the state level for changes to school construction requirements and the park preservation law.

Slowly but surely, school district and city officials are beginning to understand each other's perspectives. Forslund and his staff, for example, have learned much by getting involved on site selection committees composed primarily of school officials and staff. In addition to the city's efforts to educate the school district, the city has mobilized parents and residents to help communicate the importance of maintaining neighborhood schools. This is particularly important in light of the district's shift in the early 1990s to a "schools of choice" policy that permits students to attend any school they choose in the district, which would seem to make neighborhood schools irrelevant.

In late 2005, city officials began to lobby the state School Facilities Commission, the state legislature, and even the governor, to change laws regarding park preservation and regulations on minimum acreage requirements. In 2007, the state repealed the park preservation law. Now the city is working with the school district to keep three schools in place, rather than replacing them, by expanding into city-owned parkland. The city will sell a portion of the park to the school district at a nominal fee on the condition that, should the district abandon the property in the future, it will revert back to the city. Joint-use agreements around the remaining parkland will remain in effect. The state has also backed away from minimum acreage requirements, presenting them as suggestions rather than requirements. School districts can now appeal to rebuild on or move to a site smaller than the suggested minimum acreage. This change will help the city and school district keep schools within the neighborhoods they currently serve.

Forslund is hopeful about the school district's level of cooperation, residents' advocacy efforts, and changes to state laws and policies that increase opportunities for creative solutions to school siting. His goal is to ensure a continued tradition of neighborhood schools in Casper for years to come.

Key Lessons Learned

- Observe and, if possible, participate in the facility planning process to gain greater understanding of the school board's perspective and processes.
- Establish goals for school construction and be persistent in communicating them to the school board and community.

- Educate parents and residents about the importance of neighborhood schools. Give them the tools necessary to influence the school board.
- Create an incentive for smarter school siting: require the school to fund off-site infrastructure and road improvements necessitated by proposed facilities.
- Make parkland available for school expansions through transfer of title or joint-use agreements.
- Seek waivers from the state to minimum acreage and other requirements.
- Understand that school reform initiatives such as school choice can have unintended consequences for neighborhood schools; work with school officials to address these concerns.

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Lincoln, California—Joint-Use Facilities Lead to Greater Collaboration

Lincoln, California, a suburb of Sacramento, is one of the fastest-growing cities in the U.S. and home to a relatively large number of retirees. City officials and staff have worked hard to ensure that population growth, which has averaged 38 percent per year in the last six years, does not compromise the quality of life for existing residents. The city's revised general plan, which will be formally adopted in 2008, will mandate that only areas that can support a population of about 10,000 can be annexed. These annexations are planned as villages, with a commercial core, neighborhood schools and parks, and a goal of 40 percent open space. The city emphasizes the need for pedestrian and bike connections between and within the villages and, in particular, between schools and neighborhoods.

Sharing Schools and Parks. To support the city's goal of 40 percent open space, the general plan mandates that the city plan and develop a park adjacent to each new school. The school board, which had a representative on the general plan committee, therefore seeks new school sites that have sufficient and suitable land for parks. School and park facilities are then shared through a master joint-use agreement,

which states that the city will share park facilities with the schools during the day and schools will share their facilities with the community outside of school hours. Once completed, each new facility will also have a site-specific cooperative agreement outlining terms for maintenance and usage, as well as insurance and liability issues. (See the Resources section on page 33 to learn how to access sample joint-use agreements.)

Lincoln's city manager, Jerry Johnson, says this arrangement enables the community to build "enlarged and enriched multi-purpose facilities that are much nicer than what either the city or the school district could afford on its own." The arrangement also benefits the school district, enabling it to work around the state's minimum acreage requirements because the city-funded park facilities are included in the total acreage for each school site. Three elementary schools have been built in Lincoln in the last six years, and each is a joint-use facility located on seven to ten acres.

Based on growth projections, the city's school district estimates it will need to build twenty new schools in the next fifty years. When a major development is proposed, city officials inform the school district; based on the projected number of new families, the school district estimates the potential impact on school capacity and determines whether a new school is needed. The state provides only 40 percent of funding for a new school facility; the balance comes from impact fees paid by the developer to the school district and special assessments on residential property.

Decisions about where to build school facilities result from a collaborative process. Many sites are donated or sold to the school district by the developer. As such, developers have a significant influence over where schools are located. The city planning department works with the school district's facilities planner, as well as the developer, to identify the best site for a new school. Ultimately, the school district must agree to the specific plan, indicating that the schools are appropriately located and there will be money to build them when they are needed.

Expanded Collaboration.   Communication and collaboration between the city of Lincoln and the school district have strengthened in the last seven years, as the city and school district began to collaborate around joint use of schools and parks. As a result of the stronger working relationship, a joint committee of school board and city council members was formed. The committee includes the city manager, the school superintendent, the assistant school superintendent for business,

City of Lincoln, California
Population (2006): 39,566
Annual Population Growth Rate: 38 percent
Setting: Suburban city
Form of Government: Council-manager
School District: Western Placer Unified
Funding: Separate budget and independent taxing authority
Municipalities Served: 2, plus outlying areas
Number of Schools: 11
Total Enrollment: 7,842

the city finance director, two school board members, and two city council members. The committee meets quarterly to discuss potential areas of collaboration, such as how the city can assist in the maintenance of school buses to save the district money.

Two major outcomes of the joint committee's work are a combined city hall and school district headquarters building, set to open in 2008, and a joint-use public library. The library is the product of a partnership among not only the city and the school district but also the local community college. The majority of the funding for the facility (65 percent) came from a state grant; the balance was split evenly among the three parties. Operating costs for the facility, which is owned by the city and governed by the city council, are divided based on the estimated proportion of populations served—the general public, high school students, and community college students.

Framework for Collaboration.   Johnson cites the joint-use requirement in the general plan as the genesis of collaboration between the local government and school district; it generated the need to work together and out of that came a more concrete working relationship. "Having some institutional requirements or frameworks in place is very helpful for ensuring collaboration," says Johnson. He acknowledges that, in some cases, it may be more politically palatable to develop a working relationship first, before establishing a general plan requirement.

In the case of Lincoln, this wasn't an issue—the city manager and superintendent have a close personal relationship. Their shared vision and leadership have helped minimize politics in city/schools collaborative efforts, establishing trust and eliminating turf issues. "What it comes down to is personal relationships," says Johnson. "Solidarity on the part of the leadership sets the tone for city and school district staff."

Johnson says successful collaboration also depends on clearly defined roles and responsibilities, regular joint meetings, a shared vision of cooperation, and a mutual goal to take advantage of every opportunity to collaborate. Support from citizen advocates and elected officials can also make collaboration more feasible and effective. The new joint-use library was not just the work of the joint committee—one committed resident, a retired university librarian, was instrumental in making sure the project moved forward. The resident pushed the committee to apply for a grant and put together a cooperative agreement. He was constantly advocating at both public and private meetings, in front of the superintendent, Johnson, the school board, and the city council. "It's important to allow advocates to assist with collaborative projects," says Johnson. "Projects move forward more quickly and with more certainty when they have public backing."

Key Lessons Learned

- Test the waters with a joint-use partnership; if successful, it could lead to stronger working relationships.

- Put in place an institutional requirement for a minimum level of coordination.

- Establish a joint committee of local government and school leaders; clearly define roles and responsibilities and establish a shared vision for cooperation.

- Strengthen personal relationships and trust among local government and school leaders; leadership should set the tone for staff collaboration.

- Leverage the city's ability to negotiate with developers in order to establish and support community-oriented schools.

- Encourage citizen advocacy and involvement in collaborative efforts.

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Orange County, Florida—Fast-Growing County Formalizes Joint Planning

Rapid growth creates enormous challenges for school planning. And Orange County, Florida has seen very rapid population growth for decades. Since 2000, the county's population has grown more than 16 percent. Orange County Public Schools, which serves thirteen jurisdictions, including Orlando, is the twelfth-largest school district in the U.S., and one of the fastest growing.

To address the impact growth has on school capacity, former Orange County Chairman Mel Martinez (later a secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and now a U.S. Senator) directed county planners in 2000 to start considering school capacity as part of the development approval process. The process has been referred to as "school concurrency" and, much like an adequate public facilities ordinance, it seeks to ensure that infrastructure and services are sufficient to support new residential development. (See the definition of APFO in the sidebar on page 12). The policy quickly became known as "the Martinez doctrine."

A New Paradigm for School Facility Planning. Under the Martinez doctrine, if a developer requests a change in land use or zoning that would increase residential density, the county has the school district review the proposal to see if there would be significant impact on any overcrowded school. If the impact would be too great—generally considered to be an increase in enrollment to over 125 percent of program capacity per school zone—county staff will require a capacity-enhancement agreement. Essentially, the county requires the developer to help resolve the capacity issue by either building a school, adding to an existing school, accelerating a planned school, postponing the development, funding transportation of students to a school with capacity, donating land for a school, or seeking another solution.

The Martinez doctrine stood the test of lawsuits that went all the way to the state Supreme Court. At first, cities within the county were reluctant to recognize the Martinez doctrine; but the county successfully passed a charter amendment that made it difficult for them not to participate. The amendment requires jurisdictions to seek agreement from an adjacent jurisdiction before approving a new development, if the development will impact capacity at a school attended by a set percentage of students from the adjacent jurisdiction.

Historically, local governments and school districts in Florida did not consult each other in making growth-related decisions. But that finally changed early in this decade—in large part due to the model set by Orange County. After decades of rapid growth,

Orange County, Florida

Population (2006): 1,043,500
Annual Population Growth Rate: 32.3 percent
Setting: Large city and suburban area
Form of Government: Board-mayor, with county administrator
School District: Orange County School District
Funding: Separate budget and independent taxing authority
Municipalities Served: 13, plus outlying areas
Number of Schools: 211
Total Enrollment: 175,609

Florida has finally taken steps to facilitate local government–school district information sharing and coordination around school facility and community planning statewide. A 2002 state law requires local governments and school districts to share more information and work more closely. They must establish an inter-local planning agreement, share data, have a school official on the local planning board, and hold periodic joint meetings of elected bodies. A 2005 law expanded coordination, requiring local governments to integrate school concurrency into their comprehensive plans by 2008. The law left the determination of levels of service, timing, service areas, and other criteria that trigger school concurrency to be determined by the local government, subject to state approval.

Making It Work in Orange County. Florida cities and counties are now rushing to build relationships and develop a system for implementing school concurrency. Orange County, on the other hand, started pursuing these goals several years ago. The changes Martinez brought to local land-use decisions and the passage of subsequent state laws prompted Orange County and the Orange County School District to resolve the basic challenges of planning—such as data, land use and zoning coordination, and involvement of the school district in development review—and governmental coordination, including representation of the school district on planning boards. In 2002 the school district took another important step when it hired former city planner Dennis Foltz to establish a planning department within the district and coordinate implementation of the Martinez doctrine and subsequent state laws. Foltz organized the new department around four areas:

governmental relations, long-range planning, current planning (i.e., development coordination), and geographic information systems and data. Staffing of the new department was completed in 2006 when eight new staff members were brought on board.

To make collaboration successful, Foltz drew on personal relationships established in his years as a local planning director. He convened monthly meetings of local government planning directors, establishing a venue for them to communicate data and information, stem potential conflicts, and resolve planning issues before programs went public. Foltz also met regularly with the city managers of jurisdictions within the school district to discuss bigger issues, such as joint use of facilities. The district is also an ex-officio member of the county and city planning commissions and participates in local planning committee and site plan review meetings to answer questions and build relationships. One major milestone was when planning staff in one local jurisdiction informed the school district of an area where a lot of development was planned and helped the school district identify an appropriate site for a new school, enabling it to secure the site while it was available and affordable, rather than waiting for a capacity-enhancement agreement.

The development of a planning department has helped the school district better understand future development and plan more effectively. "It's difficult to be an effective coordinator if you don't fully understand the issues involved," Foltz asserts. "School facilities departments are typically focused on immediate needs and lack a coordinated process for dealing with data and developing long-range vision." Foltz believes that establishing a district-based planning program has enabled the school district to better understand community planning and effectively participate in the community planning process. Statewide, the school concurrency mandate has spurred more districts to bring in professional planners and consultants.

The Martinez doctrine has resulted in well over one hundred agreements between school districts and developers in Orange County, involving thousands of homes and classroom space for the children moving into those homes. The most common solutions have involved timing—either delaying when residential projects go on the real estate market to match school construction schedules or, more typically, developers paying for construction of additional school capacity or paying the cost of interest so that school projects can be accelerated. For example, one developer

helped speed up construction of a high school, a middle school, and two elementary schools by two years by paying the cost of interest on these projects, so the school district could pay off its construction loan at the originally budgeted time. The developer's costs, which added up to several million dollars, were not credited back as a reduction of their impact fees but, rather, were considered a cost for expediting the development.

"The solution to the land use-school facility conflict lies in strong intergovernmental efforts in planning and coordination—including, of course, adequate funding," says Foltz. "It is possible, if local governments and schools can overcome 'silo' mentalities and really work together." Perhaps as important as the actual addition of capacity in Orange County has been the improved governmental coordination to develop the data and reviews necessary for the school district and local government to make this process work. It has greatly improved all aspects of planning coordination.

Orange County's experience carries important lessons for jurisdictions experiencing rapid growth: to stay ahead of school enrollment, local governments and school districts are well served by a formal mechanism requiring cooperation and communication. However, it is important to note that while APFOs and school concurrency facilitate greater collaboration, they do not ensure community-oriented schools.

Key Lessons Learned

- Establish an agreement between the local government and school district that outlines how planning efforts will be coordinated; determine what data will be shared, how each entity will be represented, and how frequently coordinating meetings will be held.

- Require developers to address school enrollment generated by proposed development by including schools in adequate public facilities ordinances or establishing a school concurrency policy.

- Create venues for communication and collaboration, such as monthly meetings between local government and school district planning directors.

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Durham County, North Carolina– Integrating Schools into the Comprehensive Plan

The Durham area has experienced healthy growth in recent years, raising concern about the city's and county's long-term ability to sustain adequate levels of service. The Durham Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2005, establishes a pattern of growth for Durham City, Durham County, and Durham Public Schools, assuring that the jurisdictions share the same vision for the future. The revised comprehensive plan seeks to balance growth with the provision of community infrastructure and services by establishing priorities for new public facilities that maintain service levels and minimize public costs. The plan identifies schools as part of the area's vital infrastructure and incorporates a Schools Element. Among other measures, the element provides a policy basis for denying rezoning proposals that push the schools beyond capacity. It also requires that the planning department recommend against zoning proposals that would result in new development exceeding school system capacity.

The goals, objectives, and policies of the plan's Schools Element address many of the issues related to the integration of land use and school facility planning. Following is a summary:

Goal 1: Provide and maintain sufficient school building capacity for the needs of school children in Durham.

Objectives:

1. Establish and maintain level of service standards for public school facilities by type of facility (elementary, middle, and high school). (The element calls for a current maximum threshold of 120 percent of system capacity and a future threshold of 110 percent.)

2. Develop and maintain current data for the evaluation of the adequacy of school facilities in rezoning requests.

3. Maintain and improve public school facilities as needed.

4. Lessen reliance on mobile classrooms.

Goal 2: Ensure that school facilities are incorporated into the long-range comprehensive planning process so that schools may serve as focal points for communities and neighborhoods.

Objectives:

1. Utilize common data sources in the development of the Durham Public Schools' "Capital Improvements Plan" and the Comprehensive Plan.

Durham County, North Carolina

Population (2006): 246,896
Annual Population Growth Rate: 2.4 percent
Setting: Mid-size city and rural area
Form of Government: Board-manager
School District: Durham Public Schools
Funding: County government
Municipalities Served: 1, plus outlying areas
Number of Schools: 46
Total Enrollment: 31,719

2. Locate schools where they may assist in providing community and neighborhood focal points. (The element calls for coordinated capital improvements in pursuit of co-location of complementary facilities, such as parks and libraries.)

3. Consider community character in the design and appearance of schools. (The element calls for public workshops to engage the broader community, as well as review by the city-county Appearance Commission.)

Revision of the Durham Comprehensive Plan began in 2002 following the completion of a smart growth audit. A broad-based steering committee was established early on to ensure that varied, divergent, and often conflicting perspectives were included. Hundreds of people were involved in the effort, including representatives from Durham Public Schools, and citizen workshops contributed additional stakeholder input.

Between 2001 and 2003, Durham County voters approved $157.1 million in bonds to support school facility improvements and construction. The revised comprehensive plan, which passed in 2005, will ensure that the investments Durham Public Schools makes in its facilities will support the county's broader vision and goals.

Key Lessons Learned

• Engaging stakeholders in a smart growth audit or assessment may help them see the need for a new approach to locating and designing schools, particularly in communities where there is already buy-in for smart growth.

• Work with school district leaders to incorporate location and design standards for schools in a revised comprehensive plan. This can be particularly successful in communities where the local government funds school construction.

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Stonington, Connecticut—Seeing Both Sides of the Coin

Frank Connolly was a town manager and assistant town manager for twenty-six years until 2002, when he made a big change to become the business manager for the Stonington, Connecticut Board of Education. In his thirty-two years in town and school administration, Connolly has seen an ongoing struggle for local governments and schools to work together. "We're grappling with similar issues, but we do look at different sides of the coin. When I joined the Board of Education, I didn't understand the complexities of the education side of the coin—despite twenty-six years in local government."

"There's an inherent conflict built into the system," he says. "Local government leaders look at the overall finance and management of the entire community; the tax rate is the bottom line. But Boards of Education look at the finance and management of education—a single subset of the community. There are bound to be conflicts." Now that he is more familiar with the mandates on schools to meet extensive state and federal reporting requirements—many more than local governments are subjected to—Connolly says he "can see now why there are elements of distrust and protection."

In Stonington, town and school leaders have worked to resolve this conflict by establishing a permanent Town/Board building committee. Committee members include representatives from the town's Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Education, and the public—all stakeholders are involved and their interests are represented, according to Connolly. The committee was originally established in 2002 to work on renovation of the high school. It was very successful and continues today as a permanent committee with most of its original members.

Committee members are now studying the growth of the school district and what renovations and expansion will be required in the future. The committee will seek to continue the town's tradition of community-oriented schools and try to avoid con-

Town of Stonington, Connecticut

Population (2006): 18,220
Annual Population Growth Rate: 2 percent
Setting: Rural, suburban town
Form of Government: Selectmen-Town Meeting, with administrator
School District: Stonington Public Schools
Funding: Budget incorporated into town budget
Municipalities Served: 1
Number of Schools: 7
Total Enrollment: 2,568

struction on the edges of town. Connolly asserts that edge schools "introduce significant transportation and operational issues." They also limit the ways in which school facilities can benefit the community as a whole.

"There is a realization in our community, like many others, that schools are more than just education facilities. Over the years I've seen more emphasis on the use of school facilities to serve the entire community," says Connolly. The new high school, for example, was renovated with the community in mind. It is now an active community center that houses adult education and recreational and educational programs. The school and community center are in use nearly every night and year-round. It's so busy, in fact, that school and town officials struggled to identify two weeks this summer when they could close the building for cleaning and maintenance. "One week was the best we could do," says Connolly.

Key Lessons Learned

- Local government and school district leaders should seek to understand each other's perspectives and establish a culture of trust; this can help make conflicts easier to resolve.

- A permanent school facility planning committee with representation from all stakeholders can help establish trust between involved parties and ensure continuity of collaboration.

- Having a staff person in the school district with experience in local government, and vice versa, can help enhance understanding and collaboration.

- In communities where the education budget is part of the city or town's overall budget, the city or town manager should reach out to school officials to help them understand the tax rate impact

the proposed education budget or school facility will have on the community.

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Orange County, North Carolina—Financial Incentives Influence School Siting and Design

In fall 2007, Carrboro High School opened its doors to students in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School District. While the six hundred students and their parents took note of the large classrooms and high-tech computer and science labs in the county's third high school, local government leaders were proud of the innovative way in which financial incentives were used to promote smart growth principles in the planning and design of the school.

Putting the Mechanisms in Place for a Smarter Approach. A joint planning agreement, signed in 1987 by Orange County jurisdictions, established urban service boundaries limiting sewer and water infrastructure. In July 2003, an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) was put in place to further manage growth—one of the first in the state (see page 12 for a definition of APFO). Together, these measures have been instrumental in helping Orange County communities manage growth—the county's annual growth rate has hovered around 2.6 percent, while neighboring Wake and Johnson Counties struggle to manage growth rates of 7 to 10 percent. (Wake County has a $1 billion deficit due in large part to its school construction program.)

"Overall, there has been strong support for smart growth measures within the county and between jurisdictions," says county planning director Craig Benedict. "High environmental and quality-of-life standards have been set for the county." In 2003 the county and its jurisdictions, as well as the two school districts, began to implement High Performance Building (HPB) standards for new public buildings. The standards, which outline sustainable design incentives and guidelines, were formally incorporated into school system-wide construction standards in 2007.

The new system-wide standards are already being implemented in new construction.

Orange County funds school construction and most operational expenses for both of the county's school districts, Orange County Public Schools (which has no taxing authority) and Chapel Hill-Carrboro Public Schools (which has limited taxing authority wherein the county commissioner must approve the tax rate). Funds for school construction are raised through a combination of bonds, alternative financing, and impact fees paid by developers.

Employing Incentives for Better Planning. Historically, the school districts have independently identified sites for new schools. When the initial Carrboro High School site was identified, county commissioners were concerned that the site was outside of the urban service boundary. Approval of the site was denied. The final site for the new school was ultimately selected through a collaborative process, with county and school district officials working together to identify a site within the urban service boundary.

Orange County funded construction of the school at a cost of $27.8 million. An additional $1.9 million was granted to the district on the condition that the new facility meet the countywide HPB standards. A four-page checklist laid out the standards for the school, which included compact design, increased bus use, reduced parking, and sufficient sidewalks and paths to encourage student walking and biking.

An additional $300,000 was originally budgeted to address necessary road improvements. However, the county was able to get the state Department of Transportation to accelerate portions of scheduled improvements to the roads, which were not slated for redevelopment until 2009–2010. Rather than returning the $300,000 to its coffers, the county gave the school district the money on the condition that they use it to improve pedestrian amenities and increase walkability between the school and adjacent neighborhoods. The DOT improvements were made in 2007 and include the addition of bike lanes and connections between the primary access road to the school and road networks to neighborhoods to the north, improving both pedestrian and automobile access to the school.

Developing a County-wide Coordinated Planning Process. In recent years, the towns within Orange County requested more collaboration and increased information sharing around facility planning. Many of the sites that the school districts were identifying for new facilities were outside of the urban service boundary. Leaders at both the county level and within

Orange County, North Carolina

Population (2006): 120,100
Annual Population Growth Rate: 2.6 percent
Setting: City, suburban, and rural
Form of Government: Board-manager
School District: Orange County Schools (OCS) and Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School District (CHCCS)
Funding: County government plus some state reimbursements
Municipalities Served: 4, plus outlying areas
Number of Schools: 12 in OCS and 16 in CHCCS
Total Enrollment: 6,793 in OCS and 10,936 in CHCCS

cities and towns were concerned about the impact these sites would have on growth, as the extension of infrastructure to support the schools could open up large areas of undeveloped land to residential and commercial development.

To help address these tensions, Orange County officials convened a Schools and Land Use Council during the 1999–2000 school year. The council, which met on a regular basis until 2004, included staff from the local governments and school districts within the county. Participants discussed collaboration around a variety of issues, from the sharing of park facilities to how to monitor growth to make sure it doesn't get ahead of school capacity. The council helped everyone see how local planning and school planning are inter-related, and helped start a dialogue about how they can be integrated better and earlier.

A major outcome of the council was the decision to develop a coordinated process to approve new school sites. The council jumpstarted the process and launched ongoing workgroups to monitor and refine it. The school collaboration workgroup, for example, is an off-shoot of the council. It meets quarterly to look at collaboration issues that reach beyond facilities, such as prototype schools, construction standards, and lifecycle costs of the HPB standards. Another workgroup includes planners from various local governments and school districts who meet annually to discuss the APFO and what the coming year will bring in terms of growth and infrastructure needs.

Key Lessons Learned

- Establish location and design standards for public buildings, including school facilities, that incorporate sustainable development principles.

- Leverage infrastructure and capital improvement funds to create financial incentives for school districts to meet location and design standards.
- Counties can convene localities and school districts within their boundaries to initiate conversations about collaboration.

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Albany, Oregon–Manager Promotes Safe Routes to School

Getting up at 5:00 a.m. isn't always easy. Wes Hare, city manager of Albany, Oregon, acknowledges as much. Yet, that is how he has begun his days for almost fifteen years—with early morning jogs. Hare's enthusiasm for exercise has heavily influenced his approach to local government management. For him, one of the city's key functions is to create a safe environment for physical activity, and in Albany he has been instrumental in shaping initiatives to create a healthier community, especially for youth.

Maintaining a Healthy Perspective. With strong support from the city's active Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, Hare has seized opportunities to integrate a health perspective into a number of ongoing projects. Those projects cover the gamut. For example, Benton County recently received funding for a bike trail that will provide a connection to the city of Corvallis, located ten miles away. And a few years ago, Albany's city council approved a process to promote cluster development in North Albany Village, a development where pedestrian-friendly design and village-style commercial centers in residential neighborhoods will encourage walking and biking.

Increasingly, Hare is turning his attention to the challenge of making it easier for children to be active. The national Safe Routes to School (SRTS) movement came up on his radar through his work with "some very motivated citizens" on the bike-pedestrian commission and his involvement in ICMA's Active Living Ambassadors program. (See page 18 for more information about SRTS.)

As he looked at the trends, including an emerging diabetes epidemic among children and a sharp decline

City of Albany, Oregon

Population (2006): 46,213
Annual Population Growth Rate: 2 percent
Setting: Rural city
Form of Government: Council-manager
School District: Greater Albany Public Schools
Funding: Separate budget; independent taxing authority
Municipalities Served: 3, plus outlying areas
Number of Schools: 20
Total Enrollment: 8,538

Active Living Ambassadors

To become engaged in an ongoing peer exchange and technical assistance initiative, consider joining the ICMA Active Living Ambassadors, a peer-network among ICMA members interested in building healthy communities. Visit http://icma.org/activelivingambassadors for details.

in the percentage of kids who walk and bike to school, Hare was shocked. In Albany, surveys conducted at two elementary schools and one middle school showed that as little as 10 percent of the students were walking or bicycling to school. But a generation ago, a majority of kids walked or biked to school. "You'd have thought someone would have raised the alarms," he says. "None of us really even noticed."

Hare found it unsettling that this profound change had occurred so quickly. "That caught my attention. I felt an obligation to inform our Council and propose that we address the issue in our strategic plan." After learning more about the SRTS program and its goal to increase the number of students walking or biking to school, Hare got involved in Albany's SRTS program. He currently chairs a committee of ten community members who meet monthly to discuss goals and strategies, and five schools are active in the city's SRTS program.

The SRTS committee was initiated by the city as part of its Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and is sustained by parents and school district and city staff. Hare's participation on the committee has given it a level of visibility that it might not otherwise have had. For example, when parents living near one school asked that pedestrian facility improvements be incorporated into the city's capital improvement plan, Hare was able to make that happen. Most of

the improvements made by the city through the SRTS program have been funded by the city's general fund, since the city hasn't identified a new revenue source for the program.

The city's goal is to ensure that students can walk or bike to school safely. Achieving this means designating police to patrol pedestrian routes and to control traffic, as well as making infrastructure improvements to sidewalks, bike lanes, and cross-walks. Hare notes that these efforts complement the four themes laid out in Albany's strategic plan: a safe community, great neighborhoods, a healthy economy, and effective government. "How safe are we if we don't know whether our kids can walk or bike to school without fear?" he says. "Part of a great neighborhood is one where someone feels comfortable and safe."

Getting the Schools on Board. After the school district won approval of a bond for new school construction in November 2006, city staff and the SRTS committee were influential in locating a site for a new elementary school (grades 3–8) in the middle of an existing, growing residential neighborhood. There were powerful incentives for the school district to buy cheaper land available on the edges of the community. However, the city was able to help the district cut its costs for the community-oriented school site by combining their resources—they co-located the school adjacent to a new park they had plans to build in the neighborhood. The local Boys and Girls Club also contributed to the effort by building a gym on the site for club programs.

By not building the school on the outskirts of the city, the school district and city have ensured that students will be able to reach it safely by walking or biking. Surveys conducted by the SRTS committee have found that school location does, in fact, have a significant impact on the number of children that walk or bicycle to school in Albany: at one elementary school located outside of town and far from residential neighborhoods, 15 percent of children walk or bicycle to school and only 6 percent walk or bicycle home; and at another located in the middle of a neighborhood, 29 percent of children walk or bicycle to school and 45 percent walk or bicycle home.

Hare attributes the city and school district's successful collaboration partly to the close partnership that evolved between the city and school district on the bond referendum—the city included information about the bond measure in utility billings and its quarterly newsletter to citizens—and on site selection for the new school. "It was just a very collegial rela-

tionship, and it continues to be that way," he says. He also points out that many community members have come together to support Albany's SRTS program, which is one of the reasons he has become so engaged in the initiative. It provides an opportunity to interact with families, giving him a chance to work with parents, students, and other community members he wouldn't otherwise get to know.

"I think the awareness is certainly starting to build," he says. And, because of that awareness, "it will be difficult for the school district to site a school away from residential neighborhoods in the future." School transportation is federally subsidized in Albany, so transportation costs are not a factor for the school district. "But when you look at it from the perspective of trying to get your kids more active, it becomes a factor," Hare notes. In Albany, SRTS has helped bring that into the equation.[95]

Key Lessons Learned

* City leadership and participation in SRTS (and other efforts to help children walk or bike to and from school safely) can help raise visibility and buy-in for the program.

* Cities can leverage funds available for parks and other facilities to help school districts afford more central (and often more expensive) sites. The facilities can then be co-located or shared through joint-use agreements.

* Survey data can help cities make the case that school location matters when it comes to children walking and bicycling to school—and getting physical activity.

* Increasing citizen awareness about the link between school location and children's activity levels can help catalyze support for community-oriented schools.

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School district Web site: http://www.albany.k12.or.us

Cincinnati, Ohio—Connecting School Quality and Community Vitality

When talking with local leaders in Cincinnati, it's clear that the city and the school district recognize there is an inextricable connection between the suc-

cess of the school system and the vitality of the city. As school superintendent Rosa Blackwell explains, "The city and school system are linked, and it's only when both are doing well that each of us does well. We seek to maximize resources to have a healthy, vibrant community that will attract families and businesses."

The School-Community Connection.   The city, which had seen continual population decline since the late 1960s, has firsthand experience with how school quality can impact a city. In the 1990s, Cincinnati Public School District (CPS) received a lot of media attention due to below-average standardized test scores. City manager Milton Dohoney believes the perception of a failing school system contributed to the ongoing out-migration from the city to its suburbs. The city's population dropped 9 percent between 1990 and 2000, and the city's poverty rate reached 25 percent by 2005 (the national average that year was 12.6 percent).

In the past decade, the city has battled a crime wave that has troubled residents. Many citizens have responded with calls for more police officers and a new jail. But Dohoney, the mayor, and the city council have argued that directing more resources to the police force alone will not create a sustainable level of community safety. To have a safe community, the city must create more economic opportunities for people, so children going through the school system see opportunities for themselves down the road and avoid a destructive lifestyle. "We've taken the economic approach to addressing public safety," says Dohoney. "That means we've got to engage the school district and address workforce development. We have to care about the 'product' that's coming out of our public school system."

The school system has another significant impact on Cincinnati's economy, Dohoney adds. "When companies are considering where to relocate, one of the key factors they look at is school quality. And when their employees move to the Cincinnati area, they choose where to live based on the schools. So, for economic development reasons, it's important that we have a successful school system."

Turning Schools into Community Learning Centers.   In 2006, community leaders launched Strive, an initiative that brings together a coalition of education, business, faith, nonprofit, philanthropic and civic leaders to develop a long-range plan to ensure that every child in Cincinnati can be successful from birth through college or career training. Coalition members, the community, and staff of Strive identify and priori-

Cincinnati, Ohio

Population (2006): 332,252
Annual Population Growth Rate: 0.3 percent
Setting: Large city and suburban area
Form of Government: Council-mayor, with city manager
School District: Cincinnati Public School District
Funding: Separate budget and independent taxing power
Municipalities Served: 13 (Cincinnati and suburbs)
Number of Schools: 79
Total Enrollment: 36,872

tize specific strategies proven to increase educational success. They're working to create a culture of collaboration that emphasizes the use of data to evaluate the efficacy of services, and to identify areas in the school system with insufficient or duplicative services. And they're bringing together service providers from inside and outside of the formal education system to develop regional strategies across Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. "Our hope is that, over time, public and private dollars will flow to data-driven, collaborative, citywide strategies rather than being haphazardly distributed to individual programs," says Jeff Edmondson, executive director of Strive.

In 2003, CPS received a $1 billion bond to support facilities construction and improvements. Support for the bond hinged on the district's promise to use the funds to convert the city's schools into community learning centers (CLCs), which would offer health and senior services, recreational programming, and adult education to the broader community, in addition to educating children. "Our goal is to ensure that our school district offers families quality choices," says Blackwell. "The fact is that schools are the center of our neighborhoods. Many of our neighborhoods are older and being redeveloped, and schools have become a focal point." Edmondson adds that, "through the community learning centers initiative, the school district will help break down the walls between schools and communities."

The district plans to renovate fifteen existing schools and build thirty-five new schools. The high schools will be renovated but most of the elementary schools will be new. When possible, the district will keep schools on their existing sites; in some cases, new sites have been identified that provide more green space or adequate land. In all cases, architectural review ensures that the buildings are

consistent with the existing architectural style of the neighborhood. Construction began in 2004 and is approximately one-quarter completed. "It's a lot of work—but we don't feel alone in it because of the partnerships we have with the community and city," says Superintendent Blackwell.

The school district seeks to build schools that respond to the needs of the neighborhoods, in addition to the educational needs of students. To help reach this goal, the district works with school staff, parents, and community members to discuss both the physical design of the school and the incorporation of community services when it begins planning the renovation of each school. The district has also hired a consultant to help it align funding and partners in support of the conversion of schools into CLCs, to ensure that it makes the best use of its resources. For example, in response to the need for additional mental health services for children and families identified as a priority through the community planning process, the consultant facilitated partnerships with community mental health agencies, which are now co-located in the schools and able to provide services that are more accessible and more effective. The services are provided to the students without cost to the district, which allows education dollars to be devoted solely to education.

Multi-Agency Collaboration Is Key.   Collaboration between the city and school district has also been instrumental in implementing the CLC and facilities improvement initiatives. The city has expedited permits and approvals for the district. The collaboration has also helped bring recreation resources into the schools during and after hours through co-located facilities. And the district draws on its working relationships with the city police department, the parks and recreation department, and the sewer district to carry out its projects.

Norman Merrifield, director of the Recreation Commission, has worked for the city less than a year, but is already impressed with the level of collaboration between agencies. "One of the reasons why Cincinnati is recognized for providing a high level of recreation services is because we focus on neighborhood-level service delivery. Our goal is to have key services available within a one-mile radius of the neighborhood school." The Recreation Commission has programs in more than twenty schools across the city. They also share an equal number of recreation facilities with the school district through joint use.

CPS has a separate budget and taxing authority, so the city has no jurisdiction over the school district. Nevertheless, the city and school district are able to collaborate successfully: the city council and school board hold joint meetings several times a year, and the mayor and school board convene committees to discuss collaboration around such varied issues as the facilities master plan, utilization of abandoned school buildings, possible joint purchasing, and dealing with truancy issues. One outcome of the work of these committees was the city's decision to budget $1 million to help fund the school nurse program, an expense the school district was struggling to cover as it faced a budget deficit. Part of the reason collaboration between the city and school district is so successful, according to Dohoney, is that the school superintendent and city manager are on the same page. The two leaders meet quarterly to discuss intersecting issues.

The city does not play a major role in determining future school sites, but it does work with the district to examine demographic patterns and identify where the population that the school seeks to serve lives. "We're landlocked, so we don't have unlimited land for new schools," notes Dohoney. "It's incumbent upon us to make sure we use the limited land that we do have in a smart way. For that to happen, we have to have collaboration between the city and schools." The city supports the district in identifying appropriate locations for new school facilities. And, when the city plans an economic or community development initiative in a specific area of town, it engages the school district to examine how the initiative will impact schools and identify potential solutions. The collaboration also benefits the city because staff can anticipate earlier how new schools will impact police and fire services, as well as transportation and other infrastructure.

"Collaboration between the school district and the city government has to happen because we both impact the quality of life in our city," says Dohoney. Their efforts are paying off. Beginning in 2000, the city saw a steady delay in population loss and, in 2006, Cincinnati reported its first increase. Further, the city experienced a 23 percent decrease in its homicide rate in 2007. "We have come a long way, but we still have a ways to go." Dohoney notes. "If Cincinnati is going to be all that it can be, we have to have collaboration between city, schools, and the private sector."

Key Lessons Learned

- Efforts to address public safety and economic development must include an assessment of the public school system.

- A system-wide approach to service delivery can make co-location of services more effective and economical.

- Citizens may be more willing to support school facilities improvements if the facilities will be community-oriented.

- Joint meetings between fiscal decision makers can result in shared funding and other resources.

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School district Web site: http://www.cps-k12.org

Conclusion

School facilities have a significant, long-term impact on the communities they serve—and this impact can be positive or negative. Schools that are built on the edges of established cities and towns, away from the people they serve, are generally less beneficial to communities in terms of the economy, the environment, public health, community cohesion, social equity, quality of education, and local finance. Community-oriented schools, on the other hand, follow more sustainable practices and are generally better for students, from an educational and health perspective, and the broader community in terms of finance, community cohesion, and quality of life.

The failure of local governments and school districts to coordinate their planning efforts can contribute to the trend of schools built increasingly farther from the people they serve, and the associated environmental, economic, and social impacts. By coordinating their planning efforts, local governments and school districts can create more community-oriented schools, achieve multiple community goals, and make better use of tax dollars.

However, before local governments and school districts can begin collaborating, there are a number of key barriers they must overcome, including lack of trust, communication, and commitment; politics; and time constraints. Leaders can address these barriers and lay the foundation for an ongoing partnership by establishing a process for local government-school district collaboration and communication. They can work together to develop a shared vision and plan for the community and its schools. They can then identify policy changes that will support their shared vision.

As the case studies and other examples included in this report demonstrate, local governments and school districts that coordinate their planning efforts and implement more community-oriented approaches to school facility planning see significant, positive results. They not only use tax dollars more effectively but they also meet their respective goals of serving the community's interests and delivering quality education.

Additional Resources

Resource Publications—Coordinating Planning Efforts

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Resource Publications–Community-Oriented Schools

Appraisal Guide for Older & Historic School Facilities. Council of Educational Facilities Planners International, 2005. http://shop.cefpi.org/product.esiml?PID = 118

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Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2003. http://www.epa.gov/dced/pdf/school_travel.pdf

Resource Web Sites

Building Educational Success Together
http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/BEST/best.asp

Coalition for Community Schools
http://www.communityschools.org

Council of Educational Facility Planners
http://www.cefpi.org

KnowledgeWorks Foundation
http://www.kwfdn.org

New Schools, Better Neighborhoods
http://www.nsbn.org

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities
http://www.edfacilities.org

National Center for Safe Routes to School
http://www.saferoutesinfo.org

Sample Government Documents

ICMA has collected innovative local government documents, including joint-use master agreements and general plan elements, from cities and towns across the U.S. To browse and download these documents on the ICMA Web site, visit http://icma.org/main/

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91 The case studies featured in this report are based primarily on interviews conducted between May 2007 and January 2008 with city managers, planning directors, and other local government staff in the represented communities. Whenever possible, facts were verified by ICMA. However, many of the statements included in the case studies are anecdotal and the opinion of the interviewees. Neither ICMA nor the U.S. EPA are liable for any inaccuracies or misrepresentations.

92 Population statistics in this section are from the U. S. Census Bureau's 2006 Population Estimates, available at http://factfinder.census.gov.

93 The local officials interviewed for each case study provided the annual growth rates.

94 School district data in this section is from the National Center for Education Statistic's Common Core of Data for the 2005–2006 school year.

95 This case study includes text adapted from: Emily Salomon, "Strides for a Healthy and Active Government," *Public Management* (December 2007), http://icma.org/pm/8911/public/activeliving.

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