

Principles of New School Location Planning
Jessica Frost, Safe Routes to Schools

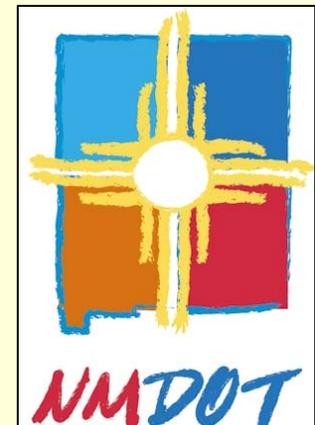
School Facilities Planning and Siting

Prepared for the Las Cruces
City Council and School Board

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Outline

- Current trends in school siting and design
- How school facility planning affects communities
- Factors affecting school facility planning
- Benefits of coordination between local governments and school districts and how to implement coordination
- Community-oriented approaches to school planning
- Other school site planning and design issues

Current Trends

- Fewer schools, more students
 - 1930: 262,000 schools/28 million students
 - Today: 99,000 schools/50.1 million students
- Mega schools on more acreage
 - Sites are 47% larger than schools built in 1971
 - Located on 10-30+ acres
 - Located on cheaper, fringe land, edge of community
- Larger enrollment sizes
 - 1950: 118 students
 - 2006: 507 students

Increased Distances

1969: 87% of students lived w/in 1 mile

2001: 21% of students lived w/in 1 mile



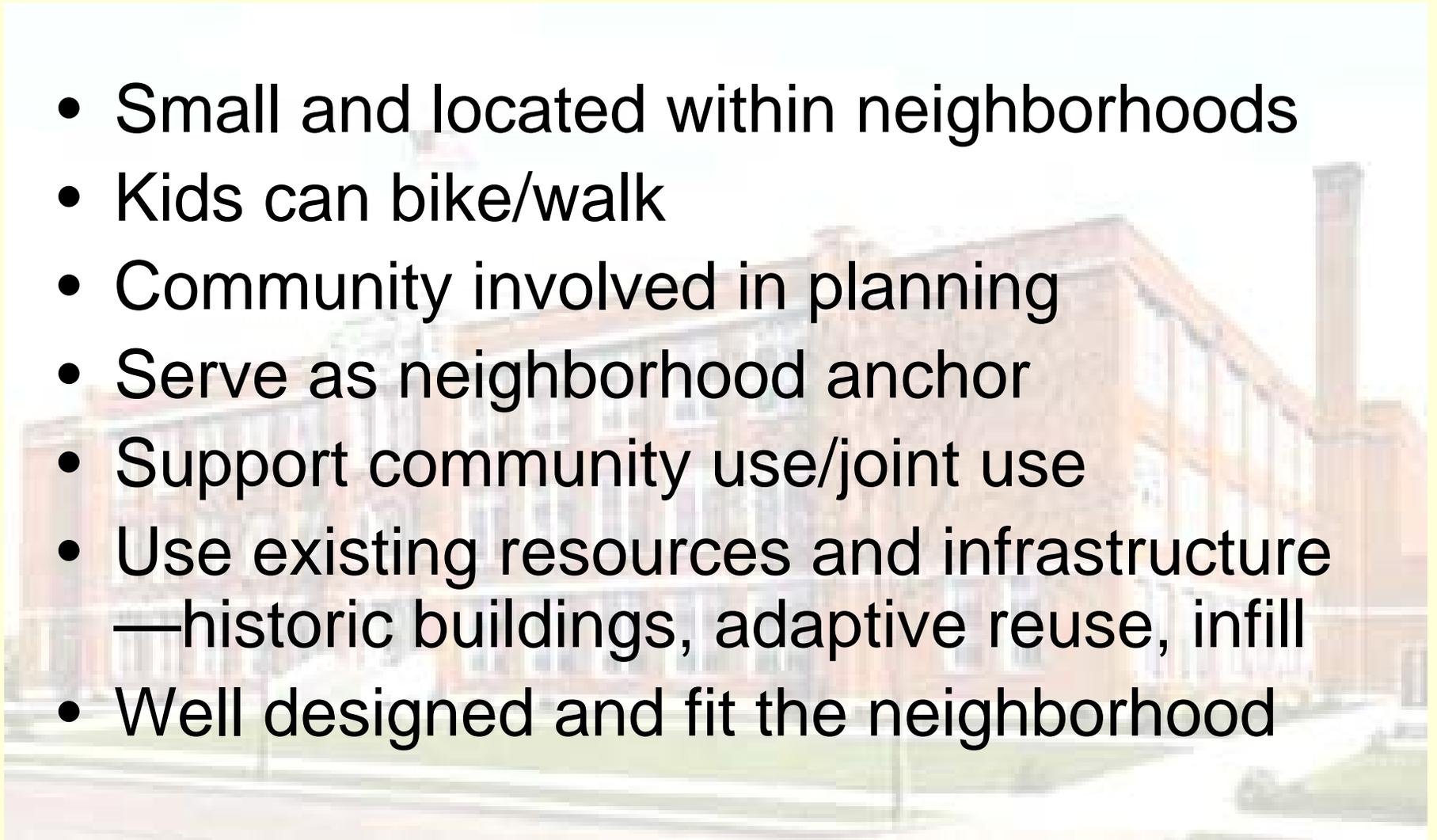
Students unable to walk or bike, more parents driving!

Population Shifts

- 1950: $\frac{1}{2}$ of households had children
- 2000: $\frac{1}{3}$ of households has children
- 2025: 30% of households will be single person
- Increasingly smaller % of homeowners will have direct ties to local schools
- Schools need to provide services to ALL residents to gain support

Return to Community-Oriented Schools

- Small and located within neighborhoods
- Kids can bike/walk
- Community involved in planning
- Serve as neighborhood anchor
- Support community use/joint use
- Use existing resources and infrastructure
—historic buildings, adaptive reuse, infill
- Well designed and fit the neighborhood



How school facility planning affects communities

- Economy
- Environment
- Public health
- Traffic congestion
- Community cohesion
- Social equity
- Quality of education
- School and local government finance



1. Economic Impacts

- High quality schools in nhds increase property values, thus tax revenues
- New schools on edges can contribute to outward migration and disinvestment
- School closings and population shifts impact local businesses
- Renovation/construction in an established neighborhood can stimulate revitalization

2. Environmental Impacts

- Edge schools on undeveloped open space create more impervious surface affecting water quality
- Development follows leading to sprawl
- Distance means more driving, increased VMT
- More VMT means increased carbon emissions contributing to climate change



3. Public Health Impacts

- More VMT and traffic congestion contributes to unhealthy air, increased asthma rates
 - Nearly 5 million children suffer from asthma
 - 14 million lost school days/year due to asthma
 - Over last 25 years asthma rates have increased 160% in kids up to 4 and 74% in 5-14 year olds
- Air quality is measurably better around schools with more walkers and cyclists!



3. Public Health Impacts



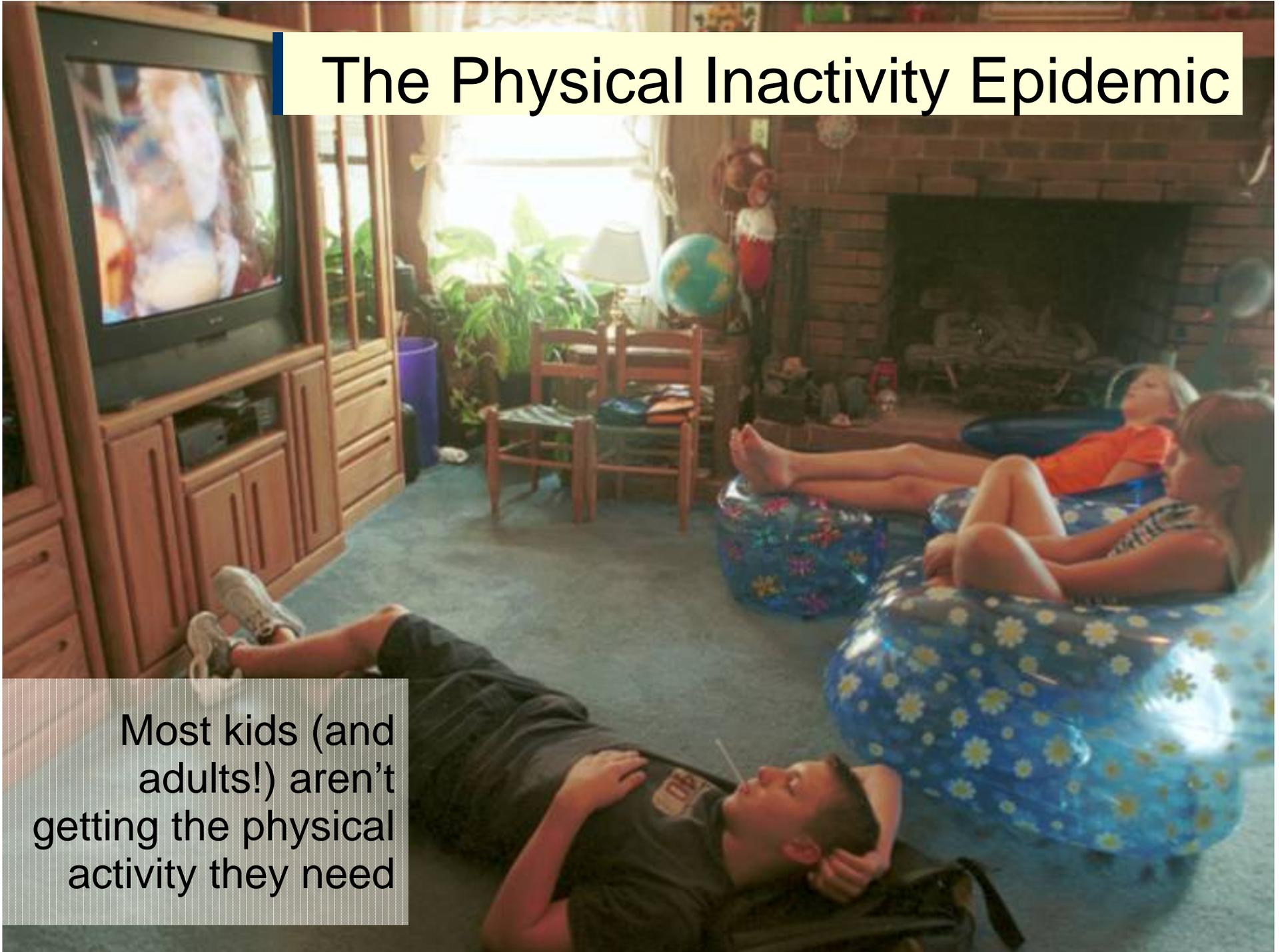
Fewer kids are biking and walking!

1969: 42% of 5-18 year olds walked to school

2001: 16% of 5-18 year olds walked to school

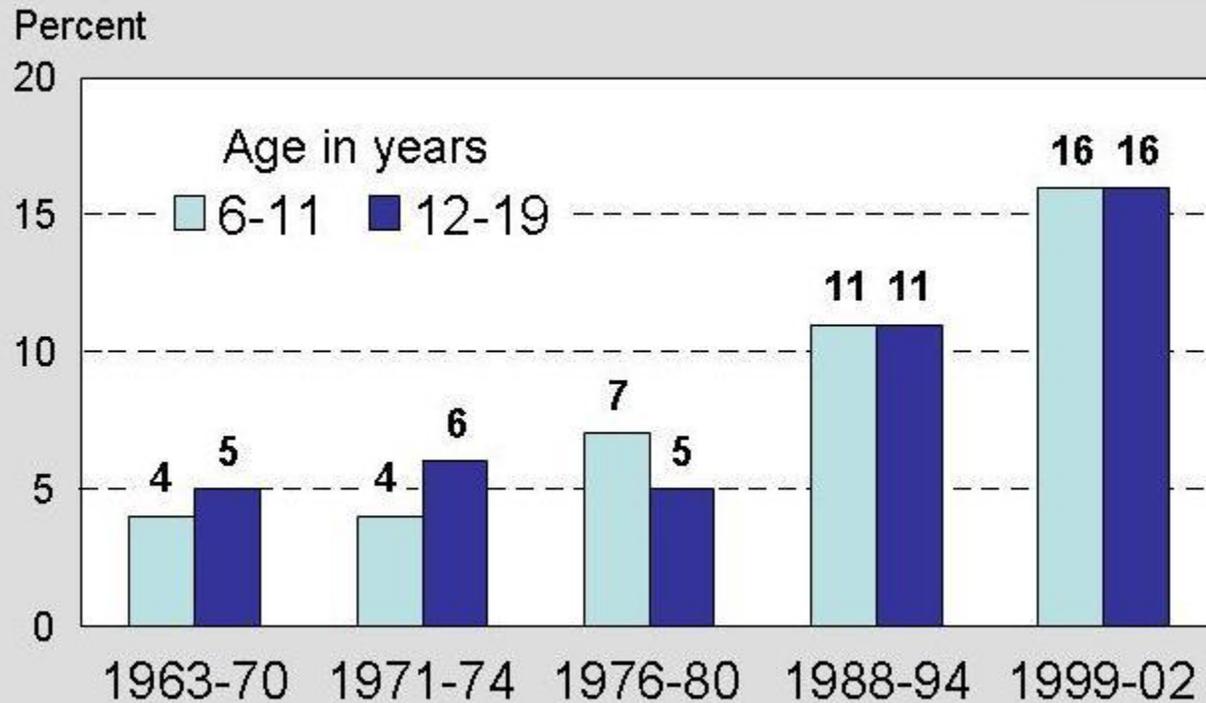
The Physical Inactivity Epidemic

Most kids (and adults!) aren't getting the physical activity they need



3. Public Health Impacts

Prevalence of overweight among children and adolescents ages 6-19 years



NOTE: Excludes pregnant women starting with 1971-74. Pregnancy status not available for 1963-65 and 1966-70. Data for 1963-65 are for children 6-11 years of age; data for 1966-70 are for adolescents 12-17 years of age, not 12-19 years.
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, NHES and NHANES

The % of kids considered severely overweight has tripled in last 30 years.

U.S. youth overweight rates

4. Traffic Congestion



- Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ of all school-aged children are driven to school
- Parents driving their children to school account for 20%-25% of morning rush hour traffic
- Congestion nationwide cost the US economy \$78 billion in 2007, due to 4.2 billion lost hours of productivity and 2.9 billion gallons of wasted fuel

5. Impacts on Community Cohesion

- School facilities integrated into neighborhoods contribute to community identity and cohesion
- Co-located with govt/community services or offer recreational or cultural opportunities bring residents of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds together.
- Builds relationships, increases diversity and community cohesion
- Community-oriented schools promote transparent school facility planning, thus civic engagement and support
 - Between 1930 and 2002, US population doubled but participation on school boards fell from 1 million to <200,000 people
 - Local citizens are not being included or getting involved in school planning

6. Impacts to Social Equity

- Construction of newer edge schools contributes to socioeconomic segregation of communities.
- Over last decade, schools serving impoverished neighborhoods received about half as much funding for building improvements as schools serving wealthier neighborhoods.
- Schools in low income areas focus more on basic repairs while more affluent schools make significant educational enhancements, such as computer labs.
- Community-oriented schools that are higher-quality and smaller foster revitalization and development of mixed-income neighborhoods.
- Smaller schools promote equity in education leveling the achievement field between students.

7. Impacts on Quality of Education

- Current trend towards consolidation of schools to cut costs BUT
- Smaller schools more cost effective if costs are measured per ***graduate*** rather than student
- Smaller schools – lower student-teacher ratios, more parent involvement, higher academic achievement and graduation rates
- Community schools have access to other community resources to enhance learning environment

8. Impacts to School and Local Govt Finances

- Transportation costs to schools/school district/state
 - Las Cruces: 2009-2010 busing costs were \$3.9 million for 1.6 million miles of travel and 9,158 students
- Infrastructure costs - extending sewer, water and roads - usually not included in budgets of school construction projects
- Other costs - EMS, fire, police, trash
- Increased service fees/taxes for business and property owners
- Construction in areas not targeted for growth

Factors Affecting School Facility Planning

- State Policies
 - New Mexico Public Schools Facilities Authority (NMPSFA) oversees all new school construction and expansion of existing facilities; projects must comply with Statewide Adequacy Standards and NMPSFA guidelines
- Local Policies
- Lack of Coordination



State Policies

- Minimum acreage requirements
 - removed from NM standards in 2009
- Minimum school size requirements and enrollment sizes prohibit smaller schools
 - NM sets maximums on square footage for state funded projects
 - NM does not set enrollment minimums
- Funding formulas favor new construction over renovation (don't take into account ALL costs of new construction) – typically 65%
 - NM has no official policy, case by case basis
 - NM requires cost analysis on all projects

Local/District Policies

- Schools in NM not subject to these but some follow
- Local building codes and zoning policies – setbacks, height limitations, parking
- Building codes prohibit expanding or reusing existing facilities – ADA, fire codes, toxic substances
- Districts trying to keep up with growth – build larger schools due to length of time to acquire land and get through approval process
- School districts defer maintenance costs affecting viability of buildings for reuse/renovation
- Community concerns about reusing older buildings, ie toxic substances (lead and asbestos) – education needed on successful abatement projects

Lack of Coordination

Separate but Parallel Universes



School Planning – focus on children



Community Planning – health and well being of entire community

Lack of Coordination

- Different planning processes
- School facility planning decisions driven by economics—most land for the lowest cost
- School siting decisions often made w/o consulting local govt staff or considering local comprehensive plans
- Local govt planning and development decisions made w/o considering impact of new development on school enrollment
- Approval of large-scale residential development can push districts to make rushed decisions
- Local capital planning and economic development plans fail to incorporate school facilities and needs

Why is there a disconnect?

- Lack of trust – barrier to effective collaboration
- Politics – impact objectivity and consistency of information and decision-making processes
- Time constraints – everyone is busy!
- Lack of communication – failure to communicate and understand each other's goals
- Lack of commitment – impedes successful collaboration

From 2006 summit on Intergovernmental Collaboration for School Siting, NC

Benefits of Coordination on School Planning

“The community is best-served if its individual components work together as an interdependent whole rather than a series of unrelated parts.”

- Increased resource efficiency – sharing rather than duplicating resources saves \$
- Promotes closer ties between development and new school capacity
- Better links between schools and neighborhoods
- Co-location and joint use of facilities
- Better alignment of comprehensive and school facility plans

1. Establish a Process for Collaboration and Communication



- Set up protocol for sharing objective data about development and enrollment
- Set up and institutionalize a mutually-agreed upon decision-making process (to avoid politics, change in leadership)
- Communication – regular and on-going, monthly or quarterly meetings
- Collaboration requires leadership from the top and good working relationships
- Invite each other to meetings on topics of mutual interest



2. Develop Shared Vision and Plan

- Establish common vision, goals and objectives: How do the school district's needs intersect with the community's needs?
- Bring local govt staff into school facility planning and design process
- Fully integrate school facility plans with CIP and land use plans
- Incorporate a schools element into local comp plan
 - How does school planning support growth and development objectives?
Outline process for site selection, infrastructure and planning of schools

3. Support Community-Oriented Schools

- Evaluate impact of bldg codes, zoning laws and planning processes
- Give schools priority in permitting process
- Id and purchase future sites while available and affordable
- Consider school capacity and transportation in review process for residential development
- Ensure bldg codes allow for reuse/renovation
- Implement joint and shared use agreements

Community-Oriented Approaches to School Planning

- Locate new facilities within new or established neighborhoods
- Identify infill sites
- Adapt existing facilities
- Locate on public land
- Build multistory schools
- Share nearby recreational and community facilities – joint use agreements



Community-Oriented Approaches to School Planning



- Use school as anchor for new walkable neighborhoods
- Create safer environments for students to walk/bike (SRTS)
- Make schools a focal point of neighborhood revitalization—a new or renovated school in a depressed area sends message that govt is committed



Other School Site Planning and Design Issues

- Consider impact of school on roadway system
- Locate schools in center of attendance boundary to minimize walking distance
- Provide vehicular access from at least 2 different streets
- Provide ped/bike access from all points
- Do NOT locate E/M schools on arterial streets
- Separate pu/do areas and provide safe passage for peds/bikes
- Avoid closed campuses that result in fewer access points

Questions?

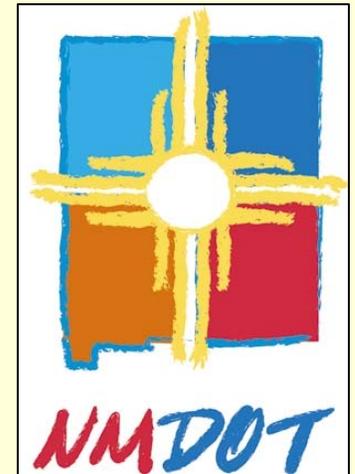
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School Siting List of Resources
Prepared by Jessica Frost, AICP
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NM Department of Transportation
5/19/10



National Trust for Historic Preservation resources -

- Constance Beaumont, *Why Johnny Cant Walk to School*, 2002.
http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/historic-schools/additional-resources/schools_why_johnny.pdf
- *Building Educational Success Together: Recommended Policies for Public School Facilities*, May 2005. <http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications/modelpolicies/PlanningSectionMay2005.pdf>
- Renee Kuhlman, *Helping Johnny Walk to School*, 2009.
<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/historic-schools/helping-johnny-walk-to-school/>.

EPA - <http://www.epa.gov/schools/>

- *Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting*, October 2003.
http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/school_travel.htm

Planning for Schools & Livable Communities, The Oregon School Siting Handbook, Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program, June 2005. <http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/docs/schoolsitinghandbook.pdf>

Salvesen, Sachs and Engelbrecht, *Intergovernmental Collaboration and School Facility Siting*, The Center for Urban and Regional Studies, August 2006.
<http://curs.unc.edu/curs-pdf-downloads/recentlyreleased/Salvesen%20Z.%20Smith%20final%20school%20report.pdf>

Darren Springer, *Integrating Schools into Healthy Community Design*, NGA Center for Best Practices, May 2007.
<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0705SCHOOLSHEALTHYDESIGN.pdf>

School Site Planning, Design and Transportation, ITE Technical Committee TENC-105-01, September 2007.
<http://itd.idaho.gov/SR2S/documents/School%20Site%20Planning.pdf>

Local Governments and Schools: A Community Oriented Approach, ICMA Press, Volume 40, 2008. <http://icma.org/documents/SGNReport.pdf>

Nathan Norris, *Smart Growth Schools Report Card*, August 2009
www.smartgrowthschools.org