

# Back to School for Planners

by Tim Torma

In 1996, a fire swept through and severely damaged the St. Helena Elementary School in Napa County, California. Cost considerations could have led the community to abandon the 1931 structure and rebuild somewhere else, but the public quickly rallied to keep their school in the heart of the community. Residents and community groups pitched in, raising money and even painting. "It was never an option to rebuild at a different site," says architect Jon Stong. "The community really valued the neighborhood location of the historic school."

Renovating the St. Helena Elementary School allowed the landmark to remain a firm fixture in the town's future. The

*St. Helena's renovated elementary school includes a theater that is also used by community groups.*



Napa Valley Symphony and other organizations perform in its new community theater and sports leagues and groups like the Boy Scouts use its playing fields and cafeteria. Most children still walk to school and, with community resources close at hand, parents don't have to spend hours chauffeuring children to extracurricular activities.

While preserving its historic character and status as a neighborhood center, the school has also vastly improved its educational capabilities and, in 2004, was recognized by United Way of the Bay Area for ranking second on standardized test scores among all "high poverty" elementary schools in the seven-county Bay area.

*Nice story, but why should I care?* One reason is that school facilities often drive land development patterns. Another is that investments in educational facilities represent one of the largest capital outlays many local governments make.

Over the coming decades, thousands

of schools will be built or renovated across the country. Decisions about the construction and renovation of these schools will have profound implications for their communities. Planning commissioners should know, and care, about how these decisions are made.

## TRENDS

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of public schools in the United States decreased from 238,000 in 1930 to 93,000 in 2001.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, student population rose from 28 to 53.5 million. As average school size has grown, the trend has been toward building "mega schools" at the edges of the communities they serve.

Explanations for this trend towards larger school size include the ability to offer more courses and purchase more advanced equipment, and lower costs per student per year. Some even trace the trend to the 1950's space race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> The theory was that large comprehensive schools would produce better scientists.

Former Harvard president James B. Conant is widely acknowledged to be the father of the comprehensive schools movement. His influential 1959 book, *The American High School Today*, generally advocated for larger schools. But even Conant thought a high school of 800 was about optimal. Today, about half of U.S. secondary schools enroll more than 1,000 students. Enrollments of 2,000 or more are common. Florida had the highest average secondary school size in the 2001-2002 school year at 1,565 students.

State "minimum acreage" standards

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<sup>1</sup> Digest of Educational Statistics, 2002, Table 87 (U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics).

<sup>2</sup> Stacy Mitchell, "Jack and the Giant School," *Journal of the New Rules Project* 2 (Summer 2000).



## Minimum Acreage Standards

The minimum site size required varies widely among states that have acreage standards. Some state standards were based on guidelines provided by the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI). However, the 2004 revision of CEFPI's influential *Guide for Planning Educational Facilities* no longer contains 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.

In 2003, South Carolina eliminated its minimum acreage requirements for schools. The State of Maine has gone one step further, by setting *maximum* site sizes. If a school district builds on a site exceeding the maximum, the state will not fund the purchase of the excess land; the school district will have to pay for it.

For a complete listing of state policies governing school site size, see <[www.cefpi.org/research.html](http://www.cefpi.org/research.html)>.



## Bonus Funds

Looking for a creative way of linking school planning to other community goals? The Orange County Commission in North Carolina plans to award Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools bonus funds for incorporating specific smart growth strategies in the construction of its third high school. 1.9 million in additional school construction money has been approved pending the implementation of smart growth measures such as compact building design, increased bus use, reduced parking lots for students, sufficient sidewalks and paths to encourage walking and biking, and the creation of distance learning opportunities. An additional \$300,000 could be awarded for a set of transportation initiatives including school bus shuttles from existing city park and ride facilities, and increased use of municipal transportation systems.



Four years ago, voters in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, narrowly approved building a new high school on 79 acres of farmland on the edge of town. Above: the new high school under construction. Below: The former high school building, located in a neighborhood close to downtown, has recently been demolished.



The former high school before and after demolition.

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(employed in 27 states) have been one powerful impetus behind the development of vast, land-consumptive school complexes. For example, a state might require 30 usable acres plus one additional acre per 100 students for a high school. New school facilities typically demand large amounts of land, often upwards of 50 acres. Parcels this size are hard to find or assemble in already developed areas. The result is that school districts acquire land on the edge of town, frequently farmland, ranches, or natural areas.  *Minimum Acreage Standards.*

In a number of states, school construction funding formulas have also had a bias favoring construction of new schools, rather than the renovation or expansion of existing facilities. This bias is reflected in the fact that many funding formulas authorize school renovations only if they will cost substantially less than new construction (for example, when the cost of renovating a school is 75 percent or less of the cost of building a new school).

Whatever the cause, the trend towards mega schools continues despite widespread agreement among researchers that the size of most U.S. schools is too large.<sup>3</sup> A growing body of research has shown that "student achievement in small schools is at least equal and often superior to achievement in large schools."<sup>4</sup> A higher percentage of students, across all socio-economic levels, are successful when they are part of smaller, more intimate learning communities.<sup>5</sup> Females, nonwhites, and special-needs students, whether at risk, gifted, exceptional, or disadvantaged, are all better served by small schools.<sup>6</sup> Security improves and violence decreases, as does student alcohol and drug abuse.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent summary of research on this subject, see: Karen Irmsher, "School Size," *Educational Resources Information Center Digest* 113; <<http://search.eric.org/digests/ed414615.html>>

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Cotton, "School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance," *School Improvement Research Series Close-Up #20* (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1996); <[www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html](http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html)>

<sup>5, 6, 7</sup> Irmsher - Ibid

The assumption that larger schools are more cost-effective has also been questioned. In a 1998 review of research literature, Mary Anne Raywid of Hofstra University concluded, "When viewed on a cost-per-student-enrolled basis, they [small schools] are somewhat more expensive. But when examined on the basis of the number of students they graduate, they are less expensive than either medium-sized or large high schools."<sup>8</sup>

### OPPORTUNITIES

While a first-rate education must always be the primary consideration when making school facility decisions, a growing number of communities are using school investments to meet multiple goals – educational, environmental, economic, social, and fiscal. Small towns are focusing efforts to keep schools downtown with Main Street revitalization programs. For example, in Littleton, New Hampshire, students at the rebuilt in-town high school work with local businesses and the city government to "make the learning real" and keep the community healthy and viable.

Cities are combining school revitalization funding with other municipal investments, using schools as a key component in efforts to stabilize entire neighborhoods. In Milwaukee, for example, the Wisconsin Neighborhood Schools Initiative has linked efforts to improve the 37th Street Elementary School with investments in the surrounding neighborhood, including building and renovating properties and helping low-income residents to own their own homes.

Suburban areas are also taking steps to have neighborhood schools help "center" the community. Large developments, such as that emerging in place of Denver's old Stapleton Airport, are capitalizing on the valuable role that schools can play in providing a central hub.

Indeed, these efforts recall early 20th century models where schools were,

<sup>8</sup> Mary Anne Raywid, "Small Schools: A Reform That Works," *Educational Leadership* 55 (December 1997/January 1998): 34-39.

physically, at the heart of the community.  *Neighborhood Schools*.

### SCHOOLS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

School size, design, and siting are not just of interest to folks focused on education, nor should they be. Citizens and groups concerned about land use planning, community development, historic preservation, and public health, are also focusing on how to make better education investment decisions.

For several years the National Trust for Historic Preservation has been a leading voice on state and local school investment and siting policies. Constance

Beaumont, the former director of state and local policy for the Trust is widely credited with raising awareness of school planning issues in communities across the country. She is the author of *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School*, an excellent report on the damages "school sprawl" can cause, and steps that can be taken to preserve neighborhood schools. *Resources*, p.10.

Advocates for smarter patterns of development have also turned their attention to school planning. Groups such as Smart Growth America and the Funders Network for Smart Growth have advocated

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### Neighborhood Schools

by Laurence C. Gerckens, FAICP

Concerns for the health and safety of children were central components of ideal urban structure theories of the early twentieth century. Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, promoted in his book *To-morrow, a Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898), consisted of six "neighborhood units" bounded by through-traffic streets, each with a central elementary school located just a few blocks from the furthest residence. Forest Hills Gardens, Long Island, New York (1910+), was the first American test of this school-child-focused neighborhood idea.

The culture shock of World War I brought on not only the wild excesses of the Jazz Age of the 1920s, but also a heightened perception of youth as the promise and salvation of the future. In the planned neighborhood developments of the 1920s, elementary schools were centrally located within easy walking distance of their student population.

The educational and recreational needs of older children were provided for in the 1920s in the siting of large, architecturally impressive, central high schools and their organized-sports fields. These schools became integral components of town and city centers. High-school-age children thus had after-school access (either by foot or by electric trolley car or rubber-tired bus systems) to downtown or "Main Street," where the retail shops, theaters, and other places of amusement were located.

With the explosive unplanned perimeter suburban sprawl of the 1950s and the decades that followed, concern for the life patterns of elementary-school and high-school-age children became less evident. Safe local walk-in elementary schools, no longer viable with the lower densities resulting from the advent of large-lot residential zoning (as well as reduced family size) were abandoned in favor of more far-flung locations. New high-school facilities were often located on large tracts of open space at the perimeter of the community, often accessible only by school bus or automobile.

There are signs of a reversal in this decades long trend, as proponents of "New Urbanism" and "Smart Growth" advocate for higher density residential areas, permitting reclamation of the walk-in local elementary school, and increased provision of transit service, enabling older students to access central areas of the community without need for their own car. The growing number of "safe routes to school" programs also highlight a renewed interest in enabling young people to walk or bike to school. These programs are not only designed to provide health and safety benefits, but to better connect children with their communities and with the natural environment.

*Laurence Gerckens is emeritus professor at The Ohio State University, and one of the nation's leading planning historians. The above is excerpted from his article "Y is for Youth" in the Planning ABC's, PCJ #51, Summer 2003.*



## School Planning in Orange County, Florida

by Alissa Barber Torres, AICP, and Michael Rigby, Orange County Planning Division

The Orange County school system has added over 5,000 new pupils per year for the past decade, making it the nation's 14th largest at 167,000 students. How can a county plan to serve thousands of new students annually?

When Orange County staff receive an application for a proposed new residential development, we work with the Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) to evaluate proposed changes in future land use and zoning relative to available school capacity.

If the schools that would receive new students from the proposed development are over capacity, the developer must enter into a "Capacity Enhancement Agreement" with OCPS. These agreements typically include pre-payment of school impact fees and an additional contribution to fund necessary classroom capacity. OCPS has secured more than 60 agreements with funding commitments totaling over 93 million dollars.

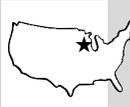
Orange County has also sought to foster the location of elementary schools within walking distance of residential areas. In west Orange County, the Horizon West Sector Plan covers a 38,000-acre master planned area that was previously in rural residential and agricultural use. School planning for Horizon West's six villages and Town Center includes the requirement that all housing in the villages' neighborhoods be no more than one-half mile walking distance from an elementary school.

New developments are required by ordinance to contribute land for the provision of adequate public facilities, including schools, prior to development approval. Horizon West school planning efforts now are focused on obtaining high school sites.

Orange County also has an interlocal agreement for joint school planning with OCPS, and a non-voting member represents OCPS on Orange County's Planning and Zoning Commission (as required by Florida Statutes).

**"Creating more neighborhood schools is one of the most important avenues for advancing quality of life in South Carolina. It makes sense from a learning standpoint, an economic standpoint and it makes sense if you want to have schools that are part of a community's fabric as opposed to part of its sprawl."**<sup>11</sup>

— South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford



## St. Paul, Minnesota

Since the 1960s, St. Paul's former Johnson Senior High

School has served as a warehouse for the school district. The historic school's recent "rebirth" as an elementary school is a testament to the hard work of school officials, community residents, and non-profit organizations.

The renovated 75,000 square foot building, with a 15,000 square foot addition, houses not just the elementary school, but offices for social service agencies and community meeting spaces. In addition, a partnership between the Wilder Foundation, the East Side Neighborhood Development Company, and the St. Paul Foundation has established the "Opportunity Housing Investment Fund," which plans to build or renovate seventy-five homes near the elementary school, making them available to low-income families with children attending the school.

Another innovative aspect of this school is its close relationship with the nearby East-side YMCA. Shared activities include a teen center, youth development programs, free swimming lessons, a track, and health and special education classes.

<sup>11</sup> Remarks available at: <[www.scholline.com/sanford071703.htm](http://www.scholline.com/sanford071703.htm)>.

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for schools that act as neighborhood anchors, use existing infrastructure efficiently, and bring communities together.<sup>9</sup>

 *Sidebar, St. Paul, Minnesota.*

The EPA also recently studied the travel and environmental implications of school siting. Since travel to school can represent 10-15 percent of morning rush hour motor vehicle trips in many areas, the choice of school location and design affects traffic congestion and air quality as well as having implications for school transportation budgets.<sup>10</sup> And, as concern mounts about the amount of physical activity school children get, many school districts, planners, and parents want to provide as many children as possible with the option to walk safely to school. *Editor's Note: For more on this, see "Safe Routes to School" in PCJ #56.*

<sup>9</sup> See <[www.smartgrowthamerica.org/children.html](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/children.html)> and <[www.fundersnetwork.org](http://www.fundersnetwork.org)>.

<sup>10</sup> "Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting," U.S. EPA Report 231-R-03-004 (2003); available at: <[www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/school\\_travel.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/school_travel.pdf)>, or by calling 800-490-9198. See also the information on page 14 of this issue.



## On-Line Comments

"Our City is in the process of expanding and retrofitting an existing elementary school. During the initial planning process the school board was looking to acquire land to build a new school. We were fortunate to convince the School Board and taxpayers that putting on an addition and updating the 50 year old neighborhood school was the most cost effective and smart growth way to go."

— Martin J. Connor, AICP, City Planner, City of Torrington, Connecticut

"One factor that can lead to school sprawl is land donations by developers. Much of the time, the land is not a great choice for a school, but the district is tempted to take it. If the planning commission asks tough questions at the time of sketch plan review about the possible donation, it can support a school board that may not want the new site, but doesn't want to be accused of turning down free land. Even better is your staff working with school staff when proposals come in to talk about the feasibility of the site."

— Craig Kenworthy, Bozeman, Montana

## PLANNERS & SCHOOLS

Schools are an important community asset. However, there is often a disconnect between school facility planning and other town planning functions. In several states, schools are exempt from local zoning regulations, while in others local review is limited. In addition, capital planning for schools is frequently not integrated with other local capital planning or economic development efforts.

Even in states where planning commissions or boards don't review schools under local zoning, planners can take an active role in developing a common community agenda for issues relating to the location and design of schools, and how school needs fit with the community's comprehensive plan goals and objectives. Here are some things planning commissioners can do:

1. *Ask to review a copy of your school district's facility master plan.* This document should have information about plans for school closure, repair, expansion, modernization, renovation, and new construction. Are the district's school plans in sync with the community's comprehensive plan? Are 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.* In many communities the planning commission prepares, or provides comments on, the local capital improvement plan. Use this opportunity to raise questions about the relationship between your community's capital improvement plan and the school district's capital investment or construction plans. Many school districts form advisory committees on school construction. Get one of your members on that committee and work toward school investments that meet educational and other community goals.

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

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*Editor's Note:*

### "Out With the Old!"

That was the message Bennington, Vermont, business leaders unfortunately sent in supporting the closing of the downtown middle school, and its relocation to a 110-acre field in an outlying section of the town.

At the state permit hearing for the new school held in April 2002, the CEO of the regional medical center told of potential doctors visiting the area and being distressed to see that their children might have to go to classes in an old (circa-1913) downtown school building. The president of the local bank similarly spoke of the value of having a new facility in attracting new residents to Bennington. Little interest was shown in trying to rehab the existing building, and few concerns were raised about turning prime agricultural soils into the new school's parking lot.

What of the benefit of the existing downtown school location being just a

block away from the town's public library? Not that important, according to the middle school principal, as the new school would be fully equipped with its own computers and library.

Another complaint raised by school administrators about the existing downtown location: participants on the school's sports teams needed to walk half-a-mile to the park used for practice and athletic events. With spacious sports fields, the new school would eliminate the need for this tiring walk.

Initial plans for the new middle school (for cost reasons) also failed to include any sidewalks connecting the school to residential neighborhoods and the downtown – despite the fact that the Bennington Town Plan stated that "children and others using school or other facilities need uninterrupted sidewalks or paths." School administrators did indicate a desire to build these as soon as feasible.

*From the Editor: In the interest of full disclosure, I testified as an expert witness in the state permit hearing mentioned above, on behalf of opponents of the proposed site. However, the new school facility did receive its state permit, and has opened this Fall.*



*The recently closed Bennington Middle School building downtown (above) located just one block from the public library (right). The site for the new middle school facility: a 110 acre field in a "resource conservation" zoning district (below).*



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example, a community in a state with minimum acreage standards may be able to get a waiver for a smaller school site.

4. *Support the maintenance of your community's existing school facilities.* How does the school district allocate money for maintaining and upgrading existing schools? Keeping schools in good shape can help keep families in existing neighborhoods rather than chasing down the "new good school" at the edge of town. It can also help stabilize neighborhoods. The physical condition of schools is a high visibility cue to residents (and

prospective residents) about whether the area is being invested in or "abandoned."

5. *Educate school board members and your fellow commissioners on the implications and opportunities related to school spending.* Help your school board evaluate offers of land donations for schools by developers. Often such land is not a great choice for a school location, but it can be politically difficult for the school district to turn it down. Planning staff might be able to work with school staff and the developer to analyze the proposed site and negotiate improvements in location or design.

6. *Think creatively, and never underesti-*

*mate fiscal arguments.* When education bonds are on the ballot, partnerships that integrate community resources and services with a school's educational program can strengthen support from citizens, even those with no school-age children. Work with school districts to put together school proposals that also meet broader community needs, providing facilities that can be used by all citizens (e.g., athletic fields, libraries, theaters).

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7. *Be proactive in reviewing school projects brought before your commission.* Does the project provide bike racks for students to lock their bikes? Are there

## When School Doors Close

by Dr. Barbara Kent Lawrence

In 1930 there were more than 130,000 school districts in the United States; today there are fewer than 15,000. Since 1930 we have closed 69 percent of our schools, though student population has increased by about 70 percent. As a result, the size of schools at all levels has grown, while thousands of communities have lost their schools. What happens when school doors close?

Consider four characteristics of a sustainable community: economic security; ecological integrity; quality of life; and empowerment and responsibility.

*Economic security:* Schools contribute to the economic life and vitality of their neighborhoods. When a community lacks a school, fewer new residents move there and property values decline. The buying power of the school district and its employees, and the purchases students, parents, and community members make in businesses located around the school, can be substantial. In upstate New York, for example, it was found that communities with schools had lower rates of poverty and dependence on welfare, and more people working as professionals,

1 Thomas A. Lyson, "What Does a School Mean to a Community? Assessing the Social and Economic Benefits of Schools to Rural Villages in New York," *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 17 (Winter 2002); available in Word format at: <www.ed.psu.edu/CREC/lyson.doc>.

than communities without a school.<sup>1</sup>

*Ecological Integrity:* The trend in school construction over several decades has been to larger buildings on larger lots. Farmland, forests, and wildlife habitat are lost as new schools take over outlying sites. Schools located at a distance from the community's center force people to use buses and automobiles, increasing air pollution and dependence on fossil fuels. This pattern in which schools are "the advance scouts for sprawl"<sup>2</sup> also often imposes on taxpayers the costs of extending new infrastructure, such as roads, sidewalks, and water and sewer lines.

*Quality of Life:* The quality of life deteriorates in a town that loses its school. Schools bring together people from all ages in a wide range of activities and function as centers of community. When schools close, this connection is severed. Residents of eight small towns in North Dakota that had lost their school rated their quality of life significantly lower than residents of towns that had retained their school.<sup>3</sup> A case study of Lund, Nevada, found that one-third of all community activities took place at the school, and

2 This memorable phrase has been used by Cecil Steward, Dean Emeritus of the University of Nebraska's School of Architecture.

3 Randall S. Sell, "Socio-Economic Impacts of School Consolidation on Host and Vacated Communities," *Agricultural Economics Report* 347 (March 1996); available in pdf format at: <http://agecon.lib.umn.edu/ndsu/aer347.pdf>.

4 M.D. Petkovich and C.T.K. Ching, *Some Educational and Socio-Economic Impacts of Closing a High School in a Small Rural Community* (Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Nevada, 1977).

that these activities diminished when schools closed.<sup>4</sup>

*Empowerment and Responsibility:* Since 1930, the number of people serving on school boards has fallen from one million to fewer than 200,000. Participation in the democratic process is reduced when a school closes because fewer people contribute to decisions about local education "making public schools less public."<sup>5</sup>

As one commentator has noted, "educators and non-educators alike must recognize that schools do more than educate children; they also maintain communities."<sup>6</sup> Planners need to recognize the importance of small neighborhood schools as engines of sustainability, and seek to secure their place in the community.<sup>7</sup>

*Dr. Barbara Kent Lawrence is a consultant, researcher, and writer specializing in small schools and facilities policy. She is the lead researcher for Dollars and Sense: The Cost-Effectiveness of Small Schools, and author of The Hermit Crab Solution: Creative Alternatives for Improving Rural School Facilities & Keeping Them Close to Home (AEL, Charleston, West Virginia 2004).*

5 Craig Howley and Robert Bickel, "Smaller Districts: Closing the Gap for Poor Kids" (manuscript, 2001); available at: <http://oak.cats.ohio.edu/~howley/asbj2.htm>.

6 Alan Peshkin, *Growing Up American: Schooling & the Survival of Community*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 208.

7 In addition to the benefits discussed in this article, researchers have found that small schools provide educational advantages for students. Some of these findings are discussed on page 4 of this issue.

existing or planned sidewalks not only at the site, but also connecting into adjoining neighborhoods? Ask how the project will meet the greater goals of the community, while meeting the district's needs. Are there redundant or enhanced services? Where do students and teachers live, and how will they arrive each day? How does the community access the facility, and is student safety accounted for?

If the planning board does not have a formal review function, consider taking the time to provide an informal, advisory review of the school project. School districts may well appreciate the feedback, opening them to thinking more about different aspects of school siting. It can also strengthen channels of communication between school and planning staff.

#### SUMMING UP:

School projects represent some of the largest expenditures of public dollars that local governments make. Where and how school investments are made have major consequences for the community. Planning commissioners can contribute substantially to school planning efforts and to the quality of life

President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Elementary and Secondary Education Bill on April 11, 1965. Alongside Johnson, Kate Deadrich Loney, his first school teacher.



in their communities by bringing their insights and perspective to the table. ♦

Tim Torma has worked at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency since 1995. He is a policy analyst in the Agency's Smart Growth Program. Torma's recent work has included projects related to environmental and health effects of school siting, and research and writing on school planning issues. Torma has also been a contributing writer, editor, or reviewer on a wide range of growth-related publications, most recently *Getting to Smart Growth II* and *Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community*.



## Tomorrow's School

"Tomorrow's school will be a school without walls – a school that's built of doors which open to the entire community.

Tomorrow's school will reach out to the places that enrich the human spirit: to the museums, to the theaters, to the art galleries, to the parks, to the rivers, and to the mountains. It will ally itself with the city, with the city's busy streets and its factories and its assembly lines and its laboratories – so that work does not seem an alien place for the student.

Tomorrow's school will be the center of community life, for the grownups as well as the children: 'a shopping center of human services.' It might have a community health clinic, a public library, a theater, and recreation facilities. It will provide formal education for all citizens – and it will not close its doors any more at 3 o'clock. It will employ its buildings round the clock and its teachers round the year.

I am not describing a distant Utopia, but I am describing the kind of education which must be the great and the urgent work of our time."

— Remarks of President Lyndon B. Johnson to the American Association of School Administrators, Feb. 16, 1966.



### On-Line Comments

"Over the last decade, public school districts have become increasingly complex organizations, offering a far wider array of services than ever before. In addition to providing basic education for children ages 5 to 18, public school districts now provide special education and social services, pre-school services, and programs for the elderly. Schools serve as hubs of the community.

But events like Columbine have impacted the community's view of letting the general public into schools. Security identification badges, cameras, school district campus police forces, code red drills, and other measures have given a sense of security during the school day. Future planning partnerships and potential collaborative community spaces should be planned, designed, and programmed with this in mind.

There are also sometimes competing interests between school boards and city or county governments regarding choosing locations for

future schools. The impact that these choices have in shaping the community is profound. School location choices can redirect the momentum of a city's comprehensive plan, and can have both fiscal and social consequences. School boards do not likely want to be labeled as the catalyst for growth. It's a 'chicken and egg' situation. Are school districts buying land because they are responding to plans that cities or county have approved for growth, or are school districts creating areas of growth because they are building schools on the urban fringe?

Often times, school districts purchase land on the urban fringe at a much cheaper price than if they were to purchase a site (assuming one were available) in areas where adequate infrastructure exists. When land is purchased, and the word is out that a new school is planned for the fringe area, the residential real estate marketers swing into high gear, extolling the virtues of living near a brand new school. From the city or county perspective, school districts often put them in a bind, sending them scrambling for resources necessary to extend

adequate infrastructure. Traffic congestion brought on by a new school can send residents streaming into City Hall to demand a solution. Clearly, there is a need for school districts and cities/counties to work together on this challenge."

— David Hill, AICP, REFP [Registered Educational Facilities Planner], Overland Park, Kansas

"It is very important that the staffs of the local municipality and school administration work closely together. Sharing information and integrating the comprehensive planning process can eliminate some of the duplicate efforts and sometimes conflicting future planning. Another simple, but effective, method is to reach an agreement between the municipality and the school system where schools must go through the local project review process. This can be helpful even when it is just a courtesy review."

— James Q. Gulnac, AICP, Director of Planning and Community Development, Town of Sanford, Maine