School Siting for Healthy Communities: 
*Concepts and Strategies*

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Mission

To position high-quality education as a critical component for broader city and metropolitan policy-making.

We believe that invigorating public education and revitalizing neighborhoods are goals that can, and should, be accomplished in tandem.

….and that new schools are key tools in creating great new communities.
We can all agree….

...schools should provide students with a safe healthy place to get a great education.

But….

...what other benefits can we get from this major public investment?
School Siting for Healthy Communities

1. What types of schools are we building?
2. Why does it matter?
3. Innovative concepts and strategies
Prior to WWII, we built…

1. Schools and neighborhoods together
2. Relatively small schools (small sites, multi-story)
3. Schools as neighborhood focal points
But...things have changed:
The **Mega School**....is alive and well

Half of all secondary schools
enroll 1,000+ students

Dorman High School in Spartanburg, SC
Mega Schools.... in the news

• Iowa school district plans 98 acre* mega campus *(The Hawkeye, 9/07)

• 65 acre high school planned in Bakersfield *(Bakersfield Californian 9/07)

• 80 acre HS planned in Illinois *(The Daily Herald 9/07)

*FYI, the entire Magic Kingdom in Disney (FL) is on about 100 acres.
Mega Schools: What are the implications?

Research finds:

• Increased auto trips and less walking/biking to school
• Increased infrastructure costs for roads and utilities
• Lost investment when older schools are abandoned
• Encourages sprawl
Mega Schools: What are the implications?

PHOTO BY STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES
Why are we building Mega Schools?

- Desire for sports fields
- Comprehensive school offerings
- Economies of scale with more enrollment
- Far out land is often cheaper and easier to obtain
- State policies can unintentionally encourage it (acreage and funding)
- It’s become standard operating procedure
Questioning “standard operating procedure”

Voters say no to ‘mega-campus’

Challengers overwhelm incumbents to win seats on Pottstown School Board

STOP THE $54 MILLION MEGA-CAMPUS!
VOTE FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS TEAM!

POTTSTOWN — Voters swept from office Tuesday the incumbent school board team that had advocated closing the borough’s five elementary schools.

Instead, voters chose by a roughly 440-1 margin the team that championed saving those schools.

Unofficial results tabulated at Republican campaign headquarters showed a whopping 78 percent of the voters favoring the challengers — Dennis Wausnock, Julia Wilson, Michele Parageon, Rick Huss and Nat White.

They handily defeated the team of onetime incumbents led by Barry Robertson, James Smock, Phillip Thees, Bonita Barnhill and Cathy Skidlo.

Both teams “cross-filed” for both the Republican and the Democratic line on the November ballot.

The challengers’ overwhelming majority on both ballot lines makes the November election a foregone conclusion.

“I got fired, I understand that,” Robertson said from his home after the results had become obvious.

“Of all the elections I’ve been in, this is the most exciting,” said Huss, a former school board member who “came out of retirement because the issue meant so much to me” to run for a fourth time.

“It was exciting because the people spoke,” Huss said.

What they spoke about was the rejection of the
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**CONCEPTS**

- School siting decisions should benefit the entire community
- School sites should take full advantage of existing resources
- School sites should be easily and safely accessible by walking, biking, and/or transit
- School site should be a community focal point when appropriate

Source: Oregon School Siting Handbook, 2005
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**STRATEGIES**

- Smaller sites/schools
- Multi-story design
- Strategically co-locate
- Shared / joint use facilities
- Relate design to existing buildings
- Ensure “pedestrian friendliness”
- Conduct full cost evaluation of alt sites
- Community participation
- *Partner with local governments*
Conclusion:
School Siting Matters for Student and Community Health

3 key mechanisms:
• School location
• School size
• School design/type/use

We need to ask ourselves:
How do proposed new school sites affect student and community health outcomes?
• Joint use or co-location opportunities?
• Offer travel to school options?
• Efficiently use land and existing resources?
Resources

Center for Cities & Schools, UC Berkeley
http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu

BEST (Building Educational Success Together)
http://www.bestschoolfacilities.org

EPA, Smart Growth Program
http://www.epa.gov/dced/schools.htm

American Architectural Foundation, Great Schools by Design
http://www.archfoundation.org/aaf/gsbd/index.htm

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

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