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Helping Johnny Walk to School

Policy Recommendations for Removing Barriers to Community-Centered Schools

BY RENEE KUHLMAN

The *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Sustaining Communities through Smart Policy* project is being undertaken through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Center for State and Local Policy. The Center offers technical assistance, training, and publications to support and advance the work of preservation at the state and local level. The project received additional financial support from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and the Building Educational Success Together (BEST) collaborative, courtesy of the Convergence Partnership.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (www.PreservationNation.org) is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places that matter to them. By saving the places where great moments from history—and the important moments of everyday life—took place, the National Trust for Historic Preservation helps revitalize neighborhoods and communities, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability. With headquarters in Washington, DC, eight regional and field offices, 29 historic sites, and partner organizations in 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to a national network of people, organizations and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history and collectively shaping the future of America's stories.

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BY RENEE KUHLMAN

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS
CENTER FOR STATE AND LOCAL POLICY

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PREFACE BY RICHARD MOE, PRESIDENT
National Trust for Historic Preservation

In addition to providing a place to educate our children, schools are also important anchors that help define and sustain our neighborhoods. Recognizing this fact, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has long urged citizens across the country to retain existing schools or construct new ones where they can function as true community centers.

In 2000 the National Trust published *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl* and included older and historic neighborhood schools on its list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. Since then, awareness about the health, transportation, and sustainability ramifications of school siting choices has grown significantly. In 2009 for example, the American Academy of Pediatrics noted that "factors such as school location have played a significant role in the decreased rates of walking to school, and changes in policy may help to increase the number of children who are able to walk to school."[1]

But despite this growing awareness of the benefits of community-centered schools, far too many existing schools continue to be threatened with abandonment, and new schools continue to be built far from the residents they serve. According to the most recent National Household Travel survey, only about 35 percent of K-8 students now live within two miles of their school.[2]

As part of our *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Sustaining Communities through Smart Policy* project, we asked some of the brightest minds in their fields the following question: "What policies and practices are preventing the retention or development of community-centered schools?" We then asked them to offer suggestions for state reform. Their recommendations provide the basis for this report.

I urge states and communities to adopt the recommendations provided in this report. Breaking down barriers to community-centered schools is an essential part of sustaining the health of our communities.

Project Background

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Center for State and Local Policy launched the *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Sustaining Communities through Smart Policy* project in 2008 to encourage the retention and development of community-centered schools.

Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and with generous support from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and the Building Educational Success Together (BEST) collaborative courtesy of the Convergence Partnership, this project brings together leaders from different fields and partners in nine states to find new ways states can encourage community-centered schools.

Project partners include **California**'s Ad Hoc School Siting Coalition with the Local Government Commission, the Center for Cities and Schools at UC Berkeley and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership; GEORGIA BIKES! and the **Georgia** Safe Routes to School Network; the Active Transportation Alliance of **Illinois** in partnership with Healthy Schools Campaign and Landmarks Illinois; The Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University in **Louisiana**; the **New Hampshire** Preservation Alliance; **Oklahoma** Sustainability Network in partnership with Oklahoma Safe Routes to School Network and the Neighborhood Alliance; **Oregon**'s Innovation Partnership; Preservation **Pennsylvania**; and the **South Carolina** Arts Foundation on behalf of the South Carolina Design Arts Partnership.

The primary author of this publication is Renee Kuhlman, director of Special Projects for the Center for State and Local Policy at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In November 2008 the project's advisory committee and project partners met in Washington, D.C., to help identify the barriers and provide recommendations for state actions. Throughout 2009, they commented on drafts and offered additional research avenues and policy suggestions. The author is deeply grateful for their insights and assistance. Representation on the Advisory Committee does not imply endorsement of specific policy actions recommended within this report.

For project updates, visit www.PreservationNation.org/issues/historic-schools/. For more information about the project or this publication, contact Renee Kuhlman at 202-588-6000 or at policy@nthp.org.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Marni Allen, Senior Research & Policy Associate
21st Century School Fund
Washington, DC

Pam Barth, Project Manager
National Center for Safe Routes to School
University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center
Chapel Hill, NC

Constance Beaumont, Education and Outreach Manager
Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program
Salem, OR

Matthew Dalbey, Ph.D., Senior Policy Analyst
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, DC

Mary Filardo, Executive Director
21st Century School Fund/Building Education Success Together
Washington, DC

Jill Ortman Fouse, Member
Parent Advisory Council for Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools
Silver Spring, MD

Karla Hampton, JD, Senior Staff Attorney
National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity
Public Health Law & Policy
Oakland, CA

Deb Hubsmith, Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Fairfax, CA

Mary Humstone, Research Scientist
American Studies Program
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY

Thomas Hylton, President
Save Our Land, Save Our Towns Inc.
Pottstown, PA

Emily Knupp, LEED AP, Schools Sector Associate
US Green Building Council
Washington, DC

Emily Kujawa, MPH, Project Coordinator
National School Boards Association
Alexandria, VA

Andre Larroque, AIA, CSI, NCARB
Building Standards Coordinator
New Mexico Public School Facilities Authority
Albuquerque, NM

Judy Marks, Hon. AIA, Director
National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities
Washington, DC

Bob McNamara, Senior Policy Representative
National Association of Realtors (NAR)
Washington, DC

Dee Merriam, FASLA, Community Planner
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Environmental Health
Atlanta, GA

Larry Morandi, Director, State Policy Research
National Conference of State Legislatures
Denver, CO

Sean O'Donnell, AIA, LEED AP, Principal
Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects
Washington, DC

Robert Ping, State Network Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Portland, OR

Susan L. Roakes, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning
The University of Memphis
Memphis, TN

David Salvesen, Ph.D., Deputy Director
Center for Sustainable Community Design
Institute for the Environment
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC

Lisa L. Sharma, MPH, MBA, Senior Associate
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
National League of Cities
Washington, DC

Christine Shenot
International City/County Management Association
Washington, DC

Marty Strange, Policy Director
Rural Schools and Community Trust
Randolph, VT

Graham Stroh, Program Manager
American Architectural Foundation
Washington, DC

Angela Diaz Usher, AICP
School District of Palm Beach County
West Palm Beach, FL

Barbara Worth, Director of Strategic and Private Development
The Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI)
Scottsdale, AZ

Sara Zimmerman, JD, Senior Staff Attorney
National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity
Public Health Law & Policy
Oakland, CA

ABSTRACT

School districts are responsible for the education of almost 50 million public school students. Nearly all decisions about the use and location of school facilities are made by local school districts—but the impact of these decisions goes far beyond the school and the education of its students. This report identifies the larger community interest in decisions about retaining existing schools and deciding where to locate new ones. It describes the states' role in school siting decisions and identifies state level policy changes that will ensure that educational, environmental, health, community, and fiscal considerations are weighed by communities when school districts make school closing, consolidation, and site selection decisions.

The Rosa Parks School in Portland, Ore., serves as a "community campus." Partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club and Portland Parks and Recreation permit the sharing of programs which benefit the students and their families. If built in isolation, the new school and a new Boys and Girls Club would have cost at least 50 percent more than co-locating and using the facilities of a community campus. In 2009 the Council of Educational Facility Planners International presented the school with its highest honor, the James D. MacConnell Award.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DULL OLSON WEEKES ARCHITECTS AND PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Community-Based Schools—Good for Students, Good for Communities

IN 2009 IN THE FARMING COMMUNITY OF ARVADA, WYO., *the state funded the construction of a smaller, modular school to replace the mid-sized, brick 1940s school building that the state considered too large for the current number of students. The older school, which served students during the day, also hosted community weddings, potluck dinners, and elections. Now the community struggles to maintain both the former school as a community center and the new school facility.*[3]

An architect designing a new high school was informed by the State of Virginia that his firm's proposed design, which took up 12 acres, did not meet the state's preferred site size of 26 acres. The state recommended purchasing adjacent properties but approved the smaller site after learning about an agreement to share space with an adjacent park.[4]

Before Minnesota changed its "60 percent" rule regarding renovation options, the Renville County West School Facility task force recommended closing the elementary and high schools and servicing all of its programs in one new facility because the estimated total renovation cost was 74 percent of the cost of a new school.[5]

What's happening here? Can we afford to abandon our older and historic schools and build anew on the outskirts of town? Is this really the best arrangement for educating our children and sustaining our communities? Not necessarily.

When a community starts to plan to renovate or to construct a new school, its first objective is to provide a safe, healthy place for children to get a good education. In addition to meeting education goals, however, the school building and its surroundings can also support the community's vision and goals for its future. Goals such as preserving the vitality of the surrounding neighborhood,

encouraging a healthier population, and conserving open space.

For many reasons, renovating schools located near the families they serve is a much better option than constructing a new school on the outskirts of a community. Because of their central location, older and historic schools offer multiple transportation choices (biking, walking, mass transit, auto, and bus). In addition to helping to "anchor" the surrounding neighborhood, these schools are often used for multiple community purposes. They are truly *community-centered* facilities. While not every older and historic school building should be rehabilitated, the loss and abandonment of many of these schools is unnecessary and a waste of resources.

There are numerous benefits to community-centered schools.

Community-centered schools encourage close ties with community members. Because community-centered schools are used by residents of all ages for recreation and events during non-school hours, improvements are likely to be supported through local bond measures. These schools also provide more opportunities for interaction between students, teachers, and parents because long distances are not a barrier.

IS YOUR SCHOOL A COMMUNITY-CENTERED SCHOOL?

While not every characteristic will be present, many of the following components exist in community-centered schools. A community-centered school...

- ☑ **...uses, expands, or adapts existing buildings (either those originally built for school use or for some other purpose) to provide a 21st-century education.**
- ☑ **...is located near the families it serves, allowing large numbers of students to walk or bike to school and encouraging frequent interactions between parents, teachers, students, administrators, and residents.**
- ☑ **...uses existing roads and sewers and avoids extending infrastructure wherever possible.**
- ☑ **...is accessible via multiple modes of transportation (including public transit for upper grades) enabling students to attend extracurricular activities without adult transport.**
- ☑ **...is broadly supported by the community, including passage of bonds for upgrading school facilities, because the facilities are used by residents of all ages.**
- ☑ **... fits well within the neighborhood and has a relatively small footprint.**
- ☑ **...is included in the school district's master facilities plan and is integrated with other land uses through a broad community planning process.**
- ☑ **...shares space with other public or private entities such as the YMCA, library, and municipal park, and allows after-hours access to school facilities.**
- ☑ **...reflects good civic design that generates public pride.**

Community-centered schools offer educational benefits. Since community-centered schools are located within neighborhoods, they often have a small student body. Studies have shown that smaller-sized schools see more students graduate, have better attendance records, and experience strong participation by students in extracurricular activities.[6]

Community-centered schools increase property values. The presence of a local school supports higher property values[7] and encourages continued public and private investment in the neighborhood. This in turn reinforces the tax base available to the schools.

Community-centered schools save on construction and operating costs. By co-locating or sharing such facilities as libraries, theaters, athletic fields, swimming pools, and parks with non-school entities, both construction and operating costs can be lowered.[8] Furthermore, renewing a school campus often costs less than purchasing a new site, mothballing or demolishing the original school, and constructing a new facility and supporting infrastructure.[9]

By renovating and modernizing older schools, states can create local construction jobs while extending the life of existing school buildings through repair, modernization, or rehabilitation.[12]

Community-centered schools offer location efficiency. Community-centered schools keep travel distances short. Shorter and fewer auto and bus trips help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save on busing costs, and lower the number of traffic collisions.[10] Community-centered schools are also accessible by several modes of transportation, including such low carbon modes as walking and biking.

"...there is no doubt reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled is a basic and effective method to reduce transportation emissions."

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, 2008[11]

Community-centered schools help the environment. Community-centered schools take advantage of existing resources, including roads, infrastructure, and buildings. Also renovating an existing building reduces waste intended for landfills and means less land is used on the outskirts of a community.

PHOTO BY BYRD WOOD

According to estimates, every square foot of nonresidential building demolition adds 155 pounds of solid waste to area landfills. In contrast, nonresidential renovation only produces 18 pounds of waste per square foot. Often the materials—brick, block, wood, plaster, and stone—have decades of use left in them. To calculate how much waste would be created through demolition, visit www.thegreenestbuilding.org/waste.html.

The construction and operation of buildings account for 48 percent of the United States' greenhouse gas emissions. But reusing and retrofitting existing buildings can reduce these emissions dramatically.[13]

Community-centered schools encourage healthier families. Schools in residential areas allow children and their families to get more exercise. Florida researchers found a higher rate of walkability for schools built prior to 1950 and for those built after 1996 when the state started requiring school districts and local planning agencies to coordinate land-use decisions. During these times, schools were built within or near residential districts which gave residents multiple ways they could travel to school.[14]

"Children can engage in physical activity as a part of their daily lives, such as on their travel to school. Factors such as school location have played a significant role in the decreased rates of walking to school, and changes in policy may help to increase the number of children who are able to walk to school."[15]

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, JUNE 2009

PHOTO COURTESY ILLINOIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION AGENCY

Building Schools Outside of the Communities They Serve—What Are the Consequences?

PROVIDING A QUALITY EDUCATION IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT for all students is a priority for every community. But community-centered schools are increasingly rare. Changing demographics, land-use requirements, and educational factors have resulted in major changes in the relationship between public schools and their communities and have had negative effects on education, the environment, children's health, communities, and the fiscal well-being of government.

In 1930 there were 262,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the United States; today, there are 99,000 schools.[16] Over the same time period, the number of students rose from 28 million to 50.1 million which means we are accommodating almost twice as many students in almost two-thirds fewer schools.[17] Communities need to find solutions that sustain communities because the U.S. Department of Education estimates that by 2030, the student population will reach 60 million.[18]

The schools and the surrounding acreage became larger. A study of South Carolina's coastal counties, for example, found that "school site size has increased every decade since the 1950s and school sites built in the last 20 years are 41 percent larger than those built previously. ...schools constructed since 1971... are 47 percent larger than the (Council of Educational Facility Planners International) requirement."[19]

School site size has also increased because school enrollment sizes are larger than before. In 1950 the average school size was 118 students. In 2006 the average size was 507 students per school.[20]

As schools increased in size they began to move further away from the residents they served. In 1969 some 87 percent of students lived within one mile of their school; by 2001, only 21 percent lived within one mile of their school.[21] In Georgia,

for example, much of the population growth has taken place in automobile-oriented suburbs. In 2007 researchers estimated that 6 percent of elementary students, 11 percent of middle school students, and 6 percent of high school students in the state could reasonably be expected to walk to school.[22]

As these schools move to the outskirts of communities, what does this mean for communities and the residents that live there?

The number of cars on the road increases. When schools are not situated within an easy walk of local residents, more parents have to drive their children to school. Researchers found a 30 percent increase in the number of cars on the road between 7:15 and 8:15 a.m. during the school year.[23]

And more cars on the road lead to increased carbon emissions. According to a recent study, carbon emissions continue to rise "almost in lock-step" with Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs).[24] By encouraging shorter travel distances to schools, states can help decrease the number of cars on the road, thereby decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. A Brookings Institution study concluded "...while debates still rage as to the extent carbon emissions affect environmental conditions, there is no doubt reducing VMT is a basic and effective method to reduce transportation emissions."[25]

Distant locations offer fewer opportunities for physical activity. Today approximately 9 million children over the age of six are considered obese. Over the past 30 years, rates of

Minnesota Links Climate Change to School Siting

John Bailey

Meet John Bailey. As the director of policy for 1000 Friends of Minnesota, he paid close attention to recommendations from the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group on how to meet the state's aggressive law to reduce global warming emissions by 80 percent by 2050.

Transportation accounts for 25 percent of the Minnesota's global warming emissions, and while much of the debate focuses on cleaner cars and cleaner fuels, the advisory group found that a significant portion of the problem stems from simply the amount that all of us drive.

At the time, Minnesota recommended a minimum number of acres for schools (60 acres for a high school of 2,000 or more students, for example). This "minimum acreage" rule made it difficult, if not impossible, to locate a school in a densely populated neighborhood. The state also had a rule about not renovating a school if the cost exceeded 60 percent of the cost of building a new school, which limited renovation options for schools already located in communities. Therefore, the group recommended that the state's rules requiring minimum acreages for schools and its bias against renovating existing schools be eliminated.

In 2009 the Minnesota legislature voted to disallow the commissioner of education from taking into account any minimum acreage amount or renovation percentage when making decisions on new school construction applications.

This will help encourage renovation of schools such as the Beardsley School, pictured here, which was included on Minnesota's 10 Most Endangered Properties list in 2007.

As Bailey points out, "This small change gives Minnesota's communities a greater voice in where to build new schools and helps address the state's goal of decreasing carbon emissions."

For more information go to www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PIONEER PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL CENTER FOR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

childhood obesity have more than tripled among children ages 6 to 11.[26] Because obese children are at greater risk for developing heart attacks, strokes, and hypertension later in life, the National Institutes of Health have estimated the obesity epidemic will cost families, businesses, and governments nearly $147 billion per year in health costs alone.[27]

Lack of regular physical activity has been cited as one of the causes for the rise in childhood obesity. Locating schools within neighborhoods allows students to more easily bike and walk to school which helps them reach the recommended amount of physical activity for children—60 minutes daily.[28]

The connections between the school and the community are weakened. Researchers at the Michigan Land Use Institute found that new school construction outside of established cities prompts school closures within them.[29] Large schools located outside of communities make it difficult for parents who live far from their child's school to attend meetings, parent/teacher conferences, or to otherwise become involved in the school. Students who rely on buses may not

By keeping or locating schools within neighborhoods, communities can encourage more physical activity, such as biking or walking, and help address the obesity epidemic.

Changing New Mexico's Site Standards and Design Process

Andre Larroque

As a school facility architect, Andre Larroque became interested in the effects of minimum acreage standards on students and their communities. In his position as building standards coordinator for the New Mexico Public School Facilities Authority, Larroque recognized that the state's communities and school districts would benefit from a less prescriptive approach to acreage requirements.

Instead of recommending a certain number of acres based on student size, New Mexico now asks school districts to submit information about the planned curriculum and the desired learning environment when applying for state funding for school renovation or construction. In 2009 New Mexico removed site acreage requirements and revised its guidelines to promote the viability of smaller sites.

For more information go to www.nmpsfa.org/pdf/planning/Adequacy_Planning_Guide_12-14-07_Chg_4.pdf.

The recent elimination of minimum acreage standards in New Mexico will facilitate the construction and retention of schools on smaller sites in the future, such as the Bosque Farms Elementary School, pictured here, which sits on a five-acre neighborhood site.

PHOTOS COURTESY DEKKER/PERICH/SABATINI

have an opportunity to participate in social, cultural, or recreational activities after school. Distant sites also prevent neighborhood residents from accessing the schools' facilities on week-ends and evenings for recreation or community events.

The decisions to open or close schools have a profound effect on community growth or decline, economic vitality, and sense of place.[30]

MARK WYCKOFF, FAICP, SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, MICHIGAN LAND USE INSTITUTE

Demolishing and abandoning schools in existing communities decreases property values. Michigan researchers discovered that school closures resulted in decreased property tax revenues. Their analysis of Jackson, Mich., found that average home property values within a half-mile of an open, stable elementary school rose at a 3 percent higher annual rate than they did around similar neighborhoods with a closed elementary school. Researchers also studied the effects of closing an elementary school. Had the school remained open and home values had similarly increased, researchers believe the city, county, and schools would have realized almost $2 million more in property taxes from 1994 to 2003.[31]

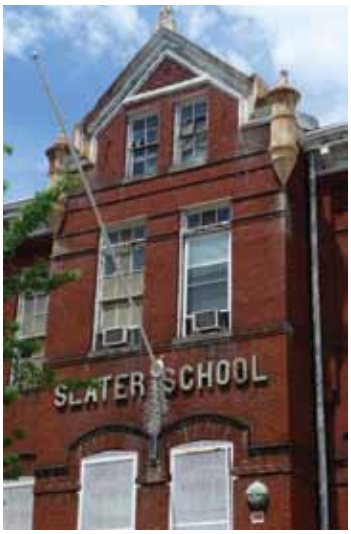


PHOTO BY ADRIAN SCOTT FINE

School districts struggling to pay other expenses like student transportation costs sometimes neglect regular school maintenance. But deferring maintenance often leads to bigger, more expensive repairs down the road and threatens the continued use of an existing community-centered school.

Taxes increase to pay for new schools. Taxpayers are spending millions of dollars to purchase large school lots and to construct new facilities.[32] However, a more sustainable and less costly option is to renovate an existing school. And the multi-story design of many older schools allows for the use of more compact and less costly sites.

Aligning School Locations with New Hampshire's Smart Growth Goals

Senator Fuller Clark

Martha Fuller Clark works hard to ensure New Hampshire supports community-centered schools. That's why, as state senator, she introduced Senate Bill 59.

The bill seeks to accomplish three goals. First, it requires school districts to investigate feasible options, through a public hearing and with input from municipal boards and departments, when deciding whether to renovate or replace an existing school. Second, it limits additional land acquisition in school renovation projects to only that which is necessary to ensure the safe flow of traffic. Finally, it requires plans for construction or renovation of schools to comply with the state's comprehensive plan and the principles of smart growth which have been incorporated into New Hampshire state statutes through legislation previously sponsored by Senator Fuller Clark.

Senate Bill 59 passed in the New Hampshire Senate spring of 2009 and in the New Hampshire House January 2010.

The challenging decision of whether to renovate or abandon a school in Keene, N.H., (pictured here) located adjacent to the central business district, was one of the catalysts for Senator Fuller Clark's legislation.

PHOTO COURTESY NEW HAMPSHIRE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

Challenges to Encouraging Community-Centered Schools

ACCOMMODATING THE NATION'S NEARLY 50 MILLION public school students in school buildings and grounds is an ongoing challenge. School districts must decide whether to close or consolidate schools, expand existing facilities, or build new ones depending on student enrollment which constantly fluctuates due to changing demographics. School districts must take into account economic, racial, and ethnic housing patterns and transportation options when making decisions about school locations.

School districts also need to provide facilities to support ever-changing educational programs and service demands. These include programs to serve a much greater early childhood population (for example, all-day kindergarten, pre-kindergarten, and even pre-school); increased programs and services for special needs students; expanded athletic opportunities for girls; new equipment and technology for career and technical educational programs; and various other educational reforms such as smaller class sizes and creating small learning communities within schools.

School districts face other challenges as well. They face a huge backlog of maintenance and repairs. School districts often lack the resources to devote time to developing partnerships with other governmental agencies around site planning and joint use of facilities. They also face the public perception that "newer is better."

State-level policy and practices often make it difficult to keep schools located within communities. Many states have minimum acreage standards that discourage reuse of existing schools by requiring unnecessarily large sites making it hard to locate schools near students' homes. State funding biased toward new construction, long funding cycles leading to deferred maintenance, and state support for the costs of transporting students encourage communities

to choose distant locations for their schools.

Excessive parking requirements, setback requirements for large buildings, and maximum front-age requirements also dis-courage community-centered schools. Today schools must provide adequate parking, but parking quickly becomes a self generating rationale for large schools. Schools that draw from a large geographic area, for example, require more parking to serve a larger faculty and student body whose only alter-native is driving. The need for larger sites to accommodate the increase in parking forces the siting of schools outside of neighborhoods, which further limits access and requires even more parking.

Many zoning ordinances require excessive parking for schools because they treat schools like commercial buildings or institutions serving adults.

BOTTOM PHOTO BY MARY HUMSTONE; TOP PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM

Colorado Targets Capital Funding Expenditures

James Hare

In 1998 Colorado authorized $190 million over 11 years through the Public School Capital Construction Grant Program to address the most critical capital needs of its public schools. To help the grants reach those districts most in need of assistance, Colorado Preservation, Inc. (CPI) partnered with the Donnell-Kay Foundation to encourage the passage of a bill in 2007 that required a portion of the funds be directed to districts with the smallest enrollments and most dire building conditions. The bill also required that "rehabilitation" be given greater priority over "replacement" in grant applications and that the Advisory Committee for Public School Capital Construction include a member with architectural expertise in school rehabilitation.

Without a comprehensive list of public school facilities and their conditions, the Colorado Board of Education lacked a way to evaluate which school districts needed the most assistance. To help address this problem, Colorado Preservation, Inc., developed a historic schools survey with funding from the Colorado Historical Society's State Historical Fund and the Donnell-Kay Foundation. Also the Colorado Department of Education developed a database of schools and their conditions.

CPI completed a reconnaissance-level survey form for schools over 50 years of age and encouraged communities to apply for a grant to rehabilitate their historic schools. CPI commissioned the film *Our Living Legacy: Colorado's Historic Schools* to show how historic schools can be rehabilitated to meet modern educational standards, save capital costs, eliminate indirect costs of sprawl, and be a source of community pride. CPI distributed a copy of the film to every school district in the state along with a publication from the Council of Educational Facility Planners, International, on how to successfully renovate older and historic school facilities.

Cory Elementary School, Denver, Colo.

CPI's executive director James Hare says, "Colorado's historic school buildings are unique symbols of community. We hope that the survey, public outreach, and policy changes have ensured that the first thought of decision-makers is: 'How can we adapt our historic school for continuous use?'"

Designing Community-Centered Schools

Sean O'Donnell

Sean O'Donnell, principal with the architectural firm Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn, is confident that just about every problem associated with siting schools in existing communities can be solved through good design.

Take the School Without Walls project in Washington, D.C., named for its goal of fostering learning outside the school walls through a partnership with George Washington University. O'Donnell renovated the original 1882 school, pictured here, to provide 21st-century classrooms and added a new facility next door to provide space for science labs, a media center, and accessible entrance. The school's location allowed for shared use of the university's auditorium and research libraries and offered access to local transit systems.

O'Donnell regularly encourages communities to reuse their older, centrally-located schools because they offer sustainable features such as large windows that allow for natural light. Renewing such school campuses can reduce construction costs while preserving the embodied energy that went into the construction of the materials and the building.

According to O'Donnell, "once you've analyzed the pedagogy that will be used and how the building can serve those needs, you can often find a solution such as an addition that will allow for the continued use of an older school."

BOTTOM PHOTO BY JOSEPH ROMEO; TOP PHOTO COURTESY COLORADO PRESERVATION, INC.

Strategies for Supporting Community-Centered Schools

COMMUNITY-CENTERED SCHOOLS DO NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT. They are part of a community vision and plan that is responsive to educational, environmental, transportation, health, community, and fiscal requirements.

States have a legitimate role in encouraging community-centered schools. In many instances states help fund the renovation, maintenance, and construction of school facilities. States provide guidelines for site and classroom size. Many states pay all or a portion of busing costs. States can help children to become more physically active by encouraging schools to be located within walking distance of the majority of students and by supporting the maximum use of school athletic facilities. States can encourage school officials to expand access to school facilities during non-school hours and provide sample agreements to alleviate legal complications. Similarly, states can encourage city officials to make city-owned facilities such as ball fields, pools, libraries, and auditoriums, available for schools through joint-use agreements.[33]

States and localities should make the following policy changes to encourage more community-centered schools:

REMOVE MINIMUM ACREAGE REQUIREMENTS

Minimum acreage standards often prevent communities from reusing older and historic schools or from constructing centrally-located new ones. By having to look for large sites (often in the excess of 30-50 acres), communities have a hard time assembling large enough parcels in existing neighborhoods and are forced to purchase land on the outskirts of town.

In the 1970s, state and local departments of education adopted a prescriptive formula for determining school acreage from a policy guidebook produced by the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI).[34] These guide-

lines recommended lot sizes for new school construction based on number of students enrolled. A high school for 2,000 students, for example, would need 50 acres. Contrast that with older schools and their athletic fields which are usually located on 5 to 10 acres.

At the urging of various government agencies and nonprofit organizations, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, CEFPI changed its recommendations in 2004. Its publication *Creating Connections: The CEFPI Guide for Educational Facility Planning* endorses a flexible smart growth approach that supports schools as centers of community.[35]

Despite a flat enrollment, the school district in Billings, Mont., has adopted a plan to construct a new facility on the outskirts of town (right). A later phase of the plan (not yet adopted) calls for closing the existing elementary school which is located in a more densely populated neighborhood (left).

What can you do with 100 acres? This image of Old Town Alexandria outlines the enormous size of some middle- and high-school campuses today. By eliminating minimum acreage standards, states and localities have more options for siting schools near the populations they serve.

Recognizing the environmental problems posed by schools on the outskirts of town, the LEED-Neighborhood Development rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council calls for new school campuses not to exceed 15 acres for high schools, 10 acres for middle schools, and 5 acres for elementary schools.[36]

Unfortunately, many school districts and school architects continue to plan using these outdated standards.[37]

Even when a policy is changed by the state, misperceptions about these acreage requirements persist. South Carolina did away with minimum acreage standards in 2003,[38] but failed to educate localities about the change in policy and the benefits to the community of smaller sites. As a result, local districts continue to build sprawling school facilities on the outside of town.

REMOVE MINIMUM SCHOOL SIZE REQUIREMENTS

Some states require school districts to meet a particular threshold of student enrollment size. In small rural communities this often leads to the abandonment of a community-centered school, and can lead to the decline of the community itself. In rural and urban districts, requiring minimum school size means that schools need to draw from larger geographic areas to meet the state's threshold for a minimum number of students, making it difficult to locate the school within walking distance of the majority of students. Reducing or eliminating

BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF ERHRENKRANTZ EKSTUT KUHN ARCHITECTS AND GOOGLE EARTH

school size requirements allows for smaller schools with smaller footprints, which means facilities can be located more easily on smaller sites within neighborhoods.

REMOVE BIAS IN STATE FUNDING FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Some state funding formulas adhere to an arbitrary "percentage rule," which calls for new buildings to be constructed even if the renovation option is less expensive. If the cost of renovating an existing school exceeds a stated percentage of the cost of building a new one, then the school district is advised or required by the state to build a new facility. Astonishingly, certain costs, such as demolishing the existing building, building new infrastructure, and land acquisition, are not typically part of the calculation.[39]

"In every case we studied, building a new school cost more than renovating an older one."

MICHIGAN'S SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOOM: THE REAL COSTS OF NEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MICHIGAN LAND USE INSTITUTE SPECIAL REPORT

Some states fund new construction at a higher reimbursement rate than they fund rehabilitation. Others, such as Pennsylvania, reimburse renovation at a higher rate.[40] Few states follow Maryland's lead and direct state construction funds to schools in existing communities.[41]

ADDRESS COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT REUSING OLDER BUILDINGS

Schools are required to meet modern building codes such as those for fire, safety, and handicapped accessibility during any renovation work. States can offer case studies of suc-

Cooperative Planning in Florida

Angela Usher

Just ask Angela Usher about cooperative planning. In her job as facility planner for the School District of Palm Beach County, Usher manages the interlocal agreements between the school district and local governments that ensure cooperative planning for school facilities.

In 2005 Florida required all local governments and school boards to adopt school concurrency by December 1, 2008. What does this mean? Usher explains that "by sharing data and coordinating planning with their multiple municipalities, Florida school districts can provide enough schools to serve the number of new residents projected by local governments."

This state-required coordination of local planning is achieved in many ways. For example, Florida school districts provide local governments with an annual report of project needs and capital improvement plans. Local governments direct school districts to potential locations consistent with existing land-use designations. Also, each school district must provide citizens with "opportunities for involvement" when formulating capital improvement plans, while local governments involve school officials when developing their comprehensive plans.

The Sunset Palms Elementary School (pictured here) which opened in 2008, is located next to a county park where recreational amenities can be shared.

Usher says "Cooperative planning can be as simple as inviting officials to meetings and sharing data. Through this type of process, we have located schools where they are most needed by the community."

For more information go to www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP SchoolPlanning/index.cfm and www. leg.state.fl.us/statutes

cessful renovations including solutions for complying with American with Disabilities Act and code requirements. States can also adopt building codes, such as the International Building Code or other "smart codes" that allow for renovation options. For more information see Marilyn Kaplan's "*Adopting 21st Century Building Codes for Historic Preservation.*"[42]

In Little Rock, Ark., more than 800 students at the eStem Charter School are learning about science, technology, engineering, and math in a 1908 Beaux Arts-style newspaper plant. The elementary school occupies the first floor, while the middle and high schools operate on the second and third floors, respectively.

School renovations also often mean confronting toxic substances, such as lead and asbestos, which frighten community members. To address this concern, states can produce educational materials and share case studies where successful abatement has occurred. States can also set requirements for architects and contractors that handle toxic substances. In order to qualify for state funds, communities can only use contractors that meet these state requirements.

The Council of Educational Facility Planners International has published guides addressing renovation and smart growth. *An Appraisal Guide for Older and Historic School Facilities* and *A Primer for the Renovation and Rehabilitation of Older and Historic Schools*,[43] are particularly helpful.

States can encourage communities that are debating whether or not to renovate their existing school to consult with an architect familiar with rehabilitation options early in the process. Moreover, an experienced architect can help communities address their concerns about unforeseeable circumstances by helping plan for contingencies.

REQUIRE FULL COST ANALYSIS FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

States should also consider how local siting decisions affect their budgets. They may end up paying more for student transportation costs and health expenses if schools are located on the outskirts of town.

Since funding comes from different sources to cover infrastructure costs and school construction costs, it is hard for communities to fairly evaluate costs of different school locations. States can help by providing a list of all of the costs that should be taken into consideration. These include indirect costs such as financing fees, direct costs such as land acquisition, construction, and equipment and furnishings, and costs for supportive infrastructure such as new sewers, roads, transportation, or utilities.

States should require communities to fully explore the potential of existing sites and facilities to meet their needs through renovation, expansions, and creative programming. States should encourage or require school districts to consult with renovation experts before

PHOTO COURTESY WITSELL EVANS RASCO

making any decisions about demolishing older schools. Florida, for example, requires that studies on the feasibility of renovating historic schools be conducted by design professionals with preservation expertise before such schools may be demolished.

Other communities are looking at constructing new schools on vacant or underutilized land within their built-up areas. In addition to relieving development pressure on open space and farmland, infill development can also save taxpayers from the high cost of building new infrastructure and keep schools located near the majority of students. States can encourage this by directing schools to locate in places with existing infrastructure.[44]

PROMOTE COORDINATED PLANNING AMONG AGENCIES

Cooperation between local governments and school districts can lead to community-wide support for school bonds and fewer costly delays in the renovation or construction of school facilities. Similarly, a coordinated, comprehensive master planning process that includes city planners, leads to siting decisions that meet multiple community goals.

Ensuring that municipal and school planners share information about demographics or new industries coming to town, for example, is another way states can help. New Hampshire state law, for example, requires that school boards ask local governments their opinions about possible school locations. However, boards are not required to ask until just 60 days before construction begins. Such a short time frame does not allow local governments to participate fully in the discussion about possible locations for school facilities.

Keeping the Communication Channels Open in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C.

Jonathan Wells

Jonathan Wells knows first-hand the value of collaboration. As the capital facilities program manager for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) Planning Department, he brings together representatives from two dozen departments and agencies monthly to discuss how they can work together on public facilities and infrastructure projects.

The key to the success of these monthly meetings is regular communication among those responsible for the operation and funding of public facilities. The forum gives decision-makers an opportunity to discuss capital plans, funding, and to highlight collaborative projects.

The City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education endorsed joint planning and joint use of facilities in a 1995 resolution adopted by their governing boards (and re-confirmed in 2000). Since then, they can point to many successes. For example, the construction of a joint community library and technical high school in the city, pictured here, gave students access to more volumes and the branch library patrons access to more technology, while capitalizing upon the site availability.

Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology

The district has built a number of elementary, middle, and high schools either on or adjacent to park and recreation property which allows for reciprocal shared use of recreational and athletic facilities in both the parks and schools. Schools routinely share athletic facilities and ball fields, as well as indoor spaces such as craft rooms and gymnasiums, with park and recreation departments.

According to Wells, "Not only have we decreased our construction and operation costs, we have greatly increased the value of services we can provide to our residents."

The New Hampshire Department of Education has recommended legislators extend the time frame in order to gain meaningful input from local governments.

Another way to facilitate cooperation among planning entities is to encourage local comprehensive plans and master plans to include school facilities. While some comprehensive plans do include schools, many do not. A state could provide guidance that clearly indicates the benefits of coordinated planning. For example, when school and municipal planners coordinate their efforts, the new neighborhoods often have high street connectivity. And researchers have found that high street connectivity is associated with a higher percentage of students walking to school. In other words, if students don't have to wind their way around cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets, they are more likely to walk to school.[45]

Accommodating athletic fields in community-centered schools requires creative design and cooperative planning among school and municipal officials. In El Paso, Tex., the El Paso High School football field nestles between the school (c. 1916) and the homes of the nearby residents.

States should not allow schools to be exempted from local planning laws and regulations. Civic structures, such as fire and police stations, post offices, town halls, and libraries are not exempt from local planning laws, and this should hold true for schools as well.[46]

Assembling enough land in existing downtown neighborhoods for school facilities can be difficult given the reluctance by local governments to use eminent domain. Even though developers may offer inexpensive land outside of the community for new schools, it may not be the best site for meeting the community's needs and might cost the community and state more in the long run. States can help localities prevent this situation by encouraging cooperation among school district and local government planners and ensuring that busing and infrastructure construction costs are factored into the land cost equation.

"When schools become the centers of community, great things happen…I think we need our schools to be open 12, 13, 14 hours … providing a wide variety of after school programs…schools should be open six or seven days a week … we've been slow to react… Our society has changed and this [community-centered schools] need to be the norm."

SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ARNE DUNCAN

AUTHORIZE SHARING OF FACILITIES

Joint use of facilities offers three distinct benefits: it can help reduce construction or operational costs, it can help increase physical activity when residents use recreational facilities, and it can increase public support (including from those without school-age children) for educational facilities. Shared facilities like libraries and swimming pools also provide a place for students to go after school, before their parents come home from work.

PHOTO WWW.SMARTGROWTHSCHOOLS.ORG

A poll of Ohio residents found broad support for such practices. Some 84 percent favored community member use of school facilities after school hours and 65 percent believed that city and school district dollars should be combined to build recreation and general public use facilities.[47]

Because it involves negotiation and legal paperwork to deal with liability issues and fees, districts and school boards are sometimes reluctant to try sharing facilities and the accompanying management responsibilities. States can provide clear guidance and useful case studies to encourage this practice.

FUND REGULAR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

Many schools are poorly maintained. The American Society of Civil Engineers regularly awards public school facilities one of its lowest ratings ("D") of all infrastructure types in its annual Report Card for America's Infrastructure.

In some instances, state building aid is available for replacing building components, but not for repair or maintenance. For example, a state might reimburse the cost of replacing windows but not the cost of repairing or maintaining the original windows.

Needing to use every available dollar for teacher salaries and textbooks, school districts sometimes choose to defer maintenance on their buildings. Deferring regular maintenance turns small repairs into bigger renovation projects and can even result in the costly construction of a new building. It can become a vicious cycle when residents move away because of run-down schools. A smaller number of homeowners means a lower tax base and fewer dollars for repairing school facilities.

For energy-efficiency, the Department of Energy encourages the use of "day-lighting" or maximizing the amount of natural light in classrooms. Pictured here is the Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, Wash.

States could require school districts to spend at least half of their maintenance budgets each fiscal year. School districts that fail to do so might not receive state funding for capital projects in the future. In New Hampshire, for example, the state can withhold funds from school districts that haven't been maintaining their schools.[48] Another idea is to offer "incentive percentage points" to school districts with excellent or good maintenance ratings when considering their funding requests.

TARGET STATE CAPITAL AND MAINTENANCE FUNDING TO SUBSTANDARD SCHOOL FACILITIES SERVING CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Spending on school construction doubled from 1995 through 2004 with school districts spending record-breaking totals—more than $37 billion annually by 2002—on hard construction expenses alone.[49] However, researchers compared construction costs of schools in California and Florida and found that the spending disproportionately benefited newer, wealthier neighborhoods.[50]

PHOTO BY CONSTANCE BEAUMONT

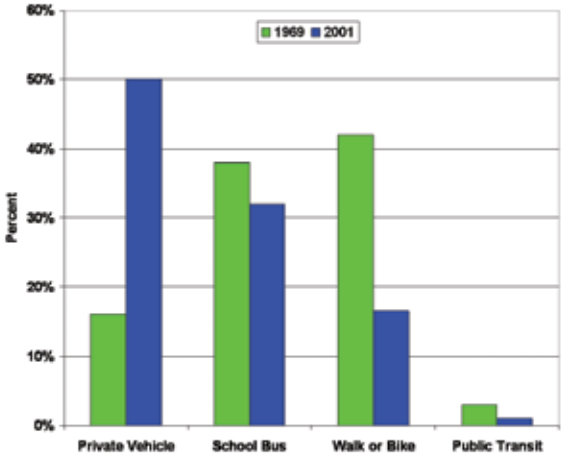
The higher investments in the suburban schools were typically not spent in constructing community-centered schools. Instead, funding went to schools located on remote sites, which leads to another type of social inequity. Without being accessible by public transit, walking, or biking, suburban schools can discriminate against those without their own means of transportation. A Michigan study found that poor and non-white families have less access to quality schools.[51]

The School Without Walls project in Washington, D.C.

Another type of inequity occurs when school choice is restricted and students are required to attend their local school which may lack the funding to carry out much needed maintenance.

Enrollment policies that offer choices about where to attend school were often intended to help improve the quality of education. Unfortunately, these educational policies have led some suburban school leaders to build mega-sized facilities with the hope of attracting students to their district[52] and has led to students traveling longer distances. Because local students are not attending their neighborhood school, ties are weakened between the schools and their neighbors and community support wanes.[53] States can address this by ensuring adequacy of all school facilities and ensuring full public participation in making decisions about school facility issues.

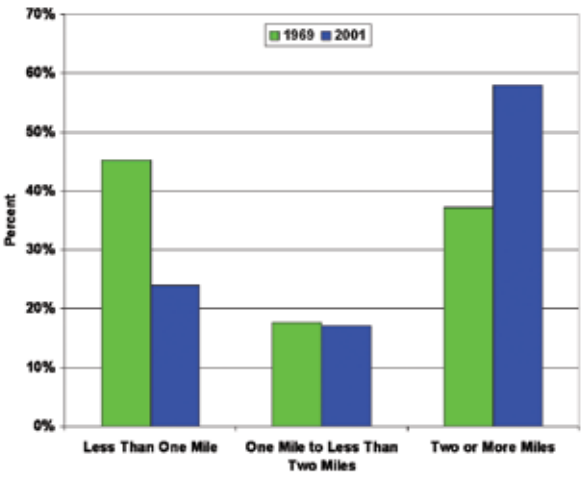
PHOTO BY JOSEPH ROMEO



FEWER STUDENTS BIKE OR WALK TO SCHOOL THAN BEFORE. In 1969 about 15 percent of schoolchildren ages 6-12 were driven to school; by 2001 half of all schoolchildren were driven to school.

SOURCE: NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD TRAVEL SURVEY BRIEF (JANUARY 2008).

For more information, go to www.cdc.gov.



DISTANCE HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST REASONS FEWER KIDS ARE WALKING AND BIKING TO SCHOOL. In 1969 more than half of the students (54.8 percent) of students lived a mile or more from their schools. By 2001 three-quarters of children traveled a mile or more to school.

SOURCE: NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD TRAVEL SURVEY BRIEF (JANUARY 2008).

EVALUATE STATE SUPPORT OF STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Some states spend a significant amount of money on student transportation and with rising fuel costs, these budgets are rapidly increasing. Furthermore, state support has the unintended effect of allowing communities to not take transportation costs into greater consideration when deciding on where to locate their schools.

In Illinois, for example, reimbursements for student transportation increased 307.7 percent between 1994 and 2009, which works out to an approximate annual increase of $32.5 million.[54] A county-by-county review of Maryland's busing costs revealed that statewide expenditures more than doubled between 1992 and 2006. The total number of miles traveled by school buses increased by 25 percent; in 2006, the buses traveled 117.2 million miles a year.[55] In Maine, even though the number of students actually declined by 27,000 students between 1975 and 1995, school busing costs rose more than 600 percent during the same period—from $8.7 million to more than $54 million.[56]

Safe Routes to School programs enable and encourage children to safely walk and bike to school, a healthy habit that provides a variety of benefits for families and communities nationwide. Parents can save on gas money and catch up with their kids, while increasing the family's physical activity level. States and local school districts can encourage healthier lifestyles, while saving on student transportation costs.

Why are states paying more? One reason is that the distance between schools and their users is increasing. An obvious way to lower these costs is to encourage schools be centrally-located and make it possible for students to walk and bike to school.

States also can support programs that promote walking and biking to school safely. For example, the state could publicize National Walk Our Children to School Day which takes place every October. It also could also encourage initiatives such as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Kids Walk-to-School program, which helps children to walk to and from school in groups accompanied by adults.

In 2005 Congress approved $612 million to implement Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia over a period of five years. With this federal funding, communities are constructing new bicycle lanes, paths, and sidewalks, and launching Safe Routes to School educational campaigns in elementary and middle schools to enable and encourage more children to walk and bike to school. Infrastructure projects that improve walking and bike safety and convenience are eligible for this federal funding if they are within two miles of participating elementary and middle schools. Unfortunately only 35 percent of K-8 students now live within two miles of their school which means the program is not able to reach nearly two-thirds of students.[57]

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL CENTER FOR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

REVIEW SCHOOL CLOSING AND CONSOLIDATION OPTIONS

School closings and consolidations occur for many reasons including declining enrollment and population shifts, assumptions that larger schools are more efficient, and the misperception that only newer facilities can better meet today's educational needs. Closings and consolidations often occur without consideration of the long-term evolution of student bodies in each neighborhood, and without a re-use plan in place for abandoned schools leaving behind a neighborhood eyesore that lowers property values.

Also, districts believing that they can achieve "economies of scale" through consolidation, sometimes fail to factor in long-term expenses such as higher busing costs to the more remote location and the need for more security, administrators, counselors, and nurses, when more students are under one roof. Communities also fail to take into account the increased traffic congestion as parents drop off and pick up their children and the possible health impacts of the longer commutes (sometimes upwards of an hour) for students traveling longer distances. Communities are often unaware that studies show improved educational outcomes in smaller, more nurturing educational settings, especially at the elementary level and for students experiencing social or economic hardships.

When school closings are necessary, states should encourage districts to consider mothballing or temporarily adapting the school for another purpose. The closed school may be useful in the future when community demographics evolve again.

Because demographics are constantly changing, communities can "mothball" their centrally-located schools, like this one in Jasper, Minn., for future use. Another option is to lease such schools for another purpose while waiting for the student population to increase again.

TOP PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM/MAGNET CREATIVE; BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF PIONEER PHOTOGRAPHY

Policy Recommendations for Encouraging Community-Centered Schools

Community-centered schools provide a wealth of benefits, not only for student learning and health, but also for the community at large. They can help:

- reduce student transportation costs;
- provide more opportunities for physical activity by students and residents;
- improve air quality by lowering emissions;
- lower construction and operating costs;
- increase community support for public education facilities; and
- ensure the continued vitality of our communities.

Community-centered schools do not occur by accident. The chart below describes ways state and local policy makers can encourage more community-centered schools. No one approach or policy will be enough; some combination of reforms should be adopted. Because of the unique policy framework in each state, remedial actions will vary. In some instances, the barriers may be addressed by rule changes; others will require legislative remedies.

To obtain the numerous benefits available through community-centered schools, states, districts, and localities can adopt the following policy positions.

BARRIER	ACTION STEPS
Minimum acreage standards lead to distant locations, too far for biking and walking.	Eliminate minimum acreage standards in both state guidelines and funding formulas. Discourage their adoption at the local level.[1] Adopt guidelines that call for a sustainable decision-making process about the size of a site (e.g., determine programmatic needs before determining site size). Encourage their adoption at the district level.[2]
School enrollment requirements make it difficult to maintain or build smaller schools that fit within neighborhoods.	Lower or eliminate minimum school enrollment size requirements to allow more students to walk or bike to school and reap educational benefits of smaller schools. Develop and distribute case studies demonstrating that more, smaller schools can be a cost-effective model for educating students.
Renovation is not on a level playing field with new construction.	Remove funding bias in state funding for new construction. Eliminate "percentage rules" that discourage renovation if it costs, for example, two-thirds of the expense of new construction.[3] Incentivize renovation by: • Providing a higher subsidy for renovation over new construction.[4] • Prioritizing spending for repair/renovation projects over new construction; • Expediting review of re-use and rehabilitation options. Encourage school districts to take steps to ensure long-term retention of centrally-located buildings. State can provide such support as: • Provide leasing guidelines for underutilized facilities until demographics change again • Provide information about moth-balling or adapting a school for another purpose as an interim measure. • Waive impact development fees for renovation. • Require localities to analyze their real estate portfolio as part of a school closing and consolidation process. Ensure that the state's building and fire codes encourage renovation of older and historic schools.[5] Change regulations that allow for easy demolition of schools. Require historic buildings to be reviewed by local government historic preservation boards before demolition permit is authorized. Have school construction guidelines require that schools be compatible in scale and size with surrounding buildings. To help renovate older schools that now need to provide more services than originally built for (e.g., cafeterias/co-ed gyms), fund design services of an architect. Create a database of school facilities and their conditions. Note which schools are historically and architecturally significant.[6]

Policy Recommendations for Encouraging Community-Centered Schools, *continued*

BARRIER	ACTION STEPS
There is a misperception that older schools cannot be renovated for 21st century educational needs and cannot incorporate green technology.	Provide technical assistance to local school officials to encourage renovation options. Disseminate case studies about the successful renovation and retrofitting of older and historic schools.[7] Address reuse of older buildings in green standards for operating and construction of schools.[8]
A lack of full cost accounting of siting decisions leads to schools being located far from the residents they serve.	Require feasibility studies to be conducted before release of school construction funds or building aid. Such studies should be required to include: • comparison of renovation and new construction options • the cost of extending infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, and sewers • an evaluation of school siting decisions for their impact on land-use patterns; student transportation costs, number of vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Local governments can help school districts estimate off-site development costs. Incentivize full cost accounting of siting decisions by: • requiring the comparison of reuse options versus costs of constructing new facilities • prioritizing state aid for projects where infrastructure is already in place (e.g., sewers, roads, etc.) • expediting review for those districts that have feasibility studies that evaluate transportation, infrastructure, and all construction costs (demolition, leasing of swing space to house students temporarily during renovation, etc.) Provide districts with planning grants so they can more closely align decisions about school facilities with community goals. Such grants would help pay for pre-development and/or feasibility studies so districts don't have to rely on free advice from consultants. Provide case studies showing that placement of schools on smaller, infill sites and repurposing buildings for educational purposes can be done.[9]
Schools are not part of coordinated, sustainable land use planning.	**COORDINATED PLANNING** Mandate coordination between local school districts and municipalities. Require or encourage regular meetings between district facilities personnel and local planning department to discuss proposed and upcoming projects. Require longer time period for notification of locality by school district about proposed changes to school facility (e.g., need for new student space, etc.) so they can have input into the decision-making process. Require local governmental input in the application for funding to renovate or construct a new school.[10] Create incentives for coordinated planning between local government and school districts. Require the state historic preservation office to weigh in on projects receiving state funding or approvals for properties listed on the state or national register of historic places.[11] Launch an education and technical assistance effort to encourage coordinated land use and school siting decisions.[12] Offer case studies where cooperative planning between districts and local governmental entities has resulted in cost savings and enhanced services to the community.

BARRIER	ACTION STEPS
(continued) Schools are not part of coordinated, sustainable land use planning.	**SUSTAINABLE LAND-USE PLANNING** Ensure that municipal planning addresses schools. Tie school siting decisions to sustainable land-use policy.[13] Because distance has been shown to be the biggest obstacle to children walking to school, encourage higher density development.[14] Encourage communities to include the long-term plan for school facilities or the facilities master plan in their long-term vision documents and/or comprehensive plans. Encourage local governments to require that new residential developments provide connectivity and safe routes to schools. Include incentives and programs in Climate Action Plans to encourage school districts to design and locate schools in ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.[15]
Schools and communities are not sharing facilities as much as they could be.	Authorize sharing or joint use of facilities by schools, municipalities and nonprofits. Provide funding for joint development designs. Provide planning mini-grants to help districts develop a business plan to cover operational costs of maintaining jointly shared school buildings and grounds. Show examples of successfully shared space and provide guidance regarding liability, fee structures, insurance, security concerns, and dividing construction and operation costs.[16] Disseminate resources on creating facilities joint use agreements.[17] Expedite review and reimbursement of building aid if school district plans to share space with another entity. Rank proposals for school building aid higher if they include shared use or joint use of facilities.
Deferred maintenance leads to abandonment of existing community-centered schools.	Fund regular maintenance and repair. Reward those districts with good maintenance records with additional funding. Address inequitable maintenance of schools in low-income communities by prioritizing state funding for maintenance dollars (e.g., basing on Title I criteria). Require a certain percentage of school district's spending to be set-aside for maintenance and carefully define what maintenance means so money is spent on facilities. Subsidize retrofits of older schools with energy-saving technologies to extend their lifespan. Offer incentives (e.g., monetary and non-monetary) to districts that regularly maintain facilities. Create a special funding mechanism to encourage regular maintenance and to help districts replace large systems (e.g., HVAC, boilers, etc.) with higher energy-efficient models to extend the life of the building.[18]
Lack of equitable funding for school facilities leads to more disinvestment in urban cores and encourages suburban sprawl.	Direct capital funding to sub-standard school facilities serving children from low-income families.[19]

continued on next page

Policy Recommendations for Encouraging Community-Centered Schools, *continued*

BARRIER	ACTION STEPS
State support of student transportation inadvertently supports sprawl locations.	Evaluate state support of student transportation costs. [20] Encourage communities to use health impact assessments to evaluate and assess different school locations for their potential health effects on a population.[21] Encourage communities to prepare a transportation cost-benefit analysis and a walkability and bikeability analysis of proposed school sites.[22] Diversify uses for which transportation dollars can be applied to include walking and bicycling and public transit to school. Require joint studies of health and fiscal impacts of school siting by Departments of Transportation, Education, Planning, and Health. Provide funding incentives for locating schools within walking distance (two miles) of 50 percent or more of students, such as: • Ranking school district's application for funding higher. • Providing additional 10 percent building aid.

1 In 2009 Minnesota barred use of minimum acreage requirements. In 2005 Rhode Island Department of Education eliminated minimum acreage standards in its School Construction Aid Guidelines. In 2003 South Carolina eliminated minimum acreage requirements for school site selection.

2 To receive credit under the U.S. Green Building Council's 2009 LEED-Neighborhood Development Rating System (www.usgbc.org), new school campuses must not exceed 15 acres for high schools, 10 acres for middle schools and 5 acres for elementary schools (www.usgbc.org). The Council on Educational Facilities Planners International (CEFPI) adopted this approach in 2004 when it revised its model guidelines for school facilities (www.cefpi.org).

3 In 1998 the Pennsylvania Department of Education rescinded its 60 percent rule to encourage rehabilitation of existing schools.

4 In 2005 Pennsylvania amended the Public School Code to provide additional state funding for renovation projects. If a renovation project meets "green" building standards certified by the U.S. Green Building Council or Green Building Initiative, the reimbursement from the state is even higher (www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter21/chap21toc.html).

5 *Adopting 21st Century Codes for Historic Buildings*, Marilyn Kaplan, National Trust for Historic Preservation, www.preservationnation.org.

6 Colorado Preservation Inc., survey of historic schools, http://colorado preservation.org/crsurvey/schools/.

7 *A Primer for the Renovation/Rehabilitation of Older and Historic Schools*, National Center for PreservationTechnology and Training with the Council of Education Facility Planners, International, 2004. www.ncptt.nps.gov
An Appraisal Guide for Older and Historic School Facilities, Council of Education Facility Planners International.
Our Living Legacy film, Colorado Preservation Inc., http://coloradopreservation.org/crsurvey/schools/.

8 New York City Green Schools Rating System and US Green Building Council rating system for operation of schools.

9 *Creating Schools and Strengthening Communities through Adaptive Reuse* www.edfacilities.org/pubs/adaptiveuse.pdf and the redevelopment of a nurse's dormitory into the first school to comply with the Department of Education's New York City Green Schools Rating System. www.eekarchitects.com/.

10 *Checklists and Step by Step Instructions: Funding, Building, and Maintaining Schools in New Mexico*, Sept. 2009. Public Schools Interlocal Agreement, Florida Statutes, Title Xi, Chapter 163, Section 31777 (www.leg.state.fl.us/statuTes/).
School Planning and General Coordination www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/SchoolPlanning/index.cfm.

11 All New Hampshire state-licensed, assisted, or contracted projects, activities, and programs are subject to the review requirements of state law, RSA 227-C:9, as implemented by state administrative rules. State agencies, departments, commissions, and institutions are required to submit such undertakings to the state historic preservation office for a determination of whether such proposed actions are located in, or may affect, historical resources. New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (www.nh.gov/nhdhr/review/106intro.html).

12 Maine State Education Department and Office of State Planning launched an educational outreach effort and together produced the guidebook *The ABC's of School Site Selection*. Copies are available from Maine State Planning Office at 207/624-6600.

13 New Hampshire Senate Bill 59 aligns school siting decisions with state's planning documents (RSA 9-A State Development Plan and RSA 9-B State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy). www.gencourt.state.nh.us/.

14 General Laws of Massachusetts, Chapter 40 R http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/40r-9.htm Localities that revise zoning regulations to support more dense development receive a density bonus payment of $1,000 per planning housing unit and $3,000 when they build that housing.

15 To reduce energy use, New Hampshire's Climate Action Plan, calls for state policy to more effectively "encourage the renovation of existing schools and the creation of high performance schools (through renovation or new construction) that both meet current educational standards and further the goals of RSA 9B and similar local and regional smart growth objectives." http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/air/tsb/tps/climate/action_plan/nh_climate_action_plan.htm.

16 Specifically, states should provide guidance about the need for sufficient and timely information about other agencies' capital plans and projects; institutionalization of processes to survive staff changes; the difficulties associated with changing one agency's capital plans to conform to another agency's capital plan; the perception that joint use is a loss of control and that a collaborative project will cost more.

17 *Legal Tools to Create Joint Use Agreements*, National Policy and Legal Analysis Network, http://nplanonline.org/news/nplan-releases-legal-tools-create-joint-use-agreements Center for Cities and Schools at http://cities-andschools.berkeley.edu/ .

18 Maine School Revolving Renovation Fund, www.maine.gov/education/const/rrf.htm.

19 In 2007, Colorado required a portion of the Public School Capital Construction Grant Program funds be directed to districts with the smallest enrollments and most dire building conditions. In 2009, the state conducted a statewide facility assessment (www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/CapConstAssessment.htm) using this checklist www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/download/pdf/CCABPreAssessmentChecklist.pdf.

20 *Yellow School Bus Blues, A County by County Review of Maryland's Rising School Bus Transportation Costs* (1992-2006), 1000 Friends of Maryland, www.friendsofmd.org/data/School%20Bus.pdf.

21 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm.

22 *Active School Neighborhood Checklist*, Arizona Department of Health Services.

In 2008 a group of organizations concerned about where communities chose to locate their schools met in Washington, D.C. These experts in the fields of education, health, transportation, and community design determined common characteristics of community-centered schools and identified key state-level barriers preventing the retention of existing community-centered schools and the construction of new ones. Finally, they formulated strategies that would result in more community-centered schools.

To learn more about the research behind the recommendations and the *Helping Johnny Walk to School: Sustaining Communities through Smart Policy* project, visit www.PreservationNation.org or call 202-588-6000.

SUMMARY

Decisions about where to locate schools greatly influence both the community's and the state's future for years to come. Providing a quality education in safe, well-maintained schools is the first priority. By reforming policy and practices as outlined in this report, states and localities can strengthen public schools and reduce carbon emissions and air pollution, preserve older neighborhoods and open space, and encourage healthier citizens and communities. By making smart policy decisions today, we can sustain our communities for future generations.

Grant High School, Portland, Ore.

PHOTO BY CONSTANCE BEAUMONT

Endnotes

1 The Built Environment: Designing Communities to Promote Physical Activity in Children, American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Environmental Health, *PEDIATRICS,* Vol. 123 No. 6 June 2009, 1591-1598.

2 National Household Travel Survey, 2001, www.bts.gov/programs/national_household_travel_survey/. The 2001 National Household Travel Survey, the US Department of Transportation's most recent national travel survey, collected trip diaries for 66,000 households between March 1 and May 2002.

3 Information collected for the Alliance for Historic Wyoming, www.historicwyoming.org/.

4 Conversation with Sean O'Donnell, Principal, Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut, and Kuhn Architects, October 2009.

5 A Transition for the Future of Renville County West Public Schools, Spring 2009, www.rcw.k12.mn.us/. The renovation option at $14,461,932 was 74 percent of the cost of the new facility at $19,460,000 and above the state's rule of 60 percent. Taxpayers voted down the proposed bond measure for a new facility and the district located all of the students in the historic Renville High School building. In 2009 the Minnesota legislature amended their Statutes 2008, Section 123B.70 to read: (c) The commissioner's evaluation of whether to replace a facility must not be solely based upon the ratio of renovation costs to replacement costs. www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/.

6 Barbara Kent Lawrence, et al., *Dollars & Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools*, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2002, 8.

7 *Hard Lessons: Causes and Consequences of Michigan's School Construction Boom*, a special report from the Michigan Land Use Institute, 6.

8 Conversation with Jonathan Wells, capital facilities program manager for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) Planning Department about projects resulting from its Joint Use Task Force, January 2010.

9 *Renovate or Replace, the Case for Restoring and Reusing Older School Buildings*, The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 3.

10 *Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, October 2003. EPA study of Gainesville, Fla., schools suggests that community-centered schools could generate 13 percent more walking or biking trips and 15 percent fewer auto emissions than schools built outside a community.

11 Robert Puentes and Adie Tomer, *The Road...Less Traveled: An Analysis of Vehicle Miles Traveled Trends in the U.S.*, Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, December 2008, www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/1216_transportation_tomer_puentes.aspx.

Also see U.S. Department of Transportation, Transportation and Climate Change Clearinghouse, www.climate.dot.gov/about/transportations-role/overview.html. The transportation section accounted for 28 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, making it the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions behind only electricity generation (34 percent). Transportation is the largest end-use sector emitting CO2, the most prevalent greenhouse gas. Since 1990, transportation has been one of the fastest-growing sources of U.S. GHGs. In fact, the rise in transportation emissions represents 48 percent of the increase in total U.S. GHGs since 1990. The largest sources of transportation GHGs in 2006 were passenger cars (34 percent) and light duty trucks, which include sport utility vehicles, pickup trucks, and minivans (28 percent). Together with motorcycles, these light-duty vehicles made up about 63 percent of transportation GHG emissions. The next largest sources were freight trucks (20 percent) and commercial aircraft (7 percent), along with other non-road sources (which combined, totaled about 7 percent).

12 Donovan Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2008, 11-12.

13 *Building Reuse: Finding a Place on American Climate Policy Agendas*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, September 2008, 5.

14 Ruth L. Steiner, Linda B. Crider, and Matthew Betancourt, *Safeways to School: The Role in Multi-Modal Districts*, a report for the Florida Department of Transportation, May 2006.

15 *The Built Environment: Designing Communities to Promote Physical Activity in Children*, 1591-1598.

16 National Center for Education Statistics, Table 98. Public Elementary and Secondary Schools by Type and State or Jurisdiction; 1990-91, 2000-01; and 2006-2007. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/tables/dt08_098.asp

17 National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/.

18 U.S. Department of Education, www.education.gov/.

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21 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006 analysis of 2001 National Travel Household Survey, 2001, (latest survey conducted by U.S. Department of Transportation).

22 Matthew D. Falb, et al. "Estimating the Proportion of Children Who Can Walk to School," *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, October 2007, 33, Issue 4, 269-275. www.ajpm-online.net/article/S0749-3797(07)00350-9/abstract.

23 *Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting*, United States Environmental Protection Agency, October 2003.

24 *The Road...Less Traveled: An Analysis of Vehicle Miles Traveled Trends in the U.S.* www.brookings.edu/-/media/Files/rc/reports/2008/1216_transportation_tomer_puentes/vehicle_miles_traveled_report.pdf. "Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Vehicle Emissions," U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2002. www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/vmtems.htm. Because CO2 emissions are dependant primarily on MPG and VMT, and because MPG remains relatively constant, any increase in VMT coincides with a proportionate increase in CO2 emissions. "The entire transportation sector accounted for 33 percent of all U.S. CO2 emissions in 2006—the single largest contributor to total emissions of all end-use sectors. The lion's share of the sector's GHG emissions—82 percent—comes from passenger cars, sport utility vehicles, freight and light trucks. And though emissions from other pollutants—such as volatile organic compounds (VOC) and nitrogen oxides (NOx)—have fallen over time as a result of engine and fuel policies, emissions of CO2 continue to rise almost lock-step with VMT." Any change in VMT of such vehicles, therefore, corresponds almost directly with changes in GHG emissions."

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26 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Healthy Youth! Childhood Obesity," http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/obesity/.

27 Finklestein E, Trogdon J, Cohen J, and Dietz W. "Annual Medical Spending Attributable to Obesity: Payer- and Service-Specific Estimates." *Health Affairs* 28, no. 5 (2009): w822-w831; see also US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Preventing Obesity and Chronic Diseases Through Good Nutrition and Physical Activity*. 2005, p. 1. Available at: www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/factsheets/Prevention/pdf/obesity.pdf.

28 "How Much Physical Activity Do Children Need?" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed from www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/children.html.

29 *Hard Lessons: Causes and Consequences of Michigan's School Boom*, a special report of the Michigan Land Use Institute.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Growth and Disparity report, 2006.

33 "National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity," http://nplanonline.org/news/nplan-releases-legal-tools-create-joint-use-agreements

34 Council of Education Facility Planners International.

35 *Creating Connection: The CEFPI Guide for Educational Facility Planning*, Council of Educational Facility Planners International, 2004. www.cefpi.org/i4a/ams/amsstore/itemview.cfm?ID=90.

36 LEED 2009 for Neighborhood Development rating system, U.S. Green Building Council, Credit 15, 76.

37 Even when such standards are recommendations and not legal requirements, the perception that "this is what the state wants us to do" affects the site selection process so states and localities need to remove these standards from their decision-making process.

38 www.scstatehouse.gov/sess115_2003-2004/hj03/889.htm Bill 3608: A Bill to amend the code of laws of South Carolina, 1976, by adding Article 5 to Chapter 23, Title 59 so as to require that beginning July 1, 2004, a plan for a new educational facility must be a plan for a neighborhood school, to provide an exception, to provide that a school that does not meet the definition of a neighborhood school shall subdivide into schools-within-a-school and to require the State Board of Education to promulgate regulations to eliminate minimum acreage requirements for school site selection.

39 For example, Ohio changed its two-thirds guideline in 2008. "When the cost of renovating a school building exceeds two-thirds of the cost of replacing the building, the policy of the Commission will be to replace the building. However, the Commission retains the ability to approve renovations that cost in excess of two-thirds of the cost of replacing the building if it is demonstrated to the Commission that the building has special historical value, or for other good cause shown. The Commission will co-fund renovations in excess of two-thirds of the cost of replacement, up to the cost of new construction. Expenditures exceeding the cost of a new building will be the responsibility of the school district." Ohio School Facilities Commission Frequently Asked Questions at www.osfc.state.oh.us/Library/FrequentlyAskedQuestions/tabid/89/Default.aspx.

40 In 2005, Pennsylvania amended the Public School Code to provide additional state funding for renovation projects. If a renovation project meets "green" building standards certified by the U.S. Green Building Council or Green Building Initiative, the reimbursement from the state is even higher. www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter21/chap21toc.html.

41 *Models & Guidelines, 27, Smart Growth, Community Planning and Public School Construction*, Maryland Department of Planning, July 2008, Publication No. 2008-001 http://planning.maryland.gov/PDF/our products/publications/model guidelines/mg27.pdf.

42 www.preservationnation.org/resources/public-policy/center-for-state-local-policy/additional-resources/mpp-iebc_building_codes_forum-mayjune07.pdf.

43 Available from www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/schools.htm; www.ncptt.nps.gov/cefpi-a-primer-for-the-renovation-rehabilitation-of-older-and-historic-schools-2004-16/, and www.cefpi.org/.

44 "Maryland Department of Planning, Models and Guidelines for Infill Development, 2001," accessed at www.mdp.state.md.us/planningact/download/infill.pdf.

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46 *Hard Lessons: Causes and Consequences of Michigan's School Boom,* a special report of the Michigan Land Use Institute; In 2003, Michigan's Supreme Court exempted schools from site plan review and all other aspects of local zoning.

47 KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2003.

48 *Manual for Planning and Construction of School Buildings 2006*, New Hampshire Department of Education, www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/programsupport/Building%20Aid/2006Manual.pdf.

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53 *Quality Schools and Healthy Neighborhoods: The Future of DC*, September 2008, 21st Century School Fund, Brookings Institute, and Urban Institute, www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411768_future_of_dc.pdf.

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55 *Yellow School Bus Blues: A County by County Review of Maryland's Rising School Bus Transportation Costs* (1992-2006), 1000 Friends of Maryland.

56 *The Cost of Sprawl*, Maine State Planning Office, May 1997, 8.

57 Discussion with Robert Ping, National Safe Routes to School Partnership, July 2009.

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