

what



M E T R O P O L I T A N F O R U M P R O J E C T

W I T H S U P P O R T F R O M

T H E J A M E S I R V I N E F O U N D A T I O N



new schools



better neighborhoods



more livable communities



“We need to be thinking long term. There is no short-term solution to the long-term condition of more and more young people needing to be educated. But the fact of the matter is that temporary solutions like portables just are not effective. So I say to all decision makers—members of school boards, state legislatures, Governors, and the majority in Congress—we need to think long term, we need to think permanent, and we need to get on with the business of building schools that can truly be centers of community and centers of learning. We have a window of opportunity here.”

Richard Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

“California’s population could explode by over 18 million residents in the next decades. We can and must make certain that this growth will have a positive, not negative, impact on our economy and quality of life. I have fought for the wise management of our natural resources and have voted to preserve thousands of acres of wetlands, old-growth forests, and wildlife habitats. Urban sprawl must be stopped. Land must be preserved for enjoyment by the public and for agricultural use in order to keep California number one in the world in farm produce.”

Governor Gray Davis

w h a t i f

if

*the most telling measure
of a society is how a
community educates its people*

then

*education reformers and
the “smart growth” movement
must all work together*

to create

*new schools
better neighborhoods
more livable communities*



new schools



better neighborhoods



more livable communities



f o r e w o r d

New Schools • Better Neighborhoods is no longer just the title of a one-time Spring gathering of civic and educational leaders at a Getty Center Symposium. It is the vision of a committed cadre of neighborhood, regional and state leaders who see the potential of voter-approved school, park, library, health and other public funds being intelligently utilized to build not only public facilities that keep the rain out, but more livable urban communities in California. As this compelling report by Steven Bingler makes clear, to fully realize the promise of such an investment strategy in our State, the Smart Growth and School Reform movements must “converge.”

David Abel
Chair
New Schools•Better Neighborhoods
A Metropolitan Forum Project
September 1999



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“The health and success of California communities is dependent on strategically located, multi-use school facilities. Community services currently provided independently by cities, counties, special districts and schools districts could be provided jointly through neighborhood centers consolidated with neighborhood schools. In this way, community goals, rather than parochial agency goals, could be emphasized and achieved.”

Steven Szalay
Executive Director
California State Association of Counties

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As California stands at the threshold of the 21st Century, some alarming statistics are creating concerns about the future quality of life for the state's citizens. By the year 2020, the state's population of 33 million is projected to reach 45.3 million, an increase of 37 percent. At the current rate, the state is adding nearly 4 million people, or the equivalent of the population of Los Angeles, every seven years.

Pressures of growth are taxing the physical infrastructure. State mandated reforms in educational practices, including bold measures like class size reduction, have created the need for more and better educational facilities. Poor planning decisions are stretching other forms of public infrastructure to the limit and draining economic vitality from cities and towns. What is needed is a means by which current programs, procedures and policies developed at every level of state, regional and local governance can coalesce to address these challenges with smarter strategies for planning and implementation.

Smarter planning for education means designing schools that serve as centers of their communities, a concept endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education and leading national educational facilities planning organizations. The concept calls for gymnasiums and play fields that double as community parks and recreation centers; auditoriums that serve as community theatres; and incorporating centralized libraries, health clinics and other community services into schools that are designed for greater community access and engagement. Smarter schools can also take advantage of a wide range of community resources—like museums, zoos, and other existing facilities—to create integrated learning centers.

“If the state of California would make it easier—nay, even mandatory—for school districts, libraries, and parks and recreation departments to work together to build new facilities in older communities, then one of the strongest motives for urban sprawl would be reduced.”

Charles Nathanson, ph.d.
Executive Director
San Diego Dialogue

Developing smarter schools that serve as centers of their communities is a concept that also has implications for the so-called “smart growth” strategies for urban and regional planning. Over the past thirty years, California’s growth pattern has consumed tremendous quantities of land for sprawling low-density development, with the car and its attendant infrastructure—streets and highways, street parking, and parking lots—taking up at least a third of all developed land. This strategy for accommodating growth also produces more traffic congestion and loss of productivity; air pollution and its environmental and public health impacts; the loss of open space; the inability of many to reach jobs and services; and the isolation of children from the elderly among other social and environmental problems.

The current model of sprawl development can be counteracted by designing more livable cities and towns. The planning and design of more community-centered schools can help make cities and towns more attractive to live in by: 1) Creating magnets for urban development; 2) Encouraging the development of inner city housing and employment opportunities; 3) Improving mobility; 4) Reducing suburban migration; and 5) Conserving greenfields.

Likewise, the implementation of smart growth principles supporting more urban development can improve education reform by: 6) Encouraging the creation of learning communities within the rich infrastructure of the urban environment; 7) Enhancing opportunities for community access and participation; and 8) Supporting teachers and school personnel by providing more affordable and attractive places to live and work.

There are a small, but growing, number of programs and projects in the state that represent some ways to achieve the goals outlined for smarter schools and smarter growth strategies. This report includes an overview of seven case studies that embody some of

“The future of California and the future of the Latino community are tied together. As Latinos grow in our numbers and influence, we need to take greater responsibility for all our children, schools, and environment. Only if we link schools with healthy neighborhoods will we realize the aspirations of our residents, new and old.”

Luis Arteaga
Associate Director
Latino Issues Forum

these smarter planning principles. These ideas and examples point to an opportunity to implement smarter, more efficiently planned community infrastructures through integrated resource development. Even a small improvement in the allocation of public resources could yield billions of dollars annually in the California economy.

In order to accomplish these goals, some changes in planning, policies and practices will be needed to:

- ☉ Support more participatory and community-based planning.
- ☉ Support innovative educational facilities that promote the concept of learning communities and schools as centers of community.
- ☉ Support the joint use of all public facilities.
- ☉ Support the planning of urban and suburban projects based on the principles of smart growth.
- ☉ Support the assessment of all public expenditures based on the concept of integrated resource development.
- ☉ Support the development of an ongoing vehicle for communications and decision-making between all agencies, institutions and organizations involved in education reform and smart growth issues

“Planning and executing the joint use of public facilities – reducing the duplication of similar functions and services – is a smarter, better use of taxpayer money.”

Joel Fox
President Emeritus
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers
Association

California, wake up! Every year educational facilities are built all across the state. Too many of these facilities are dinosaurs the day they open. At the same time, a wide range of libraries, parks and other state, regional and local facilities are being planned and constructed to duplicate many of the same functions and services. Meanwhile, a demand for 250,000 new homes every year is consuming acres of farmland in suburban sprawl, exacerbating critical problems with transportation and pollution. A cri-

sis already exists. The rapid escalation of this crisis is producing irreversible consequences for the quality of life in California now and in the future.

The resources needed to meet the challenge are already available.

Powerful movements aimed at education reform and smart growth offer promising concepts, coalitions, policy recommendations and communications vehicles to intensify the evolution of creative solutions.

An immediate statewide summit to explore pathways of convergence for these two movements would be a good place to start.

“Opportunities abound for investment in our urban centers. If smart public investments are strategically made in new schools, libraries, and health facilities, new private investment and more livable communities will be the result.”

Linda Griego
Interim CEO
Los Angeles Community
Development Bank

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THE CHALLENGE

As California stands at the threshold of the 21st century, some alarming statistics are creating concerns about the future quality of life for its citizens. By the year 2020, the state's population of 33 million is projected to reach 45.3 million, an increase of 37 percent. At the current rate, the state is adding nearly 4 million people, or the equivalent of the population of Los Angeles, every seven years.

This surge in population growth is already creating complications in a number of areas. One of the most impacted is the field of education. Coupled with state mandated reforms in educational practices that include bold measures like class size reduction, pressure has come to bear on the need for more and better educational facilities and an adequate supply of teachers to address these and other critical issues. "Smart" planning is required to determine where and how these needs can be met.

Pressures of growth are also taxing the physical infrastructure in other areas. Urban centers, rural main streets and residential neighborhoods are deteriorating. Poor planning decisions are stretching public infrastructure to the limit and draining economic vitality from cities and towns. Instead of supporting the improvement of urban infrastructure, a longstanding trend towards suburban development is competing with the renewal of the urban environment. Thousands of acres of farmland and greenfields are being consumed and problems with transportation, public finance and environmental sustainability are escalating.

What is needed is a means by which current programs, procedures and policies developed at every level of state, regional and local governance can coalesce to address these challenges and offer solutions to meet them. Two current movements in the state of California offer insights into some of the opportunities that are

"No one knows better than teachers how critical it is for improving student achievement to intelligently site, design and build smaller, more community friendly schools in our urban core. Done well, there will be little need for parents to flee cities. Done well, and schools will once again become the centers of our neighborhoods."

Day Higuchi
President
United Teachers of
Los Angeles

available. The first movement focuses on issues related to education reform, including the development of educational infrastructure. The second movement involves the concept of “smart growth” as an antidote to suburban sprawl and a means for creating more livable communities. While each of these movements presents possibilities for bettering California’s current crisis of expansion, an alliance of these two concepts will provide even greater opportunities and insights.

“Creating a school that packs 5,000 children into one corner of a 30-acre lot is clearly part of the old paradigm. We need to build small schools and more intimate learning places.”

DAVID TOKOFSKY
LAUSD Board of Education



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SMART SCHOOLS

One of the largest statewide expenditures in public infrastructure goes to building and maintaining public schools. This year, public K-12 school enrollment reached a record 5,844,111 students, surpassing the previous all time high by more than 110,000 students. Enrollment has more than tripled in the past 50 years. The estimated growth in student enrollment is approximately 50,000 students annually. New enrollment records will continue to be set for the next nine years, increasing to an estimated 6,180,921 students in K-12 public schools by the 2007/2008 school year. This constitutes a total increase of 547,275 students, or 10 percent between 1997 and 2007. This estimate includes a decrease of 345,193 Anglo students and an increase of 800,000 Hispanic students, indicating the current and continuing demographic trend toward greater diversity, but, in part, also the decision of many Anglo parents to leave the public school system.

The renovation and replacement of educational facilities is currently in a state of crisis. It can take up to seven years to run the gauntlet of local and state approvals and procedures before a school is ready to serve its constituents. As a result, school boards and building officials are working hard to get facilities on line faster. Larger and larger schools are being built in an attempt to address the problem. In an attempt to save time and money, districts are sometimes forced to replicate building plans that are outdated with respect to current educational research and teaching strategies. In most cases, projects move forward without much involvement from students, parents, educators and community members, all who have a long-term stake in the outcome. The result is often community alienation, disenfranchisement or even backlash.

There is a woefully inadequate allocation of time and money for planning how schools will fit into their communities; how the

“The fact that one of every three students doesn’t technically have a seat is what brought those that gathered at the New Schools•Better Neighborhoods Symposium together. It’s not good enough to just put them in seats. We have to take this opportunity, with the money on the table and overwhelming demand, to create school facilities that are better attuned to what we know works for students in urban areas—and that’s integrated involvement with their communities.”

Ted Mitchell
President
Occidental College

efficiencies of building larger and larger schools may not be justified in light of critical social and educational consequences; how combining school and community uses could produce more efficient and community centered environments for learning; or even for adequately identifying risk factors like building on toxic waste sites and other environmental hazards that can lead to mistakes at a scale that would have once been considered unimaginable.

It's not always that there isn't enough time allocated to get the job done or enough well-intentioned people running the show. It's not even that everybody isn't working hard enough. Rather, in its haste to get something accomplished, the system can't seem to work smart enough to accomplish an increasingly complex set of needs with a limited quantity of resources.

Smart School Planning and Investment

The current need to renovate or replace educational facilities presents an opportunity for citizens, educators and planners to take a much smarter view of the design of learning environments. *This "smarter" view can include everything from how learning spaces are designed to the process used to plan and design them.* More traditional educational facilities were once designed to sustain a model of education characterized by large-group, teacher-centered instruction occurring in isolated classrooms. But current knowledge and research about learning calls for new models. These new models of education are characterized by more active student involvement—by students doing rather than just receiving, creating rather than recreating, thinking, working and solving problems. They are supported by strategies such as cooperative, project-based and interdisciplinary learning, all requiring students to move about, work in various sized groups and be active. Furthermore, new models call for all students to learn to higher standards. This in turn has resulted in an increased emphasis on learning styles, multiple intelligences and the special needs of each student.



Smart school planning and investment means replacing the current factory schools with facilities that support these and other examples of current best practices and ongoing research in the learning sciences. This means, among other things, that school populations should be significantly less than previously projected, and that large school populations may in fact be detrimental to the learning process. The development of smaller schools on smaller sites can also save time and money, and put schools closer to parents and students, allowing schools to better serve as centers of their communities.

There are also opportunities to accommodate more efficient and productive uses for educational facilities. For the most part, school facilities in California have been, and continue to be, designed and constructed to serve a specific educational purpose based on a limited educational function. Most educational facilities operate during a 7-8 hour time frame as stand alone institutions, with limited access or joint use by other community organizations. In most cases, the auditoriums, sports facilities, food service, libraries, media center, computer labs and other specialized areas of the school are available for use by the general public only on a very limited basis. Thus, local municipalities must provide duplicate facilities to serve the same functions, with separate budgets for capital improvements, staff and operating expenses.

Smart school planning and investment means designing facilities that can accommodate expanded community functions to save on the time, money, land and other environmental resources used to duplicate functions elsewhere. Smarter designs for new or renovated facilities can accommodate direct community access to spaces like libraries, gymnasiums, auditoriums, performing arts, athletic and recreational spaces that can serve the broader needs of the community. Instead of being designed for a limited time frame of 7-8 hours every day, combining community uses can produce facilities

“We have so few resources that it just makes sense to maximize benefits with the money we do have. By thinking of schools as the heart of our neighborhoods where we build our future, realizing that they should be healthy, safe and inspiring...is a no-brainer.”

Felicia Marcus
Administrator
U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency Region 9

that operate 12-14 hours, serving a wide range of community needs that can also include things like health clinics, counseling centers and other social services. These designs can be implemented without jeopardizing the health and safety of students, by having certain community activities take place during school hours and others limited to evenings and weekends. The result of these smarter and more efficient joint use design strategies is to reduce duplication of community infrastructure.

Today's educational facilities should also be designed to strengthen the integral relationship that exists between a school and its community in other ways. They should serve a variety of community needs in partnership with a wide spectrum of public, civic and private organizations. They should provide spaces for public meetings and activities. They should provide access to communications technology. They should help meet the leisure, recreational and wellness needs of the community. They should support relationships with businesses that are productive for students and supportive of the local economy. They should provide spaces that facilitate the use of external experts and skilled community volunteers for a variety of functions, including mentorships, apprenticeships and work-based and service learning. When implemented through a community-based planning process, the results can also include increased community engagement and support for a wide range of cultural, social, economic, organizational and educational needs

Smarter schools should be inviting places rather than foreboding institutions. Their locations should encourage community use and their shared public spaces should be accessible—day and night, all year round—to the community. Schools should be places where creative configurations of space expand their use to encompass early learning and adult education; where learning occurs “after hours,” at night and on weekends; where school-to-school partnerships,



links with businesses and collaboration with higher education are encouraged and supported. They should enable learners of all ages and serve as centers for lifelong learning. Today we know that 12 or 14 years of learning will not be enough to equip people for the rest of their lives. We can't afford to think of graduation as a finish line, and that means that one of the most important end products of schools needs to be citizens who have learned how to continue to learn. Schools should support learning for people of all ages. In short, school facilities should allow access to flexible and comprehensive programs to meet all learning needs. They should provide space and programs for everything from early learning to adult education and training.

Smarter school planning and investment can also extend the learning environment beyond the traditional school site by creating schools in non-traditional settings. When community sites become destinations for educational field trips and extended academic learning centers, the links between school and community are strengthened. But these extensions are not limited to field trips alone. Through partnerships between school boards and other community organizations, a wide variety of community resources like museums, zoos, parks, hospitals and even government buildings can be enlisted to serve as full-time integrated learning centers. In this way, the school is not only the center of the community, but the whole community can also be seen as the center of the school—school as community and community as school—a *learning community*.

All of these examples point to ways that schools can better serve as the center of their communities, either by playing a more integral role as a community activity center or by extending the learning environment further out into the community to take better advantage of a wider range of community resources. Schools that are more integrated with their communities in

“The Trust for Public Land believes that public access to open space is vital to the quality of life in our cities. Any effort that seeks to increase the availability of public open space by encouraging the sharing of athletic fields and schoolyards, so they ‘double’ as parks, can only make our cities more livable and lessen the pressures for urban sprawl to eat up our unique and beautiful landscapes on the city’s edge.”

Larry Kaplan
Director
Los Angeles Office
The Trust for Public Land

these ways can strengthen a community's sense of identity, coherence and consensus. Like a new version of the old town square, they can serve as a community hub, a center for civic infrastructure, a place where students and others can learn to participate and support the common good.

A national movement integrating schools more closely with the community is growing, with support from the U.S. Department of Education and other organizations. At a recent national conference focused on the design of learning environments, a set of national design principles were identified and adopted. These design principles call for educational facilities and designs that will:

- ♥ Enhance teaching and learning and accommodate the needs of all learners;
- ♥ Serve as centers of community;
- ♥ Result from a planning/design process involving all stakeholders;
- ♥ Provide for health, safety and security;
- ♥ Make effective use of all available resources;
- ♥ Allow for flexibility and adaptability to changing needs.

In addition to the U.S. Department of Education, these design principles have been endorsed by the Council of Educational Facilities Planners International and the American Institute of Architects, which together represent the largest contingent of educational facility planners in the nation.

