

The Center for Urban and Regional Studies

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION and SCHOOL FACILITY SITING

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Acknowledgements

Intergovernmental Collaboration & School Facility Siting

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Contributors

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Center for Urban and Regional Studies

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Preface

Intergovernmental Collaboration & School Facility Siting

Few local school board tasks generate more interest and debate than selecting a site for a new school. A building's location can affect local property values, land use patterns, and neighborhood traffic. It can also influence whether children will walk, take the bus, or be driven to school by their parents. Not surprisingly, deciding the fate of an existing facility or identifying land for a new building is often controversial.

School boards often make facility decisions with little or no collaboration with local government. Similarly, local governments typically make land use decisions, such as approving a new subdivision, without consulting the school board to determine whether sufficient capacity exists for the new students. As a result, school boards, planners and local elected officials sometimes work at cross-purposes. Under our current system, one institution controls choices about school location while another controls choices about houses and neighborhoods.

School design and school location can work together to improve student achievement and build a sense of community. The location of these facilities plays a key role and needs to be a major consideration in land use planning, requiring political cooperation and encouraging broad general support.

This report shares the results of our effort to improve communication and collaboration between school boards and local governments in selecting sites for schools. On May 3, 2006, twenty-eight representatives from four North Carolina counties came together to discuss the issue of intergovernmental collaboration and school siting. The goal of the summit was to create an open dialogue between school boards and local governments while building a model of collaboration that key stakeholders can use to coordinate local land use, school funding, and school planning.

In the following pages, you will read about the issues and solutions discussed during the day's events. The themes discussed highlight the complexity of the issues at hand as well as the importance of continued collaboration in creating strong, vibrant, and diverse communities and schools.

We greatly appreciate the generous support of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, our additional sponsors, the contributions of the summit steering committee, and most importantly, the time and efforts of our participants. We look forward to continuing the work begun in the summit and to developing opportunities for improved communication and ongoing collaboration within communities.

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Executive Summary

Intergovernmental Collaboration & School Facility Siting

This report provides a summary of the May 3, 2006 Summit on Intergovernmental Collaboration and School Siting. The summit was hosted by the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill and was attended by delegations from the North Carolina counties of Union, Johnston, Cabarrus and Guilford. Each delegation was comprised of either staff or officials from the county, its school district, and its municipalities.

The summit was organized to achieve three goals:

- Clarify the interdependence across school location decisions, land use planning, local government finances, and the character of communities;
- Raise awareness of strategies, tools, and techniques that can support collaboration among school districts, counties, and municipalities when making decisions about land use and schools; and
- Identify steps for advancing collaboration by summit attendees in their respective communities.

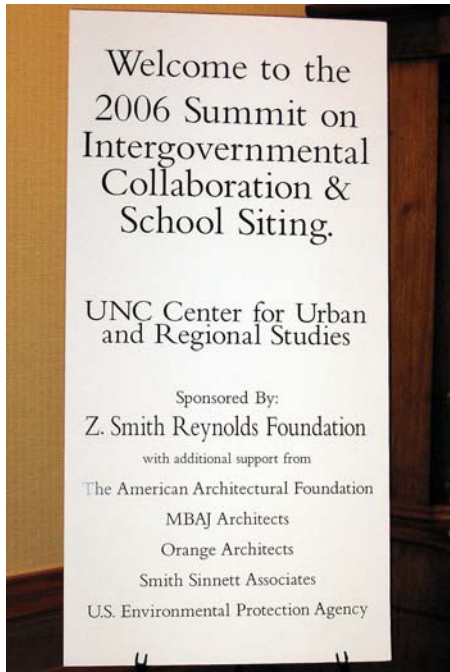
Working in both small and large group sessions, the delegates confirmed their interdependence when making school location decisions and their need to build or improve collaborative models for this process. Details of the work sessions and the issues and tasks discussed are provided within the body of this report.

By the end of the day, each county had created an individualized list of tasks for advancing collaboration. Across all four counties, these various tasks and challenges organized along five themes:

- Institutionalizing collaborative processes
- Creating a common goal and vision
- Establishing a culture of trust
- Improving communication and information
- Changing policy

These themes are discussed in greater detail in the report's conclusion. Overall, the summit aided its attendees in starting, renewing, or building upon collaborative relationships while also emphasizing the importance of further research on this topic.

Introduction



The UNC Center for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) convened over 30 municipal, county, and schools officials from Cabarrus, Guilford, Johnston and Union counties on May 3, 2006 for a Summit on School Facility Siting.

The summit was called to fulfill three purposes:

- Clarify the interdependence across school location decisions, land use planning, local government finances, and the character of communities;
- Raise awareness of strategies, tools, and techniques that can support collaboration among school districts, counties, and municipalities when making decisions about land use and schools; and
- Identify steps for advancing collaboration by summit attendees in their respective communities.

The Summit achieved these purposes through a well-formulated process that was developed over the course of a year by the project team in consultation with representatives from five statewide organizations: the NC Chapter of the American Planning Association, NC Chapter of the Council for Educational Facility Planners, NC School Board Association, NC League of Municipalities and the NC Association of County Commissioners.

Together, this group reviewed carefully compiled demographic data to determine which counties in North Carolina were experiencing rapid growth. After compiling growth rates from current Census data, the team cross referenced the results with enrollment growth in area school districts. From these two processes, a short list of ten counties was assembled. Additional research was conducted on these counties to determine whether collaboration processes were in place, whether the district was undergoing significant school construction, and the nature of relationships between county, municipal, and school officials.

Upon completing the research and verifying the list of counties with the project's steering committee, an initial interest letter was mailed to all ten counties. The letter asked interested parties to contact the Center for Urban and Regional Studies by an established deadline with a proposed delegation roster. If a county required assistance

in assembling its delegation, project staff were available to assist.

In the end, four counties responded to the invitation with acceptable intergovernmental delegations. These four counties (Union, Cabarrus, Johnston, and Guilford) were then invited to participate in the May 3rd summit.

The summit was designed to provide participants with sufficient resources (facilities, substantive experts, group facilitation, and staff support) to quickly acquire necessary background information, meet with peers to clarify common concerns and needs, and engage productively across jurisdictional lines to set priorities for the future. The Summit agenda, showing how these activities were organized over the course of the day, is included in the appendix.

In short, the day began with a presentation by Dr. David Salvesen, “Working Across Jurisdictions on School Facility Siting.” Following a brief question and answer period, the schools, county and municipal officials talked separately in facilitated break-out sessions about what is most important to them about school facility siting, what resources they bring to the table on this issue, what they need on this issue from the other groups, and what constrains their ability to collaborate on school facility siting with the other groups. The three break-out groups reported their findings in a plenary session, followed by a full group discussion that lasted right up to the lunch period.

During lunch, Jyoti Sharma, Director of Facility Planning for Wake County Public Schools, and Richard Sears, Mayor of Holly Springs, described their experiences with collaboration in Wake County (see brief summary on p. 16). After lunch, each of the four participating counties met separately to identify steps that the schools, county and municipalities could take back home to advance collaboration on school facilities siting. The four groups presented their findings during the afternoon plenary session.

Finally, Ron Bogle, CEO and President of the American Architectural Foundation and a former school superintendent, shared his impressions of the possibilities for collaboration in North Carolina based on what he had heard at the summit. In closing, members of the Summit Steering Committee offered some final remarks about the value of the day’s conversations and the need to continue a commitment to collaboration.

The following pages present a review of the information shared and discussed during the summit. The report highlights common themes surrounding intergovernmental collaboration and school siting that came to the forefront during the delegates work sessions. In addition, the delegates proposed solutions and action steps are shared to demonstrate how the four counties involved plan to move forward with a process of collaboration.

Working Across Jurisdictions

Intergovernmental Collaboration & School Facility Siting

During his opening presentation, David Salvesen set the stage for the summit with an overview of the issues, opportunities and obstacles to working across institutional boundaries. He discussed the interdependence of decisions by school boards, county commissions and local governments in North Carolina, particularly around the issue of school facility planning. In addition, he provided examples of intergovernmental collaboration from elsewhere in the state and across the country.



David Salvesen presenting to the delegates

In North Carolina, and in many other states, school boards, municipalities and county commissions operate independently, each with their own set of rules, elected members, and missions, and each with their own way of doing things. For example, school boards are responsible for, among other things, developing enrollment projections, facility plans, and building new schools. Municipalities and counties adopt land use plans and policies and make decisions about development and the provision of infrastructure. Counties also pay for the capital costs of schools. Although the three entities are autonomous, decisions by one often affect the others. This is why collaboration is so important.

For example, a municipality may approve a large, new residential subdivision, without considering whether sufficient capacity exists at the schools for the additional students generated by the project. In responding to the need for additional capacity, the school board may opt to build a new school on the urban fringe, where land is cheapest, despite the county's plan to direct growth to existing developed areas, where infrastructure already exists. Moreover, the school's location will influence future land use, traffic, and how children get to school. Under our current system, one institution controls choices about housing and neighborhoods while another controls choices about school location.

Currently, few institutional mechanisms or incentives are available for the key stakeholders that control decisions about local land use, school funding, and school planning to coordinate their thinking and their actions. As a result, school boards in rapidly growing areas are often caught behind the development curve, struggling to add new capacity to meet the demands caused by new development. Many schools are overcrowded. For their part, counties and municipalities must find ways to fund the

infrastructure (e.g., water and sewer) for the new school. In addition, the lack of collaboration often means that counties, municipalities and schools miss out on opportunities for joint use of facilities, such as joint ownership, maintenance and use of ball fields, libraries and gymnasiums.

Benefits of Collaboration

Some of the potential benefits of greater intergovernmental collaboration include:

Closer link between development and new school capacity

By keeping schools abreast of proposed subdivisions as well as proposed changes to planning and zoning, local governments could help schools develop more accurate enrollment projects, and plan facilities accordingly. Likewise, schools could let local governments know if a proposed subdivision would push the schools over capacity.

Better links between schools and adjacent neighborhoods

New schools could be better integrated into existing or planned subdivisions. Municipal and county regulations could require convenient and safe connections (e.g., sidewalks and crosswalks) between schools and adjacent neighborhoods. This could make it easier for children to walk to school, thus reducing busing costs. It would also facilitate greater use of the school facilities by the community, e.g., by adults on evenings and weekends.

Co-location and joint use of schools with other facilities

Schools, counties, and municipalities could coordinate to jointly finance, build, and manage ball fields, parks, libraries, gymnasiums and auditoriums. Together they could build facilities that they could not afford to build alone. And these facilities could be used by the entire community.

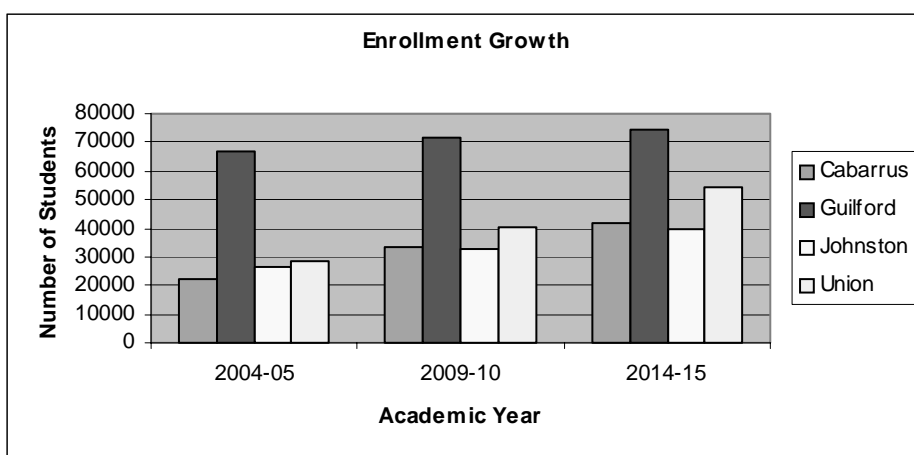
Better alignment of local comprehensive and school facility plans

Local governments and school districts can help ensure that their plans are consistent, that potential school sites are identified on maps in the comprehensive plan, and that adjacent land is zoned appropriately (i.e., for residential use).

Despite the potential benefits of collaboration, many obstacles exist. For example, some elected boards may worry that by collaborating to achieve joint gains, they may lose some of their autonomy as a result. Collaboration, however, does not mean abdication of authority or responsibility. Another issue is that the different elected

bodies have different goals and missions. In general, school boards are charged with providing a safe, nurturing environment for children to learn. Taking a broader perspective, county commissions also have to be concerned about the budget for all county functions and with keeping property taxes to a minimum. Differing priorities can make collaboration difficult. Finally, elected officials and their staff are busy and may not have time to collaborate, particularly if it is more complex and time-consuming than acting alone.

The four counties represented at the summit are all grappling with rapid enrollment growth and the demand for new facilities. Union, Johnston and Cabarrus counties all border the two fastest growing counties in the state: Mecklenburg



and Wake County. Guilford County is the third largest city in North Carolina and experiencing enrollment growth similar to both Raleigh and Charlotte.

A Continuum of Collaboration

Since all communities collaborate to some level or degree, it is useful to think of intergovernmental collaboration as occurring along a continuum, with very little occurring at one end of the spectrum (level 1) and extensive collaboration occurring at the other end (level 3). The four counties fall at various points along the continuum of collaboration.

Level 1

At Level 1, each entity (e.g., school board, county commission, municipality) carries out its mission independently, with little or no coordination or communication with other government entities beyond what is required by law. At this level, local governments approve new subdivisions (without consulting with the school board), and the school board selects a site and constructs a new school without coordinating with municipalities or with the county, except to seek approvals.

Level 2

At Level 2, school boards, county commissions and municipalities recognize that they share many interests in common. Each entity understands that it stands to gain more by working together than by working independently. School boards still retain full authority to select sites for new schools, but they exercise that authority in consultation with other entities. Some joint meetings among elected officials may be held occasionally, but at a minimum, their staffs meet on a regular basis to discuss how they can better coordinate their activities. Through memorandums of agreements, staff of the three main elected bodies let each other know of planned capital facilities early in the process so that they can identify opportunities for joint use of facilities.

For example, through a mandatory referral process, city and county agencies in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, including the school board, notify each other of plans to purchase land for capital facilities. The city-county Joint Use Task Force meets monthly to discuss joint use opportunities. Similarly, the School Board and the County Commission in Guilford County held a joint meeting in 2006 to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Level 3

Finally, in Level 3, intergovernmental collaboration is institutionalized in the community and is widely supported. Each entity still maintains its autonomy and authority for achieving its objectives, but it carries out its mission in collaboration with others. New development is closely linked with school capacity and facility planning so school overcrowding can be avoided. Proposed subdivisions and zoning changes are analyzed for their potential impacts on schools (i.e., number of new students) by grade level. New subdivisions will only be approved if adequate capacity in schools exists.

In addition, school facility plans are closely coordinated with capital improvement plans and land use plans to ensure that the infrastructure needed by the school, including sidewalks and crosswalks, will be in place when needed and that schools will be well integrated into residential developments. Potential sites for schools are identified in local land use plan maps. The elected bodies and their staff routinely and creatively pursue opportunities for joint use, as evidenced by

numerous joint use projects. Developers are asked to complete a school impact assessment for any proposed subdivision over 25 units.

Finally, a school board representative sits on the county commission or town council (as a nonvoting member), when these elected bodies are considering rezoning or subdivision approvals, and likewise, the county commission and municipalities sit on school board meetings when school facility planning is on the agenda.

Examples of Collaboration

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the Planning Liaison Committee, comprised of representatives from the school board, county commission, and municipalities in the county, meets monthly to discuss issues of common concern, such as school facility planning and financing. Similarly, in Lincoln, Nebraska, elected officials from the school board and city meet quarterly to address school facility planning issues. In North Carolina, New Hanover County established a capital facility review process to identify opportunities for joint use of facilities. And in Fulton County, Georgia, the county planning staff meet regularly with the school district staff to discuss the impacts of pending development on enrollment and new school locations. The planning staff also expedites permitting for new schools.

Prince Georges County, Maryland identifies and reserves future sites for schools. Developers are required to set aside land for schools, which the school district buys as needed. And in Florida, several counties have worked to promote greater collaboration between school districts and local governments. The state requires school districts and local governments to sign interlocal agreements that specify how they will coordinate in selecting sites for new schools. In Orange County, Florida, the school board convened a summit that brought together representatives from the school board, county and several municipalities. A similar summit is held annually in Polk County, Florida. And finally, the state of Florida has required that starting in 2008, local governments ensure that adequate capacity exists in schools before a new subdivision is approved.

Caucuses with Peers

Intergovernmental Collaboration & School Facility Siting

Following Salvesen’s presentation, the summit attendees divided into three small groups—school officials, county officials and municipal officials—for facilitated discussion. This enabled delegates from different parts of the state to come together and articulate their needs to the other peer groups represented. This process would be the first step towards increasing understanding among the governing agencies in each of the four counties.

At the beginning of the facilitated small group sessions, each group was given three questions to guide their discussion:

- 1) What aspects of school facility siting are most important to us?
- 2) What resources do we bring to the table on this issue?
- 3) What do we need (substantively, procedurally, behaviorally) on this issue from other groups?

Upon completion of the small group sessions, the three groups came together and each group gave a 10-15 minute presentation highlighting their discussions and answers to the questions.



Participants in a small group work session

The resulting presentations raised a variety of issues shared by the different peer groups as well as unique challenges that they each faced. These issues and challenges were organized into the following six themes: neighborhood, respect and trust, vision, planning, money, and collaboration.

Neighborhood

In their own way, each peer group demonstrated a focus on the issues of neighborhood in their discussion of school siting. What the small group presentations

helped to highlight around this issue was the differing ways each peer group approached and interpreted the issue of neighborhood. For example, the municipality group focused on items such as the walkability of school sites and how some schools can divide a community. As a group they expressed a desire to use school facilities as community centers. During the small group discussion, a municipal representative mentioned his interest in “flexibility in design so that schools can vary from standards

on size, number of stories, location of ball fields, etc.”

The county group emphasized the impact a school can have on traffic in a neighborhood and the demand a school facility places on local utilities and services. The school group expressed a desire to create neighborhood or community focused schools, but noted the challenge of finding suitable, affordable sites. It also noted that local permit and zoning regulations require changes in school design and construction, which adds to the cost.

Each of the issues and views linked to the creation and preservation of neighborhoods offered important insights into the complexity of collaboration. As stated by a school official during the small group work session, “one can say the [school] site should be where the kids are, another says siting should be objective based on numbers and projections, and yet another will focus on reducing transportation costs.” This complexity emphasizes the need for respect and trust, which surfaced as another organizing theme among the three groups.

Respect & Trust

As each group presented its needs, priorities and thoughts on barriers to collaboration, a desire for understanding of the demands of their unique position and respect for what they are trying to accomplish came to the forefront. Historically, as noted during the county small group session, lack of trust has caused conflict between boards, to the point at which one board was taking another board to court.

This plea for respect from the other peer groups came across most clearly during the school group’s presentation. The school group asked the counties and municipalities to understand that, although they design and construct facilities, they are not developers. As a group, the school officials feel they provide an essential service to the local communities and do not appreciate “being strong-armed” to provide



Small group session

services that other governmental agencies should. The municipal group echoed this need for respect in its request to be seen as experts on their local needs and the fabric that creates a municipality's culture.

The issue of trust and respect also was apparent in the presentations concerning the legitimacy of data used to project school enrollment and purchase land for schools. The county group encouraged school boards to purchase only the land they absolutely need and no more. By working more closely with counties, school districts could build trust in their process for calculating land requirements for future schools. This could also facilitate greater collaboration on county land planning initiatives.

Vision

The creation of a common vision was cited by all three groups as an essential component for improved collaboration. A common vision would enable the three

Holly Springs, North Carolina



Jyoti Sharma, Director of Facility Planning for Wake County Public Schools and Richard Sears, Mayor of Holly Springs, discussed the importance of collaboration in selecting the site for Holly Springs High School, which is scheduled to open for the 2006-2007 school year.

Jyoti described a typical process of selecting a site for a new school. First, the school district develops enrollment projections based primarily on an analysis of demographic trends and conditions. It then “draws a circle” one-mile in diameter around where the trends indicate a new school will be needed, and looks for a site within that circle.

Mayor Sears worked closely with the school board to ensure that the circle included Holly Springs. He recounted how landing a school in the town was one of his highest priorities, given what a school means for a town. “We haven’t had a high school since the mid-1940s.”

To facilitate the school district’s land purchase, Mayor Sears got the relevant landowners and the school district together for a meeting. “Probably the most significant thing the town did was to bring all the parties to the table,” recalled Sharma.

“Now, when kids are asked, ‘where did you go to high school?’ they can say, Holly Springs High School,” stated Sears.

According to Sears, one of the lessons learned from the project is the importance of changing attitudes about ownership of the school. “We need to foster the attitude that it’s not my school, it’s not your school, it’s our school.”

groups to present a unified front to communities. It would also aid in the creation of both trust and respect knowing that each group is working towards the same goal. As described by a municipal official in a small group session, the public attitude needs to focus on “looking at the output of schools in terms of educating children.”

The school group presented their point on this issue as the need to be a TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More. The municipalities saw a common vision as providing agreements up front on smart growth principles. The counties saw it as an opportunity to promote co-location and cooperation between the services provided by the county and those provided by the schools.

Planning

The need for a common vision was tied closely to each peer group’s call for pro-active planning around the issue of school siting. As described by a municipal official during the small group work, “[it is] critical that siting decisions be made in anticipatory fashion and not a reactive fashion.”

Planning, according to the county group, would enable early identification of sites so they could be acquired before land costs rise. A county official stated how counties can offer “a broader perspective [than the local boards] since counties see the impact of schools on other things. Counties deal with more than just schools.” Another official added that early communication and shared visions in a capital improvement plan could “avoid having a \$2 million lot turn into a \$6 million dollar property.”

In the same vein, counties and municipalities both recognized the need for careful planning in the approval of subdivisions due to their implications for school capacity, location, transportation and utilities. The school group underscored the challenge of anticipating and building for future growth as well as adopting measures, such as year round schools and the use of mobile classrooms, to address current overcrowding.

In their presentation, the municipality group offered how integrated planning can lead to creative problem solving in identifying and selecting the location of a school facility. With advanced preparation, each peer group can offer and utilize their full resources to each other in order to make the best decision for a given situation.

Money

The issue of school financing was brought up by each peer group as something that must be addressed as they continue to work on the school siting issue. The municipality group broached this issue as one of the challenges in creating a school in an urban setting. The limitations and challenges of building on small sites may deter a school district from using land in a city center, despite the impact such a location may

have in preserving the fabric of a city's downtown.

Schools, on the other hand, feel that they have to “beg for money” from the counties or find alternative funding. Financial constraints limit a school district's options in school location, particularly when faced with the demands generated by rapidly increasing enrollment. With cost driving many decisions, the schools feel limited in what they can do to provide unique alternatives for every city or community that they serve. In offering a solution to the financial issue, a school representative pointed out how schools can offer “an expertise in construction” that may enable a county to save money by varying construction methods.

In addition to the municipality and school group's concerns about finances, the county group emphasized the need to keep long term cost effectiveness in mind when planning or building schools. In a small group session, one county official expressed frustration at trying to stay within budgets because “schools come back asking for millions of dollars because of cost overruns or screw-ups. It's better to know up front what the costs are.”

Counties feel that they can help schools figure out what the costs are upfront because they can offer more than just financial assistance. For example, schools could tap into a county's data and GIS capability, its political capital, its tax levying and state resources as well as a larger perspective on county issues than just school growth.

Collaboration

These issues of neighborhood, respect and trust, vision, and planning all call for stronger collaboration among the three groups. The group presentations demonstrated a commonality between the goals and challenges faced by each group as well as the issues that may have hindered effective collaboration in the past. One county official described the current situation as a result of “statutory barriers and requirements [that] create an atmosphere that doesn't promote collaboration. Building is the sole responsibility of the school board, but the effects bleed over. Statutory tension is built in. If you try to influence schools, the school board bristles.”

As evidenced in the large group discussion following the peer group presentations, summit participants realized how much conflict could arise “when the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.” Another comment acknowledged the difficulty of building respect and trust despite the fact that they are all elected officials. The desire for a “collective agenda” and a unified force where no partner is silent was also acknowledged as vital in lobbying for change on a state level. Other suggestions to come of the morning discussion were:

- 1) Joint data collection and interpretation;
- 2) One set of rules that work from both an equity and a taxpayer standpoint;
- 3) Jointly sponsored studies designed to obtain a mutual understanding of the issues and to enable the groups to come to the necessary compromises needed to get “all the horses moving in the same direction;” and
- 4) Collaborating with private schools and the home schooling population.

At the conclusion of the morning group discussion, summit attendees enjoyed a lunch break while participating in a panel discussion focusing on the solutions and challenges of school facility siting for fast-growing counties in North Carolina. The lunch discussion and the morning sessions set the stage for an afternoon dedicated to developing action items and steps for collaboration in each of the four counties attending the summit.

Community Delegations

During the afternoon, the delegates returned to working in small groups. The small groups were organized by county with the goal of facilitating a discussion of steps that could be taken back home to advance collaboration on school facility siting across schools, counties, and municipalities. Once again, delegates were instructed to prepare a 10-15 minute report for the subsequent plenary session. To aid their discussion, each county was instructed to address the following three topics:

- 1) Barriers to collaboration that we would need to address if we were to advance collaboration back home, and how we might address those barriers.
- 2) Opportunities within this issue that we might be able to exploit together, and how.
- 3) Ideas for collaboration that might hold some promise for us when we get back home.

Based on these guidelines, the groups' discussions and reports raised several important issues relevant to collaboration and school siting. From the range of topics mentioned, five key issues stood out as primary components of successful intergovernmental collaboration: trust, politics, time, communication and commitment.

Trust

Trust proved itself a central component in the discussion of intergovernmental collaboration and school siting. Alluded to in statements about communication, enrollment projections, and existing relationships, a lack of trust was acknowledged as a prominent barrier to effective collaboration.

On the issue of enrollment projections, one county explained how municipalities do not always believe that the data from a school board is accurate, given that sometimes people have tried to manipulate the data for other reasons. Johnston County's emphasis on the use of objective data to produce enrollment projections demonstrated the school district's acknowledgement of the sensitivity of this issue. Throughout the small group work and group reports, a general consensus emerged about the need for enrollment projections that everyone can trust and accept in planning for future growth. As a representative from Union County stated in its group report, "We all have to buy into what data is, [and] get on a single message."

The need for trust also arose through conversations regarding relationships between departments. Union County admitted that, in the past, its relationship with the county was marked by a "legacy of distrust." The Union County delegation was committed to

overcoming the distrust of the past and accepting that differences of opinion will exist between groups. It will work on improving communication to resolve these issues and to move towards creating and achieving a common goal.

Finally, based on the solutions or action steps given by the delegates, improving trust would reduce the turf battles that may currently mire a school siting decision in public battles and politics. The Cabarrus County delegation expressed a desire to, “develop a collaborative and integrative plan for land use” thus enabling a unified vision to take to the public about growth and school construction. Guilford County echoed this sentiment by discussing how to better include municipalities in the school siting process so support was gained early on for the requirements and decisions made regarding school construction.

Politics

The need to minimize the politics surrounding education was raised during the afternoon delegation work sessions and reports. This issue was often phrased, as reported by Johnston County, as the desire for objective rather than subjective information and decision-making processes. Guilford County reported how education has become politicized and it emphasized the need for public awareness of issues surrounding school siting as a means to neutralize subjective or political decisions. In one of the small group work sessions, Las Vegas School district’s creation of an enrollment trigger that would activate year round schools was cited as an example of how one school facility issue could be handled in an objective, non-political, manner.

Finally the desire by all counties to institutionalize the processes developed for collaboration reflects their efforts not only to create consistent practices but to protect these practices from the fluctuations of a political environment.

Time Constraints

Several participants referenced the inability to take the extra time often required for collaboration on school facility siting issues. In one group, a delegate described how excessive workloads made it difficult to communicate or coordinate with those in other offices or jurisdictions. An elected official echoed the limitations of time by stating the impossibility of making it to every meeting when so many groups



Facilitators Betsy Polk and Maggie Ellis Chotas working with small group



Cabarrus County School Board Chair Liz Poole sharing solutions during plenary discussion

required attention. In line with these comments was a remark related to the difficulty of scheduling meetings.

In response, participants emphasized the need to establish a formalized processes that would require staff and elected officials to make the time for collaboration. Representatives from the three groups (schools, counties, and municipalities) should be at all meetings. The exact size and organization of the meetings would vary by county, but each shared an emphasis on keeping the meeting size, frequency, and participants realistic to the task and workloads of attendees. The importance of top-down leadership in support of the meetings was highlighted. Johnston County summarized this as a “practical approach” to meetings that has worked well in their county.

Communication

As the delegations gathered to discuss collaboration and school siting issues in their counties, they focused on the need

for better communication in order to understand each group’s mission and goals. Union County delegates eloquently summarized this issue by stating how, as a county, they need to beware of the danger of silence. Without sharing information, the parties involved in school siting will not be able to understand the many layers surrounding the issue, thus decreasing trust between participants. Johnston County suggested that understanding goals was not enough, but that the groups involved needed to affirm a common direction.

In addition to communicating goals among groups, Guilford and Union Counties both mentioned the need to include the community or public in the communication process. Including the public will show how each group can be an advocate for the community and highlight the complexity of school siting issues.

During a small group session, one delegate mentioned how having well-communicated goals would enable disagreements in public arenas while keeping discourse on a professional level. Addressing this issue may also help another participant's concern regarding the misperception of schools as developers.

Commitment

As the afternoon progressed, it became apparent to all participants that collaboration would not occur without greater commitment from all parties. From the Union County delegates announcement that the summit was a good start to Cabarrus County's renewed focus on completing their adequate public facilities ordinance, each delegation acknowledged both the challenges and the importance of collaborating on school-related issues.

The need for commitment also was revealed during small group sessions where participants listed various barriers to collaboration including construction backlogs (Guilford), schools at or over capacity (Johnston), an adequacy review process in need of improvement (Cabarrus) and a legacy of distrusting relationships (Union). When faced with these and other barriers, such as continued rapid growth, each county acknowledged the importance of making a stronger commitment to collaboration, despite the daily demands and distractions that can make collaboration difficult.

Proposed Solutions

Following the afternoon's small group sessions, each county shared its proposed next steps and solutions for addressing the barriers and issues highlighted earlier and improving intergovernmental collaboration. The proposed actions reflect each county's own unique set of economic, political and cultural circumstances and constraints.

For example, Guilford County saw the need to focus on unifying municipalities and school systems in the school design process. Moving forward, the delegation will explore joint-use opportunities with non-profits in their county. In addition, in designing schools, the county will begin to look at multi-use designs that encourage joint-use as well as provide a consistency of school design throughout the county. Together, the delegates agreed to develop a process for collaborating on access to the school facilities so they can fulfill a community's joint-use demands. Finally, the Guilford County delegation expressed a commitment to developing a fast-track process for school planning. This process would give the school district priority in permitting issues that, in turn, could shorten construction times and reduce overall construction costs.

For its action items, Cabarrus County focused on expanding and strengthening processes already in place between the school district and the county officials to

include the municipalities. The delegation expressed a plan to expand communication between the technical staff of the three divisions by updating or creating listservs as well as establishing regular face-to-face meetings. As a county, the delegation expressed a desire to develop a collaborative and integrative plan for land use. In addition, they outlined as an action item the need to agree upon and finish an adequate public facilities ordinance for the county. Overall, Cabarrus County expressed an interest in institutionalizing collaboration so that the necessary systems and procedures would endure turnover of staff and political leadership.



Union County delegates expressing their commitment to work together on school facility siting issues

The Union County delegation's next steps focused on improving communication. Similar to Cabarrus, the delegation announced a plan to include the municipalities in county and school discussions of school siting issues. Acknowledging the "danger of silence," the group emphasized the importance of "peer-to-peer" communication that includes feedback. This system of two-way communication would provide a venue for understanding the source of each other's concerns as well as enable the delegation to develop a single unified vision. Once created, the vision will guide communication with the public as well as any decisions or changes in directions that may need to occur as unique situations arise. In closing, the Union County delegation emphasized their need to "repeat the message until it is heard."

Similar to Cabarrus County, Johnston County's action items focused on strengthening existing processes and exploring new opportunities to collaborate while responding to the demands of rapid enrollment growth. Existing meetings provide a good foundation for intergovernmental collaboration. The delegates stated that the next step is to ensure municipalities and the school district utilize this forum for better communication. This forum will provide a manageable group of individuals who can get to know one another and affirm a common direction. The delegation also expressed the need for "mutual sharing of accurate information" that would guide school siting decisions with "objective material not subjective material." In exploring new opportunities for collaboration and school siting, Johnston County expressed the plan to look into a final review process for school construction, land banking, and the creation of a unified development code. In closing, the Johnston County delegation asserted its commitment to "working together to get better results."

Wrap Up

At the conclusion of the day's events, three individuals spoke about the importance of the delegates' work in building a model for continued collaboration between school districts and other governmental organizations.

Representing a national perspective, Ron Bogle, President and CEO of the American Architectural Foundation, highlighted the universality of the challenges faced by the delegations. He emphasized how the current institutionalized practices of locating and building schools do not serve towns, counties, and school districts looking to create collaborative relationships. Advocating significant institutional change, Mr. Bogle discussed changing the reality of the school construction process by empowering organizations and their staff to communicate and collaborate. The resulting changes, he argued, must then become institutionalized in order to maintain collaborative relationships and create a system that serves the needs of North Carolina communities.

In acknowledging North Carolina's specific challenge of rapid growth, Mr. Bogle suggested taking a closer look at how schools are funded in the state. Under the current system, he noted, it is difficult for school districts to keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for school facilities. Mr. Bogle appealed to the delegates to keep in mind issues such as sustainable design, multi-use facilities, and good community involvement as they move forward with school construction and renovation.

Following Mr. Bogle, Roger Lentz from the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association and Charles Archer from the NC League of Municipalities, offered some final words on behalf of the summit's steering committee. Both Mr. Lentz and Mr. Archer emphasized the value of the day's collaboration, its importance to counties across North Carolina, and the commitment of their organizations to promote and educate their members on the importance of intergovernmental collaboration.

In addition, Mr. Lentz and Mr. Archer recognized the ongoing challenges of reduced federal and state financial support despite increasing governmental mandates. As a result, local resources must take on the challenge and opportunity of working together. The professional organizations represented by the steering committee are ready to aid the communities in finding innovative solutions to school facility siting issues, identifying commonalities between

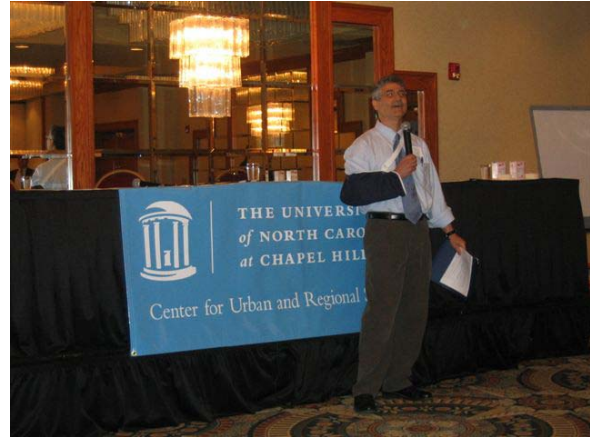


Charles Archer reviews the Summit outcomes

counties, municipalities and school districts, and assisting in lobbying for legislative change. The summit was a great start to increasing intergovernmental collaboration, and they are committed to seeing the collaboration continue.

Conclusion

In wrapping up the summit, facilitator Andrew Sachs reiterated the goals of the summit and thanked the delegates for their time, ideas and commitment to achieving better collaboration. Sachs explained that, for the delegates in attendance, the summit began or reinforced conversations about collaboration in their communities that could lead to improved siting of school facilities. As the delegations move forward with their commitment to collaboration, however, they will be faced with a number of challenges, as identified by delegates during the summit:



Andrew Sachs concluding the summit

Institutionalizing Collaborative Processes

Current successful collaboration in North Carolina counties most often stems from personal relationships between staff and elected officials at the different government agencies and departments. To insure a consistency and longevity to intergovernmental collaboration, counties must find a way to institutionalize the relationships and processes they have created. This institutionalization of collaborative processes would help to avoid situations where employee or elected official turn over creates a breakdown in communication. It also works towards establishing a common goal between agencies.

Creating a Common Goal & Commitment

Parties collaborating on school siting issues must share a commitment to the process and its outcome. As each agency involved with school siting has differing long-term or over-arching goals, creating a shared vision when it comes to school facilities is truly a challenge. However, once a shared vision is established, individual staff and officials can justify within their organization's culture the time and energy required for successful collaboration.

Establishing a Culture of Trust

During the summit, it became clear that the delegates desired a mutual understanding of the goals and objectives of each agency. This trust in each other's work would reduce incidences of turf battles where agencies

react to initiatives in a protective and isolating manner. Building trust requires time and energy often beginning with personal relationships that must then grow to larger institutional relationships. A well-established culture of trust would aid agencies in executing common visions and presenting a collaborative message to their constituents.

Improving Communication and Information

This challenge goes deeper than sending memos and notices between agencies. Delegates highlighted the need for effective, efficient and ongoing dialogue between counties, municipalities and school districts in a manner that fosters continued conversation and creative problem solving. In addition, a desire for trusted, shared data was expressed as delegates learned about not only the resources of each agency, but also the questions many had about the varying data sources.

Changing Policy

One of the biggest challenges to establishing intergovernmental collaboration for school siting issues is governmental policies and procedures. Existing building guidelines, funding structures, and zoning laws often work against the types of compromises and environment needed for effective collaboration. Careful evaluation and possible revision of these structures may increase opportunities for collaboration that would lead to effective, mutually-beneficial school location decisions.

These challenges are not limited to the counties represented by this summit, or even to North Carolina counties. The issues are relevant to school districts and communities across the country as they attempt to accommodate changing school enrollments, aging school facilities, suburban sprawl, urban revitalization, smart growth, and a host of other issues.

With all of these challenges, additional research is needed to identify the best practices and models for intergovernmental collaboration. Several communities across the United States are implementing solutions that range from grassroots initiatives to government mandated inter-local agreements in their efforts to improve the location of schools within a community. Through careful evaluation of these efforts, a better understanding can be gained of the policies and processes needed to support school siting.

From funding sources to zoning approval processes, municipalities, school districts and counties are inextricably linked by the location of school facilities in their communities. This interdependence can lead to successful collaborative partnerships or a constant source of stress and power struggles where, as one municipality reported, the measure

of control offered to a group may be used as an arena for placing public pressure on other agencies and elected officials.

It is our belief that with increased awareness, commitment and research the moments of intersection between municipalities, counties and school districts can become sources of innovative and successful solutions rather than points of stress, distrust, and public argument. The task ahead is not a simple one due to the intricacies of governmental policy, school facility needs, and community planning, however, as the summit demonstrated, each of the delegations expressed a willingness to take the steps necessary to facilitate greater intergovernmental collaboration.

As the four counties return home, we remain optimistic that they will embrace and adopt some of the tools and techniques discussed at the summit—including land banking, improved communication strategies, shared information, joint-use facilities, local strategic planning initiatives, and scheduled inter-agency meetings—in order to improve the process and outcomes of school facility planning.

Resources

Publications

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Carpenter, Susan and W.J.D. Kennedy. Managing Public Disputes: A Practical Guide to Handling Disputes and Reaching Agreement. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. (1988)

Cormick, Gerald, Norman Dale, Paul Emond, S. Glenn Sigurdson, and Barry D. Stuart. Building Consensus for a Sustainable Future: Putting Principles into Practice. Ottawa, Ontario: National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy (1996).

Creighton, James L. The Public Participation Handbook: Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. (2005).

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Susskind, Lawrence and Jeffrey Cruikshank. Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes. NY: Basic Books (1987).

Susskind, Lawrence, Sarah McKearnan and J. Thomas-Larmer (eds.). The Consensus Building Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement. San Anselmo, CA: Sage Press (1999).

Websites

Association for Conflict Resolution www.acresolution.org

Conflict Resolution Consortium www.colorado.edu/conflict

Consensus Building Institute www.cbi-web.org

Dispute Settlement Center of Orange County (NC) www.disputesettlement.org

Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium www.consensus.fsu.edu

Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution www.web.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR

Institute for Environmental Negotiation www.virginia.edu/~envneg/IEN_home.htm

International Association for Public Participation
<http://www.iap2.org/http://www.iap2.org/practitionertools/spectrum.html>

Mediation Network of North Carolina www.mnnc.org

National Association for Community Mediation www.nafcm.org

National Issues Forums: <http://www.nifi.org/>

Natural Resources Leadership Institute, NC State
www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/PIE/nrli/

Pew Partnership for Civic Change <http://www.solutionsforamerica.org/>

Policy Consensus Initiative www.policyconsensusinitiative.org

Program on Negotiation, Harvard Law School www.law.harvard.edu/Programs/PON

Public Conversations Project www.publicconversations.org

Resolve www.resolve.org

Study Circles Resource Center: <http://www.studycircles.org/>

UNC School of Government Public Disputes Resolution Program
www.ncinfo.iog.unc.edu/dispute

US EPA Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center www.epa.gov/ocempage

US EPA Public Involvement www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement

US Institute for Environmental Dispute Resolution www.ecr.gov

Appendix

Delegates

Johnston County

Dr. Anthony Parker, Superintendent, Johnston County Schools
Ms. Ann Williams, Associate Superintendent for Facilities, Johnston County Schools
Mr. Allen Mims, County Commissioner
Mr. Alexander Atchinson, Councilman, Town of Clayton
Mr. Michael Grannis, Councilman, Town of Clayton
Mr. Steve Biggs, Town Manager, Town of Clayton
Ms. Fleta Byrd, Chair, Town of Wilson's Mills Planning Board
Mr. Peter Holt Wilson, Mayor, Town of Wilson's Mills

Cabarrus County

Ms. Liz Poole, Chair, Cabarrus County Board of Education
Mr. Jim Amendum, Assistant Superintendent, Cabarrus County Schools
Mr. John Day, County Manager
Mr. Todd Berg, Planning & Zoning Board
Mr. Troy Barnhardt, Mayor, Town of Mount Pleasant
Mr. Jim Green, Deputy City Manager, City of Concord
Mr. Mike Legg, City Manager, City of Kannapolis

Union County

Mr. Martin Irvin, Town Manager, Town of Waxhaw
Dr. David Clarke, Assistant Superintendent for Auxiliary Services
Mr. Donald Hughes, Director of Facilities, Union County Schools
Mr. Dean Arp, Member, Union County Board of Education
Mr. Mike Shalati, County Manager
Mr. Mike Cognac, Mayor, Village of Marvin

Guilford County

Mr. Paul Gibson, County Commissioner
Ms. Kris Cooke, Member, Guilford County Board of Education
Mr. Kevin Lear, Chief of Operations, Guilford County Schools
Mr. Gerald Greeson, Director of Maintenance, Guilford County Schools
Ms. Rebecca Smothers, Mayor, City of High Point
Mr. Michael Brandt, Town Administrator, Town of Summerfield
Mr. David McNeill, Deputy County Manager

Additional Participants

Guest Speakers

Mr. Ron Bogle, Executive Director, American Architectural Foundation
Ms. Jyoti Sharma, Director of Facility Planning, Wake County Public Schools
Mr. Richard Sears, Mayor of Holly Springs, NC

Steering Committee

Mr. Paul Meyer, Assistant General Counsel, NC Association of County Commissioners
Ms. Sylvia Clifton, Financial Administrator, NC Association of County Commissioners
Mr. Dave Burnett, Facility Planner, NC Chapter of Council of Educational Facility Planners International
Ms. Molly Ryan, Staff Attorney, NC School Board Association
Mr. Rodger Lentz, Zoning Administrator, NC Chapter of the American Planning Association
Mr. Charles Archer, Associate Director for Operations & Federal Relations, NC League of Municipalities

Project Team

Dr. David Salvesen, Principal Investigator, Center for Urban and Regional Studies
Mr. Andrew M. Sachs, Coordinator, Public Disputes Program, Dispute Settlement Center of Orange County
Ms. Kathie Engelbrecht, Project Manager, Center for Urban and Regional Studies

Facilitators

Mr. David Godschalk, Department of City & Regional Planning at UNC-Chapel Hill
Mr. John Stephens, School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill
Ms. Betsy Polk, Mulberry Tree Consulting
Ms. Maggie Ellis Chotas, Mulberry Tree Consulting

Volunteers

Ms. Elizabeth Shay, Carolina Environmental Program at UNC-Chapel Hill
Mr. Spencer Cowan, Center for Urban and Regional Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill
Ms. Debra Hill, Center for Urban and Regional Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill
Ms. Linda Comer, Center for Urban and Regional Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill
Mr. Zach Shahan, Department of City and Regional Planning at UNC-Chapel Hill
Ms. Nancy Sussman, American Architectural Foundation

Summit Agenda

Desired Outcomes

1. Clarification of the interdependence across school location decisions, land use planning, local government finances, and the character of communities.
2. Appreciation for strategies, tools, and techniques that can support collaboration among school districts, counties, and municipalities when selecting sites for new schools.
3. Steps advancing collaboration to be taken by summit attendees in their respective communities.

Agenda

- 9:30 Registration & Continental Breakfast
- 10:00 Welcome Kathie Engelbrecht
- Conference Overview Andrew Sachs
- Presentation David Salvesen
“Working across Jurisdictions on School Facility Siting”
- 10:45 Break Out Session I: Caucuses with Peers
School, county, and municipal officials meet in facilitated small groups with their peers from other communities to discuss and develop a 5-10 minute report for the next Plenary Session: “What do the other groups need to know about collaborating with us on school facility siting.” For example:
1. What about school facility siting is most important to us?
 2. What resources do we bring to the table on this issue?
 3. What do we need (substantively, procedurally, behaviorally) on this issue from the other groups?
 4. What constrains our ability to collaborate on school facility siting with the other groups?
- 11:30 Caucus Reports & Discussion Andrew Sachs, facilitator
5-10 minute presentations from each of the three caucuses, followed by open discussion.

- 12:30 Lunch Break with Panel Discussion Andrew Sachs, facilitator
Richard Sears, Mayor, Holly Springs
Jyoti Sharma,
Director of Facility Planning, Wake County Public School System
- 1:15 Break Out Session II: Community Delegations
Each participating delegation meets separately for a facilitated discussion of
"steps we can take back home to advance collaboration on school facilities
siting across schools, county and municipalities." Please also prepare a 5-10
minute report for the next Plenary Session. Possible topics to address:
1. Barriers to collaboration that we would need to address if we were to
advance collaboration back home, and how we might address those
barriers.
2. Opportunities within this issue that we might be able to exploit together,
and how.
3. Ideas for collaboration that might hold some promise for us when we get
back home.
- 2:15 Delegation Reports to Plenary, Andrew Sachs, facilitator
and Discussion
Four 5-10 minute reports, followed by open discussion.
- 3:30 Wrap Up Andrew Sachs, facilitator
"Reactions to What I've Heard Today," Ronald E. Bogle, President and CEO,
American Architecture Foundation, Washington, D.C (15 minutes)
- Closing Remarks by the Summit Steering Committee (10 minutes)
 Summit Evaluation (5 minutes)
- 4:00 Adjourn Andrew Sachs, facilitator

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