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Durham Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 11 Schools Element

Durham City-County Planning Department

The Durham Comprehensive Plan

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Chapter 11, Schools Element

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Schools Element



*Summary of Issues
Goal 1, Adequacy of
School Facilities
Goal 2, Integration of
Land Use and School
Facility Planning
Definitions*

Durham continues to feel the pressure of new demands placed on schools by new residential development. The Schools Element identifies strategies for planning coordination and the provision of adequate school facilities

Summary of Issues

- 1. Adequacy of School Facilities.** Student population has increased by 1 to 1½ percent annually over the past few years. The number of students added in a typical year could fill a new elementary school. Durham Public Schools must continue to utilize long-range facility planning to address facility needs over the next two decades. The City and County must act to ensure that new development does not result in additional students beyond what the school system can accommodate.
- 2. Reliance on Mobile Classrooms.** Without provision of permanent space to accommodate student population growth, the Durham Public Schools must rely on mobile classrooms. Mobile classrooms provide valuable temporary space and can be used to address a variety of needs, but they cannot match the quality of educational environment that can be established in permanent buildings.
- 3. Integration of Land Use and School Facility Planning.** Schools, historically, were central points in communities. To ensure opportunities for schools to resume this position, Durham Public Schools’ planning efforts must be integrated with those of the City and County. New schools should not be located in areas where growth is not planned by the City and County. Similarly, opportunities for the collocation of schools with other complementary public facilities, such as parks and libraries, should be pursued.

Goal 11.1, Adequacy of School Facilities

Provide and maintain sufficient school building capacity for the needs of school children in Durham.

Objective 11.1.1. School Level of Service Standards

Establish and maintain level of service standards for public school facilities by type of facility (elementary, middle, and high school).

Policy 11.1.1a. School Level of Service Standard. The level of service for public school facilities shall be established as a maximum enrollment of 120 percent of the system’s maximum permanent building capacity, measured on a system-wide basis for each type of facility. Within four years, the City and County shall change the level of service standard from 120 to 110 percent of the system’s maximum permanent building capacity.

Policy 11.1.1b. Adequate Schools Facilities. The City-County Planning Department shall recommend denial of all Zoning Map amendments that propose to allow an increase in projected student generation over that of the existing zoning that would cause the schools of any type to exceed the level of service. In application of this Policy, consideration shall be given to any commitments made by the developer to mitigate the exceedance.

Policy 11.1.1c. Adequate School Facility Policies on a Less than County-Wide Basis. The City-County Planning Department, in conjunction with the City and County Attorneys’ Offices and the Durham Public Schools, shall continue to explore legally defensible strategies to permit adequate school facility policies to be applied on a less than County-wide basis. As part of this effort, the Durham Public Schools shall reassess the school attendance zones and the transfer policy in order to achieve better utilization of school facilities.

Concern about School Level of Service Standard
One member of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee had serious disagreement about the school level of service standard using 120 percent rather than 100 percent.

Objective 11.1.2. Data for Evaluating Adequate Schools Facilities

Develop and maintain current data for the evaluation of the adequacy of school facilities in rezoning requests.

Policy 11.1.2a. Data on School Capacity and Enrollment. The Durham Public Schools shall provide the following data to the City-County Planning Department for use in the evaluation of the adequacy of school facilities:

- i. Total building capacity of all schools by type (elementary, middle and high schools) in the school system;
- ii. The 20th day actual daily enrollment for all schools in the school system;
- iii. An updated copy of Durham Public School’s “Capital Improvements Plan;” and
- iv. Additional information describing the capacity that will be added as a result of any projects for which funding is committed; and
- v. Revised attendance zone boundaries and projections of the attendance impact on all schools of revised attendance zone boundaries.

Policy 11.1.2b. Student Generation Rates. The City-County Planning Department shall utilize the most recent student generation multipliers developed by the Durham Public Schools and approved by the City and County in determining the impact of proposed zoning changes on school capacity.

Policy 11.1.2c. Committed Building Capacity. Projects that add permanent building capacity to schools shown to be funded in documents provided to the Planning Department by the Durham Public School shall be considered to have been committed and shall be included in the evaluation of available space for schools of the particular facility type programmed.

Policy 11.1.2d. Data on the Impacts of Prior Zonings. The City-County Planning Department shall maintain records illustrating the impact of all zoning changes over a three-year period, considering that capacity to have been committed as a result of prior actions by the City and County.

Objective 11.1.3. Maintenance and Improvement of Facilities

Maintain and improve public school facilities as needed.

Policy 11.1.3a. Regular Maintenance and Improvement. Durham Public Schools shall continue to implement a regular program to maintain and improve its school facilities in order to provide students and staff with the best environment for learning.

Objective 11.1.4. Mobile Classroom Usage

Lessen reliance on mobile classrooms.

Policy 11.1.4a. Consideration of Mobile Classrooms in School Facility Analysis. Mobile classrooms shall not be included in the evaluation of the school level of service.

Goal 11.2, Integration of Land Use and School Facility Planning

Ensure that school facilities are incorporated into the long-range comprehensive planning process so that schools may serve as focal points for communities and neighborhoods.

Objective 11.2.1. Shared Data

Utilize common data sources in the development of the Durham Public Schools’ “Capital Improvements Plan.” and the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 11.2.1a. The Durham Comprehensive Plan and the School Capital Improvements Plan. Durham Public Schools shall consider the land use pattern adopted in the Durham Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map as well as the distribution of growth projections developed for the

Comprehensive Plan in their planning process to enhance coordination between the plans of the City, County, and Durham Public Schools Board.

Objective 11.2.2. Siting of Schools

Locate schools where they may assist in providing community and neighborhood focal points.

Policy 11.2.2a. Coordination of Planning. Durham Public Schools, the City, and the County shall coordinate plans for capital projects, seeking to co-locate schools with other facility types, such as parks and libraries that may function as complementary uses.

Policy 11.2.2b. School Sites. Schools shall not be located on sites with severe environmental constraints to development or significant historic resources such that the design of the site would compromise the resources.

Policy 11.2.2c. Joint Planning Protocol, Siting. Durham County and the Durham Public Schools shall implement their Joint Planning Protocol regarding the siting of schools.

Policy 11.2.2d. Facility and Site Reuse. The Durham Public Schools shall consider using existing inactive facilities and site for reuse.

Policy 11.2.2e. Standards for School Site Sizes. The Durham Public Schools shall establish alternative standards for the size of elementary, middle and high school sites appropriate to each Tier. (See Policy 4.3.3b, Standards for School Site Sizes.)

Objective 11.2.3. Planning Process and Standards

Consider community character in the design and appearance of schools.

Policy 11.2.3a. Joint Planning Protocol, Planning. Durham County and the Durham Public Schools shall implement their Joint Planning Protocol regarding planning school facilities.

Policy 11.2.3b. Public School Planning Workshop. In order to most efficiently use school sites and link schools with neighborhoods, the Durham Public Schools shall begin the planning for each new school and major school additions with a public school planning workshop, involving the Durham Public Schools, City and County officials, staff and interested citizens.

Policy 11.2.3c. Daylighting. In order to maximize student performance, designs for new schools and major school renovations shall incorporate daylighting techniques. (See Policy 4.2.5c, Daylighting.)

Policy 11.2.3d. Appearance Commission Review of Proposed School Facilities. In order to enhance design and appearance, the

Durham City-County Appearance Commission shall review and comment on proposed school facilities.

Revision History

- a. None.

