

SUPERIOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS: *Towns are Teachers.*

Employ the Town's Many Business, NGO and Civic Organizations to Educate the City's Residents, Young and Old.

The Vision of the "City's Schools".

Schools define a town. Smart kids are the hallmark of a character town. Grass and trees enhancing a well-kept schoolhouse convey the community's value of education, its honor for children and teachers and its dedication to the future. The character town's vision is that each child in the city receives a good education and each adult has the opportunity for learning throughout their life. While the school board has the legal responsibility for public education, the city has a vested interest in the education system and city governments can help ensure a positive outcome.

The city's role in education. The fact that the schools belong to an independent school system does not mean the city should have a "hands off" policy. To the contrary, the city is the entity that can best tailor the county schools to meet the holistic educational, recreational and cultural enrichment needs and aspirations of the city's residents and their children.

The city's resources include centers for education, recreation and culture that house its libraries, museums, history centers, parks, recreation centers, public gardens, environmental centers, theaters, zoos, aquariums, galleries and art schools. Tapping the full power of these resources is important to creating a town culture and respect for learning.

Each city has the opportunity to "adopt" the schools in their jurisdiction and provide enhanced services and facilities that make a qualitative difference to students and faculty. The idea of "city schools" is based on establishing a qualitative reason for parents to choose to live in the city based on the quality of education available to their children in the public schools. The realization of this idea requires the city to take actions that make a difference.

A perpetual partnership between the school board, the city, the business community and the city's NGOs. Since the city will be in business for many years, the idea of combining public schools with the city's educational, recreational and cultural centers can be pursued even if it takes years to accomplish.



City history taught in the park.

When new schools are sited, a location should be aggressively pursued next to one of the city's centers of education, recreation and culture. Schools near selected businesses make sense. When new parks, libraries, theaters and other such facilities are selected for new construction, locations near or next to a public school should be a priority.

Strategy.

The strategic idea. The strategic idea of "City Schools" is to fully integrate the city's schools into the fabric of the city and to co-locate and programmatically connect its schools with the city's educational, recreational and cultural centers. Being in the city is an enriching and educational experience.

A model city school policy. It could be the policy of the city to be a leader in the education of its citizens, children and adults, by engaging with all the parties responsible for the community's education. The school is the focus for formal education but the neighborhoods, the city's resources, the businesses and the town's non-governmental organizations have an important role to play. Consider the city as a place of learning with students getting the full benefit of the city's resources including its library, museums, galleries, history centers, nature parks, businesses and the myriad of other resources in town. That's a complete education.

The power of connections. The synergistic effect of proximate, connected and partnered city schools, city resources, business participation and the services of the town's NGOs creates the opportunity for the city to increasingly enhance the lives of the citizens.

The City's Strategic Objectives for Schools.

1. **Leadership.** Adopt a School Element of the city's General Plan to establish the city's responsibilities for community education, its commitment to shared facilities and programs and its leadership in partnering.
2. **Partner.** Develop lasting and productive relationships using a Unified Campus Master Plan that outlines the role and responsibility of all partners in the town's educational system:
 - The School System,
 - The City and related agencies,
 - Neighborhood Organizations,
 - Businesses,
 - Non-governmental Organizations [NGOs].



THE PRINCETON SCHOOL BLOCK contains:

- The restored Princeton Elementary School,
- Bob Crosby Field for College Park Little League,
- College Park Community Center and Community Pool,
- Fire Station No. 3 and
- The Princeton Children's Park.

- 3. Connections.** Connect schools to neighborhoods and businesses with activities, sidewalks and other necessary infrastructure.
- 4. Binding agreements.** Employ Joint Use Agreements and other contractual arrangements to commit to sharing facilities and programs.
- 5. Fulfill the town's vision.** Besides the moral obligation, an educated and informed electorate is critical for democracy. As importantly, educational excellence is an important factor for economic development. Higher incomes are generally associated with higher educational attainment. For communities to be pleasant and prosperous places, its children and adults must be well educated.

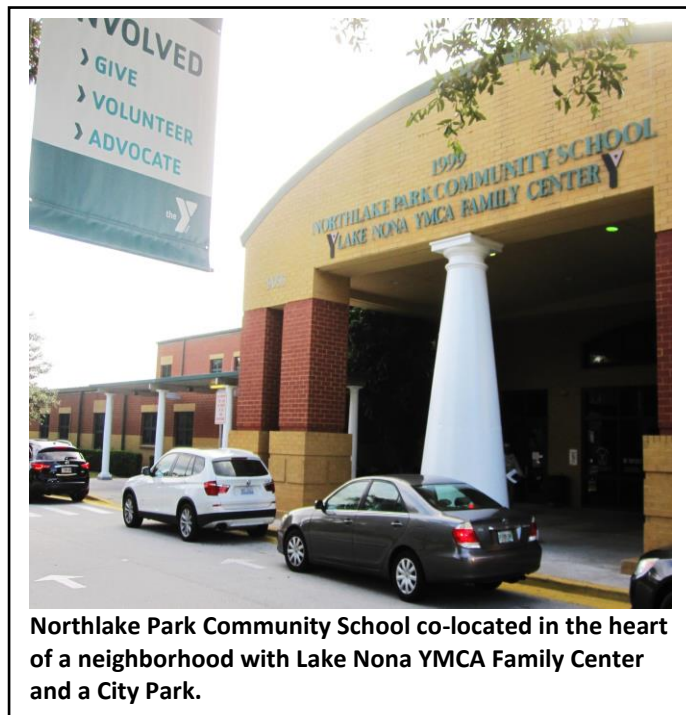
Benefits of Public School, City, Resident, Business and NGO Collaboration.

- 1. Strengthen the system.** Provide city support for schools as they develop high quality faculties, facilities and programs, including:

- Recruiting faculty as influenced by the quality of life in the city,
- Retaining excellent students,
- Integrating schools into the community fabric,
- Creating an active relationship between local businesses and the schools.

- 2. Co-located and connected educational, recreational and cultural resources in the city.**

Develop a plan to provide a public park with a community center next to every elementary school and neighborhood along with bike/ped and transit access to all of the city's educational, recreational and cultural resources.



Northlake Park Community School co-located in the heart of a neighborhood with Lake Nona YMCA Family Center and a City Park.

- 3. Shared use of facilities.** Develop a working agreement with every school in the city to enable public use of recreation facilities. Additionally, come to agreement for the use of school facilities by "qualified" city organizations such as homeowners' associations. The combination of school, parks and community centers with middle schools and high schools is more difficult since these schools are larger, less neighborhood-focused and more intensely devoted to use by students.
- 4. School access to local technology and professional services.** Develop tri-party City-School Board-Business agreements for services, such as: technology systems, library services, transit service, vehicle maintenance coordination and continuing education.
- 5. Connections of schools to neighborhoods and businesses.** Employ the city's public outreach systems to connect the schools to neighborhoods and businesses.

6. **Business partners for each school.** Jointly find a business partner for every city school, including mentoring, technology assistance and other support using programs such as Junior Achievement.
7. **Coordinated infrastructure.** Water and sewer lines can be designed and constructed once, anticipating construction of future and adjacent facilities on the same site. A single stormwater system or parking field can be designed, constructed and maintained for multiple facilities rather than having multiple systems, thereby reducing land, construction and maintenance costs.



8. **Coordinated health and education services.** The availability of meeting space overcomes a barrier often cited by agencies for not providing needed services. Available space can be used for pre-school, after school, health clinic, tutoring and other needed services.
9. **Enrichment inherent in accessible cultural venues.** The mere proximity of libraries, museums, theaters, performing arts centers, zoos, public gardens and similar community assets will draw teachers to use these amenities. This enriches the educational breadth and experience of their students. Schools have recently been cutting programs in music, arts and recreation; partly due to funding, partly due to competing time requirements such as STEM. Accessible museums, libraries and other community resources can be more fully utilized by schools to benefit students.



10. **Cost savings.** Co-location of related uses and activities is the logical outcome that needs to transcend individual fiefdoms.
 - A single budget can be prepared for the coordinated funding of several combined projects...even if the separate facilities will be constructed over a multi-year period by different funding entities.
 - As an example, in exchange for public use of the school's playgrounds, city maintenance funds and crews could maintain the school grounds as documented in a Joint-Use Agreement.
 - This type of joint-use with equitable methods of compensation is quite commonly done for large, multi-phased private developments. The advantages of a single budget include the identification of potential cost savings, better phasing of expenditures based on the phasing plan and better cash management.

- 11. Management and maintenance consolidation.** An arrangement that enables a single entity to manage several adjacent properties applies to grounds keeping, maintenance, stormwater management, security, parking, janitorial service, security lighting, as well as the programming of spaces and buildings for community use.
- 12. Collaborative planning.** The four parties - the city, the school board, businesses and neighborhood resident organizations - can directly participate in the detail design of the City School Element of the City's General Plan that includes a Neighborhood Connection Plan supported by Joint-Use Agreements. The support of other parties such as the many NGOs in every town can enhance the success of the mission to embed the education of the city's children and adults in every activity of the community.

The City School Plan as an Element of The City's General Plan.

The General Plan. The city periodically prepares its General Plan that documents its vision, strategy and action plans for the entire city and for each administrative and operating department in the government. The General Plan guides the city's elected and appointed officials as they make the many day-to-day decisions necessary to run the city. One of the many elements of the city's General Plan is the City's School Plan.

The City's School Plan. The fundamental idea of the City's School Plan is to plan, design/re-design, construct, use and maintain each public school in conjunction with the city's educational, recreational and cultural resources...to combine the individual parts into a functional, cohesive whole with:

- **A Citywide Systems Plan:** One function of the Plan is to identify all public schools in the city along with all of the city's educational, recreational and cultural resources including the connecting transportation system including streets, transit routes, bike ways and sidewalks. The Plan's purpose is to direct the interactions of the many facilities to optimize the accessibility and use of each.
- **The Unified Campus Master Plan that includes Land Use, Circulation and Connectivity:** The combination of the individual properties in the immediate vicinity of every school can lead to the planning of the several properties as one unit in a Unified Campus Master Plan. The Plan directs activities for the totality of the co-located properties. This Plan identifies locations for buildings, park lands, recreation areas, parking, stormwater areas and circulation systems for pedestrians, vehicles and transit. The idea is much more than just coordinating the planning of adjacent properties; it is combining the planning as though the pieces were those of a single entity operating as a single unit.
- **Coordinated Infrastructure:** Water and sewer, electrical, stormwater, gas and other utilities can be planned into the Unified Campus Master Plan to provide efficiencies, eliminate redundancies, and provide allocations when necessary for costing, security and maintenance. Infrastructure construction and maintenance can be advantageously coordinated, not necessarily combined. This potentially reduces the cost of design, construction and maintenance.
- **Phasing Plans:** Since the Unified Campus Master Plan contains several projects that may be scheduled for funding in different years by different entities, a phasing plan is an essential part of the Unified Plan to ensure that the differing project time-frames become an asset to the overall project. Interim uses can reserve lands for their ultimate uses once the time comes for completion of the planned elements.

- **Partnership Arrangements:** Build on an attitude of partnering. The city, the school system, businesses and NGOs can be engaged with pre-arranged interactions, such as a youth orchestra, a sports team or neighborhood activities enacted through a Joint Use Agreement [JUA].

Neighborhood Connection Plans.

The Neighborhood Connection Plan extends off-site from the campus beyond the school grounds into the neighborhoods. Sidewalks, bikeways and safe street crossings are the main feature of this Plan for the “walk-to” zone associated with each school.

This Plan fulfills the city’s responsibility to provide safe bike/ped access to schools, shops and parks for its residents. This plan enables residents in the neighborhood to have easy and safe access to their city schools, parks and community centers. The Unified Campus Master Plan identifies a secure and safe access system for entering and exiting the combined school, park, community center complex.

Joint-Use Agreements [JUAs].

Joint-Use Agreements between the school board and the city exist in many jurisdictions. They can focus on one activity, such as enabling public use of school grounds for recreation and related activities with defined responsibilities for the school board and the city, or multiple activities.

The more expansive arrangements can include cultural enrichments such as programmed interactions with museums, art centers, theaters, music halls and libraries. Co-location is helpful.

Some agreements integrate nutritional and health clinics along with other obvious services, such as:

- Agreements that enable community organizations, such as city “qualified” homeowners associations, to use the school grounds and meeting rooms for their activities consistent with school schedules.
- Agreements that lead to joint contracts for grounds maintenance, lighting and security systems, parking management, transit stops and stormwater management.
- Agreements by which operating costs may be reduced with one grounds maintenance contract for one area containing multiple facilities rather than several contracts for each of the several smaller areas.
- Agreements that permit local sports clubs to use play fields under prescribed conditions.
- Agreements that invite the local hospital to teach nutrition and health safety during or after hours; law enforcement officers may provide safety information.
- Agreements that encourage many groups to use a single community stage designed solely for school productions.

Joint-Use Agreements can exist between the city, school boards, neighbor organizations, businesses and NGOs such as the YMCA or The Boys and Girls Club. Recreation and community centers adjacent to elementary schools can be important places for pre-school and after school programs, adult education and community health activities. Agreements between the school, the city, NGOs and businesses to staff the centers can include extended day and summer programs, among others. Power comes from collaboration.

Conclusions.

The city is the education venue for children and adults. Schools, parks, museums, libraries and theaters all contribute to the education experience. Use them all; create a community system that employs every learning venue to provide technical, cultural and physical education to residents, old and young. Our society no longer has the luxury of separate, special-purpose entities that focus exclusively on their own mission while being oblivious to the needs and opportunities offered by closely related entities. Even if we could afford it, it is not a good idea to separate the education of children from the many cultural venues of the city.

Fully utilize every facility. The joint use of related facilities is the opportunity before us to fully and cooperatively use resources owned and funded by separate entities. The outcome is better and less expensive.

City government must lead. Essentially, the city must decide to play a strong role in the education of its residents, adults and children. City government cannot say it doesn't do school. It cannot say education is someone else's job. Cities can act by:

- 1. Supporting public schools.** The city can support and supplement the resources and facilities of the public school system.
- 2. Connecting residents and schools.** The city can facilitate the connection of every neighborhood to its schools through physical connections, social activities and economic support.
- 3. Connecting schools with cultural, business and recreation organizations and venues.** The city can facilitate the connection of every school to the city's many educational, recreational and cultural resources be they private businesses or non-profit organizations. Zoos, museums, art galleries and private businesses have something to offer students of all ages.
- 4. Soliciting business and NGO support for public schools.** The city can insist that local businesses and non-governmental organizations be involved in the public education process to instill the entrepreneurial and community service spirit in children and the community.
- 5. Citizens, old and young, learn that city government matters, or it doesn't.**

