



A GUIDE TO SCHOOL SITE SELECTION

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FACILITIES SERVICES UNIT
December 8, 2003**

FOREWORD

This guide contains information developed to comply with the National Flood Insurance Program Rules and Regulations and Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-2-260(c)(4); § 20-2-260(c)(7); and § 20-2-260(d)(6) that require the Department of Education to “adopt uniform rules, regulations, policies, standards, and criteria respecting all locations, construction, equipping, operating, maintenance, and use of educational facilities” and “to review and approve proposed sites and all architectural and engineering drawings and specifications on construction projects for educational facilities”.

The attached form “Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval,” is designed for use by local school systems in making preliminary determinations concerning the acceptability of school sites. It will be used by the School Site Approval Committee when making decisions concerning school site evaluations during the official approval process. A copy of the guide and form can be obtained from the Facilities Services Unit’s website located at: “http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/site2_a.pdf”. For a copy of the Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval Form only, please visit the Facilities Services website at “http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/facilities/siteform_a.pdf”. A copy of the guide and form can also be obtained by contacting the Facilities Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Education.

Requests for approval of all proposed sites for educational facilities should be directed to:

**Director of the Facilities Services Unit
1670 Twin Towers East
205 Butler Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5050
Telephone Number (404) 656-2454**

A GUIDE TO SCHOOL SITE SELECTION

A Good School Site is Important

A good, well-developed site and a well-equipped, functionally designed school plant is a basic physical tool for a quality education. Without one or the other, the educational program may suffer. Current school programs include many activities that must be carried on outside the walls of the physical plant. Well-planned and properly developed outdoor areas are essential to support outdoor activities, provide vehicular circulation, adequate and convenient parking and also be conducive to the safety of children. The site is an integral part of the total school plant and may enhance or inhibit the achievement of a school's educational objectives.

Environment is an influential factor in the lives of young children. Therefore, the school site should contribute positively to the health, safety and social aspects of a child's life at school.

Choosing a good site is one of the important early steps in overall planning. Success or failure in this initial step will be reflected in every subsequent stage in the developmental process.

For these reasons, the choice of a school site requires careful study, including a thorough and objective evaluation. Much thought should be given to the basic principles involved in good site selection.

These principles, when studied in the light of their relation to the local situation, should provide a basis for the objective selection of the best site available. Undue consideration given to the value or acquisition cost of a school site can be false economy, and often has proven to be very expensive.

Criteria for Selection of School Sites

Size:

The *minimum* acreage requirements of the State Board of Education are:

Elementary Schools - five acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.

Middle Schools - 12 acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.

High Schools - 20 acres plus one acre for each 100 students in FTE.

In developed areas, deviations from the *minimum* acreage requirements may be made by the site approval committee if the reduced acreage is considered appropriate.

Although *minimum* acreages are established, large acreages are highly desirable. Also, those responsible for selecting sites must remain aware of development limitations imposed by certain physical factors of the acreage being considered.

The size of the school may not be the only criterion affecting site size. The possibility of expansion, anticipated community use of the school or area, and the school program are other factors to consider.

Utilities:

Utilities essential to the operation of a modern school plant must be available.

Electricity and telephone services are essential to the operation of a school plant and must be accessible to the proposed site.

The desirability of **public water and sewage service** to a school site cannot be over emphasized. The cost of installing private systems, along with the continuing maintenance costs, plus environmental considerations all but eliminate consideration of private installations. Only in cases of overriding circumstances will site approval be granted at locations which cannot be served by public sewage systems.

Safety Hazards:

The school site should be free of conditions and installations which endanger the life, safety and health of children. If one or more of the potential hazards identified on page 5 of this document exists on or near a proposed school site, further consideration should be given to (a) evaluating other sites where these potential hazards do not exist, or (b) determining how the potential risk posed to students and faculty by an existing hazard could be minimized. Costs associated with implementing risk reduction measures should be considered when making a final decision regarding a proposed site. Any proposed school site adjacent to an airport, or in the final approach or departure pattern of aircraft should be evaluated carefully. The site should be a reasonably safe distance from the flight pattern to avoid the danger of falling aircraft. Also the site should be far enough from airports and flight patterns to offer reasonable protection from interfering noise levels.

School sites should be located a reasonable distance from lakes, streams, or bodies of water that could be considered unsafe to children due to depth or other conditions. Whenever possible, sites adjacent to heavily traveled streets and highways should be avoided. Also, school sites in

locations subject to industrial pollution may present risks to students and faculty with respiratory problems.

Environmental Factors:

The school site should possess physically desirable characteristics and be located so surrounding areas reflect characteristics conducive to the development of attitudes and responses in children considered to be socially, culturally and educationally desirable.

Whenever possible, the selection of a school site in an area zoned for commercial or industrial development should be avoided. The school location should be insulated from business and industrial development. The routes to and from the school site should not expose children to hazardous environmental materials or safety hazards.

The location of a school site should be acceptable to the school patronage community from the standpoint of general environmental surroundings and vehicular accessibility.

Geographical and Related Factors:

The school site should provide convenient accessibility, be supportive to an efficient transportation system, be accessible to community services needed by the school and be appropriately located with respect to other schools and the population to be served.

All school site approvals must be accompanied by a letter of assurance that the site is not in a floodplain or the Coastal High Hazard Area. This letter of assurance must be from the Floodplain Management Coordinator of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

To obtain the letter of assurance, write the Floodplain Management Coordinator, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and enclose:

1. County or City Road Map with the location of the site clearly marked and
2. Site Plan with the location of existing or proposed structures identified.

The letter of request should include a brief description of the school location with directions from a given point, such as a town or city, and the names of roads and highway numbers, and the approximate acreage of the site. The State Floodplain Management Office is authorized to request any additional information as needed to complete the evaluation of the proposed school site. Additional information may include a Surveyed Plat using a point of reference with the site tied to the centerline of an intersecting road. In the event a Surveyed Plat is necessary but unavailable, no final determination may be given. Allow from 7 to 10 days for the floodplain determination review process. A form for the request of a floodplain determination is available in the Guideline entitled Regulations and Procedures to Comply with the Standards and Criteria of the National Flood Insurance Program. The address of the Floodplain Management Office follows:

**Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Floodplain Management Office
7 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive
Suite 440
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Telephone: (404) 656-6382
Fax: (404) 656-6383**

Site Development:

The physical characteristics of the school site should be such that the cost of grading, drainage and development will be relatively low.

The evaluation of a site as it relates to physical development is a technical task, requiring the knowledge and experience of a qualified professional. The investment required to obtain a professional evaluation for physical development may result in considerable future savings.

Criteria for Selection:

A Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment will be required for each school site. The Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment shall follow the methodology of the ASTM Practice E 1527-97. A Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment Report must be attached to each completed "Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval Form" submitted to the Department of Education for review and approval.

If any one or more of the following hazards is located on or near (up to a three mile radius) a proposed school site, a Risk/Hazard Analysis shall be required in addition to the Phase I – Environmental Site Assessment:

- (1) Electrical transmission lines rated at 115KV or higher;
- (2) Oil or petroleum products transmission lines and storage facilities;
- (3) Hazardous chemical pipelines;
- (4) Natural gas transmission and distribution lines larger than ten inches in diameter with a pressure of 200 psi or more;
- (5) Propane storage facilities;
- (6) Railroads;
- (7) Major highways;
- (8) Airport approach or departure paths;
- (9) Industrial/manufacturing facilities:
 - (a) Using or storing hazardous substances as defined under Title 40 CFR 262;
 - (b) Emitting hazardous air pollutants as defined under the "Clean Air Act" and/or
 - (c) 1990 "Clean Air Act Amendment" – Risk Management Plan Sec. 112(r)
- (10) Lakes, rivers, dams, reservoirs, or other bodies of water;
- (11) Potential flooding because the property is located within the 100 year flood plain or damn breach zone;
- (12) Nuclear waste storage facilities;
- (13) Munitions or explosives storage or manufacturing.

A Risk/Hazard Analysis must be completed by a registered, professional engineer licensed to do business in the State of Georgia and shall include the following information at a minimum:

- (1) Identification of each hazard;
- (2) An evaluation of each hazard;
- (3) Options for mitigating each identified hazard (if appropriate);
- (4) A statement from the engineer based on his or her professional judgment and the findings of the Risk/Hazard Analysis regarding the suitability of the site for a school.

The Department of Education reserves the right to request information in addition to that provided in the Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment and/or the Risk/Hazard Analysis. Additional information may be needed prior to reaching a decision regarding the appropriateness

of a proposed site if any of the above named hazards exist on or up to the area located within a three-mile radius of the proposed school site.

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PRELIMINARY SCHOOL SITE EVALUATION AND
SCHOOL SITE APPROVAL FORM**

Sections I through VI of this form are designed for two purposes:

- (1) For use by local school systems when considering property for school sites and requesting approval of a proposed school site.
- (2) To summarize information regarding this site for use by the Site Approval Committee.

Section VII is to be used by the School Site Approval Committee for official approval of a school site.

I. SCHOOL SYSTEM IDENTIFICATION AND CONTACT PERSON

School System: _____ _____	Name of Superintendent: _____ Person to Contact (designee): _____
Mailing Address: _____ _____ _____ _____	Phone Number: _____ FAX Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

II. LOCATION OF PROPOSED SITE

Address of Proposed Site (if available) and/or legal definition of the property: _____ _____ _____ _____	
Acreage in proposed Site: _____ Does this acreage meet the minimum requirements? (Circle One) Yes No Please attach an explanation or rationale if the answer to the above question is "No".	Clear Title Obtainable? (Circle One) Yes No

III. NOTIFICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Has the Department of Transportation been notified of this site? (Please circle one.)	Yes	No
When was the Department of Transportation notified? (Please enter date.)	_____	

IV. PROPOSED SCHOOL TO BE LOCATED ON THIS SITE (BASIC INFORMATION)

Name of Proposed School: _____		
Proposed Grades: _____	Approximate Number of Students: _____	
Number of Instructional Units Proposed: _____	Is this the maximum size planned for this School? (Circle One) Yes No	Is this school being designed for future expansion? (Circle One) Yes No
Estimated date school is to be completed and occupied: Date: _____ Comments: _____		If expanded, maximum number of instructional units proposed in the future: _____ I.U.

V. UTILITIES AVAILABLE ON THE PROPOSED SITE

(If Utilities are not currently available on the site, please indicate when utility providers anticipate delivery of utilities to the site.)

UTILITY	CURRENTLY AVAILABLE?		WHEN AVAILABLE?	OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS	
	Yes	No	(Date)		
(a) Electricity				Voltage: _____	Phase: _____
(b) Natural Gas				Line Size: _____	Line Pressure: _____
(c) Telephone					
(d) Cable					
(e) Water					
Public				Line Size: _____	Line Pressure: _____ Attach FLOW TEST results (See Note Below)*
Private				Line Size: _____	Line Pressure: _____ Attach FLOW TEST results (See Note Below)*
(f) Sewage					
Public					
Private					

*Please attach a copy of the FLOW TEST results from the water hydrant nearest to the site. Show the distance from the closest hydrant to the site.

MISCELLANEOUS SITE INFORMATION

(For each item, circle the appropriate response. If Other is selected, please enter appropriate response.)

(a) Property Zoned	Residential	Industrial	Commercial	Other: _____
(b) Adjacent Development or Existing Community Design	Residential	Industrial	Commercial	Other: _____ _____
(c) Traffic Conditions Around Site	Congested	Moderate	Light	Other: _____
(d) Topography	Steep	Rolling	Gently Sloping	Flat
(e) Grading for Building	Excessive	Moderate	Minimal	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(f) Rock Excavation	Unlikely	Some But Not Excessive	Excessive	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(g) Area Available for Parking	Adequate Space	Limited Space	Inadequate Space	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(h) Vehicular Access to Site	Excellent Potential	Development Restricted	Development Difficult	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(i) Area Available for Athletic and Recreation Area Development	Adequate	Limited	Inadequate	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)

VI. SYSTEM REQUEST FOR SITE APPROVAL

The _____ School System requests approval of the proposed school site identified on this form. An initial investigation has been conducted, a Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment has been conducted, and if required a Risk/Hazard Analysis has been completed. After considering the findings from all studies completed and evaluating the potential school sites available for this school, the _____ Board of Education is submitting the required information and requesting approval of this proposed school site by an appropriately convened Site Approval Committee.

_____ Signature of Board Chairperson	_____ (Date)
_____ Signature of School Superintendent	_____ (Date)

ATTACHMENTS:

The following documents must be submitted to the Facilities Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Education before a Site Approval Committee can be convened to evaluate your system's request for approval of a proposed school site:

- (1) Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval Form with Sections I-VI completed;
- (2) A copy of the letter of assurance from the Flood Plain Management Coordinator of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources stating that this proposed school site is not in a flood plain or Coastal High Hazard Area;
- (3) A copy of the rough plat of the proposed school site;
- (4) A copy of the Flow Test results taken at the potable water hydrant nearest to the school site;
- (5) A copy of the Phase I – Environmental Site Assessment; and
- (6) A copy of the Risk/Hazard Analysis – Only if required.

Once this documentation has been received, a Site Approval Committee will be convened at the earliest possible date to evaluate your system's request for approval of the proposed school site.

The Committee is authorized to request any additional information on any criteria (section) when, in the judgment of the committee, such information is needed to complete the evaluation of the proposed school site.

