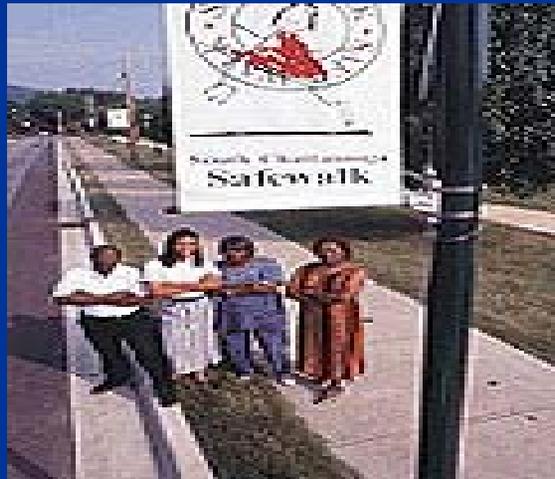


Rethinking Local Planning
and School Siting to
Address the Obesity Epidemic

Presentation by Marya Morris, AICP
Obesity and the Built Environment
May 25, 2004
Washington, DC



Thesis: Communities that reduce sprawl and address potential health impacts of plans and land-use controls will have more healthy, physically active residents.



Five Strategic Points of Intervention

1. Visioning and goal setting
2. Rethinking planning in all contexts
3. Local implementation tools
4. Site Design and Development
5. Siting Public Facilities and Capital Spending



1. Visioning and Goal Setting

- Begins with a discussion of shared values
- Results in a shared image of a community imagines most desired future
- Provides a broad context within which goals are set and plans are developed
- Majority of planning efforts now launched with a visioning exercise (reflective of more citizen participation)



Where Health and Physical Activity Fits in the Visioning and Goal Setting Process

- Residents' shared desire for healthy communities
- Enhancement and improvement of quality of life
- It is government's responsibility to protect the public's health, safety and general welfare
- Environmental justice (and the removal of health disparities) is a land-use issue



2. Rethinking State and Local Planning

- Comprehensive plans
- Neighborhood plans
- Redevelopment plans
- Functional plans
 - Health services
 - Bicycle and pedestrian
 - Transit
 - Streets and circulation
 - Trails
 - Parks
 - Housing
 - Economic development
 - Schools and campuses



How Health and Physical Activity Fit into State and Local Planning



- Smart growth is, by definition, supportive of physical activity
- Increasing transportation options
 - Reducing VMT
 - Improving air quality
 - Open space, trails, bike/ped
- Creating urban service limits
 - Monitors utility extensions
- Minimizing health risks
 - Natural hazards, hazardous materials, noise, injury prevention

3. Local Implementation Tools

- Zoning and subdivision regulations
 - Rethink development density
 - Mix land uses
 - Street connectivity
 - Require sidewalks
- Transit-oriented development
- Traditional neighborhood development
- Capital improvement programs
- Streetscape improvements
- Neighborhood traffic calming



How Can Plan Implementation Tools Promote Physical Activity?

- Open space, trails, bike, and ped encourage routine activity
- Equitable allocation of capital improvements
- Traffic calming, and ped and bikecentric plans address safety and injury prevention
- APFOs address air quality, vmt, and capacity of wastewater systems
- Neighborhood planning, TND, mixed use, increase density address social isolation and loss of community



4. Site Design and Development

- Improve the pedestrian environment
- Provide security, lighting, visibility
- Protect people from traffic
- Adequate accommodation of bike and ped facilities
- Building orientation, setback requirements
- Street trees, landscaping, open spaces
- Well connected routes between origins and destinations



How Can Site Design and Development Encourage Physical Activity?



- Traffic calming, landscaping, and street redesign reduces pedestrian and vehicle crashes
- Adequate street lighting can reduce crime, personal injury
- Inclusion of stairs provides incentive for climbing
- Onsite stormwater and wastewater management both protect groundwater, minimize flooding
- Streetscape enhancements include shade trees, pedestrian comfort, and amenities, promote walking and social interaction
- Buffering between incompatible land uses reduces noise, improves air quality

5. Siting and Use of Public Facilities



- Public Spaces
- Schools
- Post offices
- Libraries
- Museums
- Parks
- Plazas
- City Hall
- Campuses
- Community Centers

How Does Public Facility Siting and Use Relate to Physical Activity?



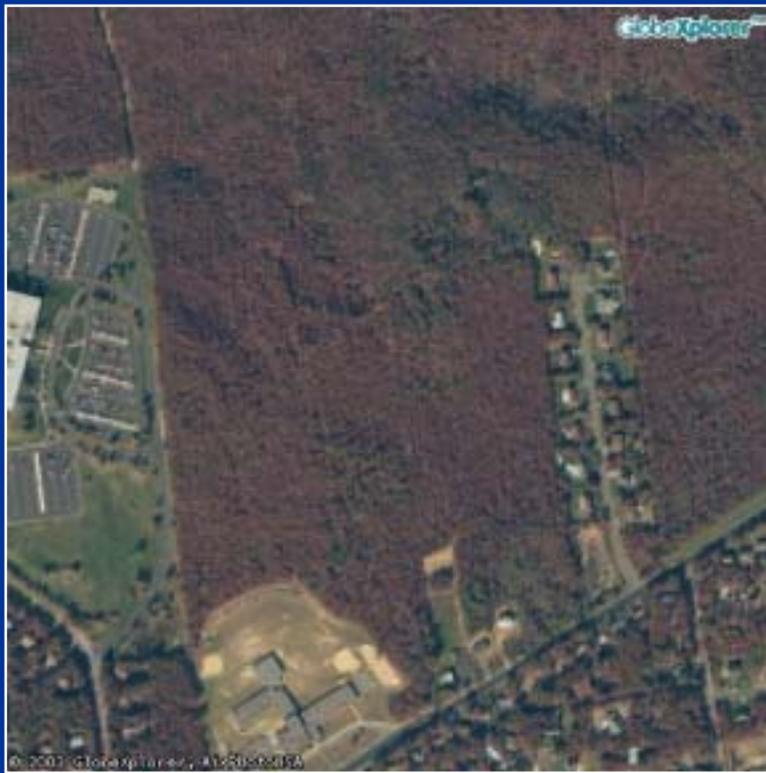
- Addresses school location, size, travel mode choice
- Can promote safe routes to schools
- Addresses full spectrum of elderly housing, mobility issues
- Siting public spaces, parks, post offices, libraries serve as walking destinations, community gathering places
- Capital budgeting can address equitable, minimize disparities

LESSON FOR MAY 25, 2004

Poor, uncoordinated planning
Gigantic school size standards
Biased funding formula
+ Poorly integrated sites
= School Sprawl

From this school district's website: "This 38-acre campus is located on Interstate 680 between rolling hills of bean and corn fields in southwest Iowa."





← Before

During Construction



Sachem High School, Farmington, N.Y.

Barriers to Walking or Bicycling to School (as identified by parents)

55% said distance; 40% said danger



And is it any wonder why?



Photo: Frederick County, Md. Public Schools



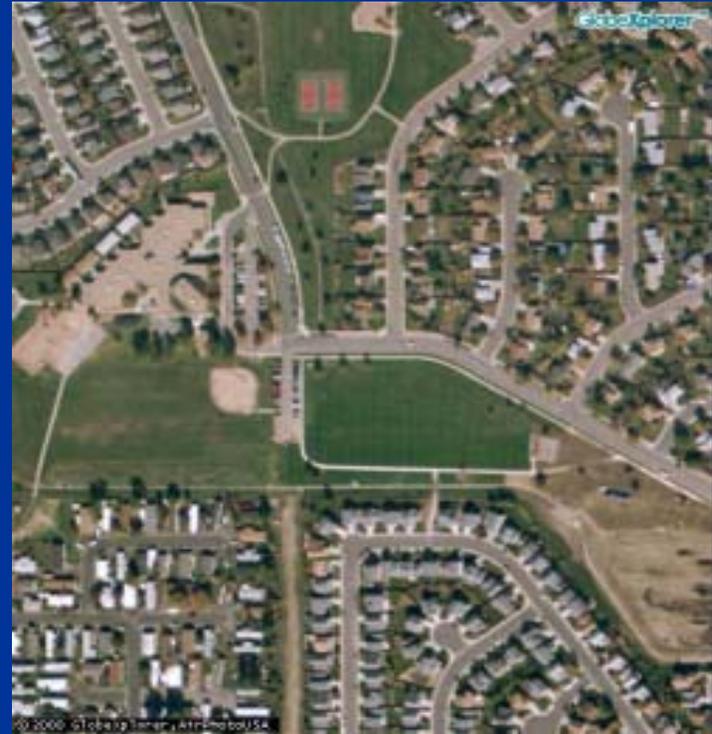
Photo : Andrew Dannenberg, MD

School Siting: Who Decides?



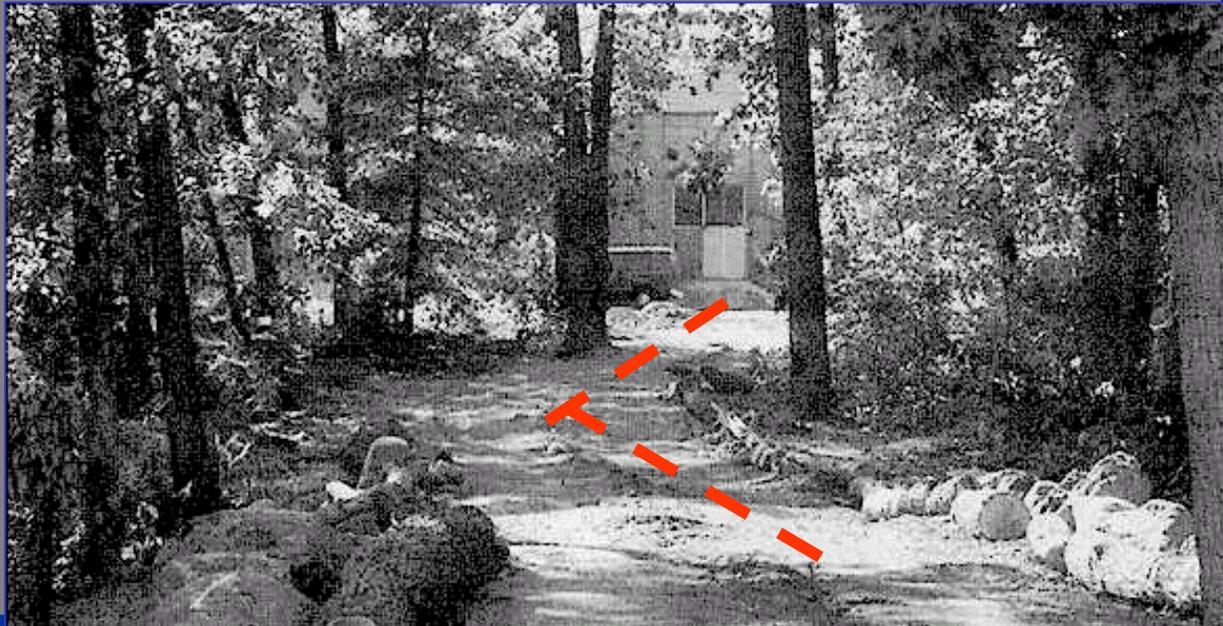
I wish they'd asked me what I thought before they built the school over there

Fugitive Paths and Formal Routes



So Close but Yet So Far

Until 1999, Waltham Mass., high school students living in the Forest Street area could peek through the woods at at their school from the end of a cul-de-sac. A easement that had been promised by the developer in the 1980s did not appear on the final plat. Kids resorted to cutting through yards to avoid a two mile car trip or a 10-minute walk along a busy road. After a long dispute over a forgotten easement a resident donated a portion of his property to allow for the path.



Benefits Reported of Smaller, Neighborhood-Centered Schools

- More kids live within walking distance
- Schools can serve as the recreational, cultural, and community center
- Reverse the trend of disinvestment in existing schools and neighborhoods
- Capitalizes on existing public infrastructure capacity
- More personalized learning environments; increased parental involvement



States, Localities Now Addressing the School Siting/Land-use Planning Disconnect

Maine

- Joint Land-use Planning/Education Task Force (2000)
 - Outcomes: New guidelines for appropriate school siting: state passed a School Siting Approval Rule and did away with CEFPI size standards

North Carolina

- UNC-CH study, *Good Schools—Good Neighborhoods*
 - Identified factors affecting school siting: suburbanization, funding formulas, economics, land use regs., state size guidelines
 - Outcomes: Detailed recommendations aimed at school boards, local governments, and state Dept. of Public Instruction

States, Localities Now Addressing the School Siting/Land-use Planning Disconnect

Washington

- 1990 Growth Management Act exempted school districts from having to recognize local growth boundaries and plans
 - Rural communities quickly raised concerns about school sprawl
 - King County Growth Management Council now requests school districts to account for growth boundaries
 - Puget Sound Regional Council recommended strategies
 - Require local govts. to identify buildable infill sites for schools
 - Eliminate minimum size requirements
 - Revise policy to favor renovation over new construction
 - Expand use of schools to make them centers of communities

States, Localities Now Addressing the School Siting/Land-use Planning Disconnect

New Jersey

- 2001 State Plan requires coordinated school facility planning
- Aimed at stopping school sprawl, shifting \$\$ back to school renovation

Michigan

- Law exempts schools from zoning
- MI Land Use Institute 2003 study found major school building in areas with declining enrollment
- Land consumption by schools far outpacing enrollment.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow that reflects on the water's surface. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

Thank You!

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