

Webinar: EPA Smart School Siting Tool

A new tool to help communities site schools that promote healthy learning and community well-being

North Central Texas Council of Governments

July 26, 2016

Agenda and Presenters

Agenda

- 1) Introduction to School Siting in Texas
- 2) EPA Smart School Siting Tool
- 3) Questions & Answers

Today's Presenters

Kathryn Rush, Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments

Regina Langton, Senior Policy Analyst, U.S. EPA Office of Sustainable Communities

Kate Marshall, Director, Land and Sustainability Programs, CSRA

Bill Michaud, Senior Technical Advisor, CSRA

Participating in Today's Webinar

- Please mute your phone during the presentations
- Questions and answers:
 - Please hold your questions until after the presentations
 - Submit your question using the “Chat” feature



Send to:

Intro to School Siting in Texas

Kathryn Rush

Transportation Planner

North Central Texas Council of Governments

July 26, 2016

What is School Siting?

The process by which a decision is made on where to locate schools, either by:

1. Building a new school
2. Renovating an existing school
3. Closing/consolidating existing schools

...and the layout of the school site.



Adamson High School, Dallas ISD

Why Is School Location Important?

Texas is adding more students and building more schools than any other state in the nation.

Texas K-12 Student Enrollment



Number of Students Added Per State, 1994-2013:

U.S. Average: 124,141

California: 881,640

Texas: 1,288,049

Schools Have Long-Lasting Impacts on Communities

Student Achievement

"One of the keys to improving education is a sense of community where teacher, student and parent all feel a sense of ownership in their school."

– South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, 2003 State of the State Address



Source: Georgia Conservancy

Schools Have Long-Lasting Impacts on Communities

Transportation



School location affects how students and staff get to school.

Researchers from the EPA found a 30% increase in number of cars on the road between 7:15 and 8:15 am. during the school year.

Travel times/
delay

Safety of
pedestrians
and cyclists

Traffic
congestion

Air pollution

Student
access to
extracurricula
r activities



Schools Have Long-Lasting Impacts on Communities

Economic Development and Growth



Source: Georgia Conservancy

Challenges

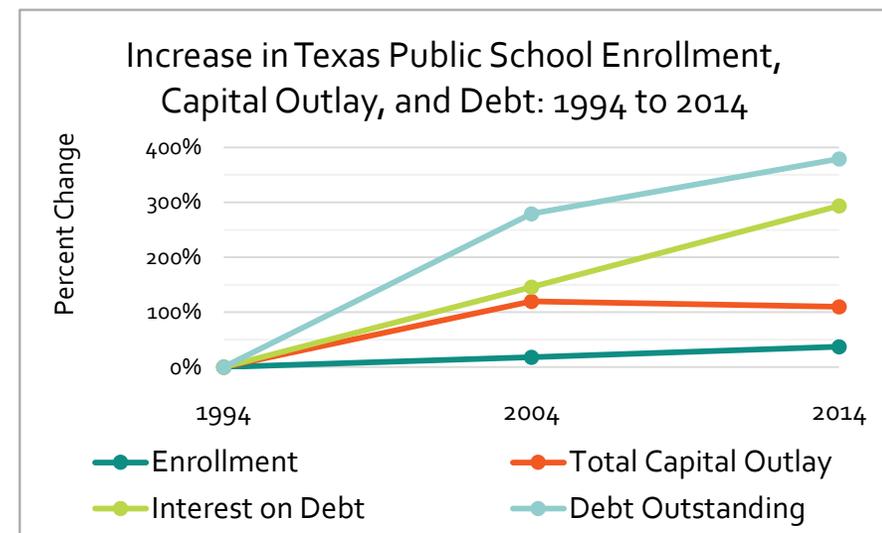
Lack of State-level Guidance

- No state-level guidance or regulation on how or where to locate schools
- School districts are encouraged but not required to develop long-range facility plans
- Lack of clear direction or discussion of the benefits for an ISD and municipality to have buy-in on locating practices and preferences

Challenges

Large Budget Item / Limited Funding

- School facilities are second largest sector of public infrastructure spending, after highways.
- ISDs rely on voter-approved general obligation bonds to access capital funding.
 - To pass bonds, an ISD must balance its needs with what it believes the community will support.
 - Citizen concerns about large bonds and increasing debt are making it harder to pass bond elections.
- Flood of bond programs and competition from private sector driving up construction costs in North Texas.
- Educational changes also drive spending: expanded Pre-K, technology, career and technical education (CTE), magnet schools, etc.



Source: U.S. Census of Governments, Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data
Note: 1994 and 2004 adjusted to 2014 dollars to account for inflation.

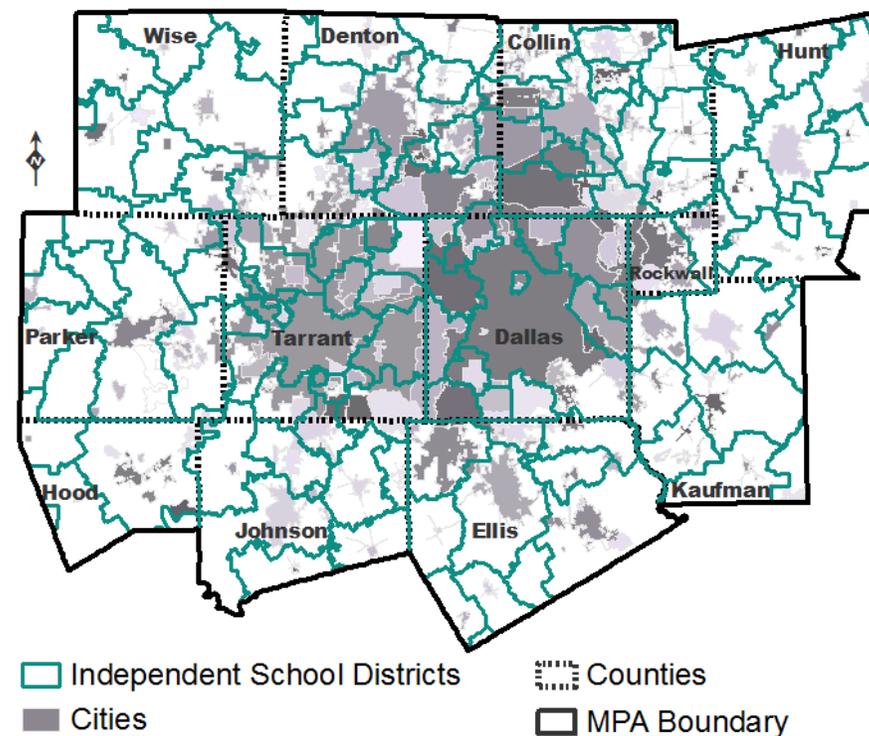
Challenges

Interagency Coordination

Obstacles:

- Autonomy
- Different geographic boundaries
- Tradition – often no history of working together
- Lack of state policy framework to collaborate
- Trust
- Time, cost
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of leadership

DFW Metropolitan Planning Area



Opportunities/Benefits of Interagency Coordination

- Fewer costly delays in the renovation or construction of school facilities
- Siting decisions that advance educational and community goals
- Closer ties between development and school capacity
- Increased resource efficiency
- Greater community support for school bonds
- Better links between schools and adjacent neighborhoods
- Improved student access and safety by coordinating construction of new schools with road and sidewalk improvements
- Better alignment of local comprehensive plans and school facility plans
- May have lower infrastructure costs with infill school sites versus locations on the edges of communities with larger tracts of greenfield land

EPA Smart School Siting Tool

A new tool to help communities site schools that promote healthy learning and community well-being

Tool Overview

Assessment & Planning Workbook

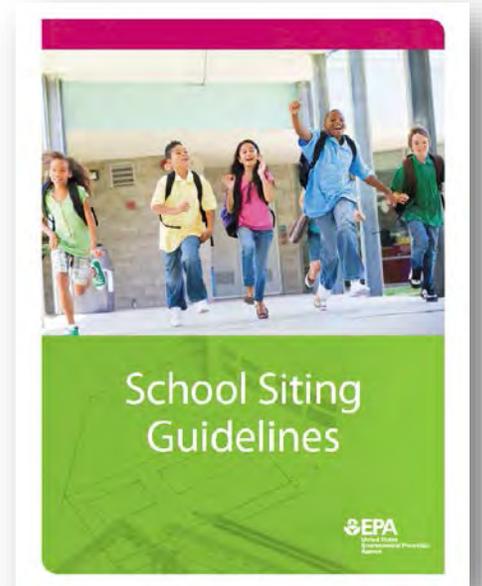
Webinar: July 26, 2016

Background Guidelines and Training

School Siting Guidelines

- Meaningful community involvement
- Health, safety and environmental evaluation
- Opportunities to promote environmental justice
- Renovation, upgrade, adaptation and expansion
- Possible sites in overburdened communities
- Multi-modal, active transportation options
- Schools as community hubs
- Comprehensive assessment of costs

www.epa.gov/schools/school-siting-guidelines



Smart School Siting Tool Key Objectives

The tool is designed to...

- Encourage collaboration and coordination in school siting
- Use data to enhance community decision-making transparency
- Provide structure to get started and keep going
- Support siting decisions that reinforce community goals
- Link community infrastructure and school agency investments

Available at:

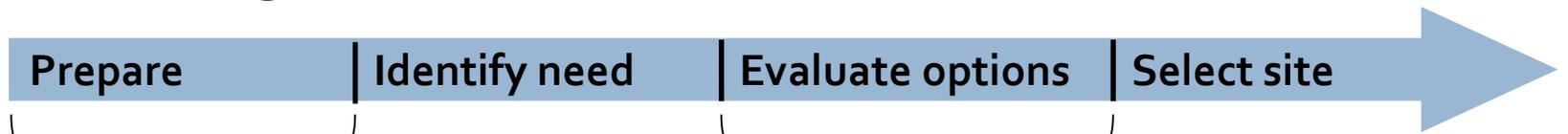
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-school-siting-tool>



Smart School Siting Tool Overview

Two Parts

School Siting Timeline



1 **Assessment & Planning Workbook**
Helps communities prepare for siting decisions by assessing coordination between school siting and other planning processes

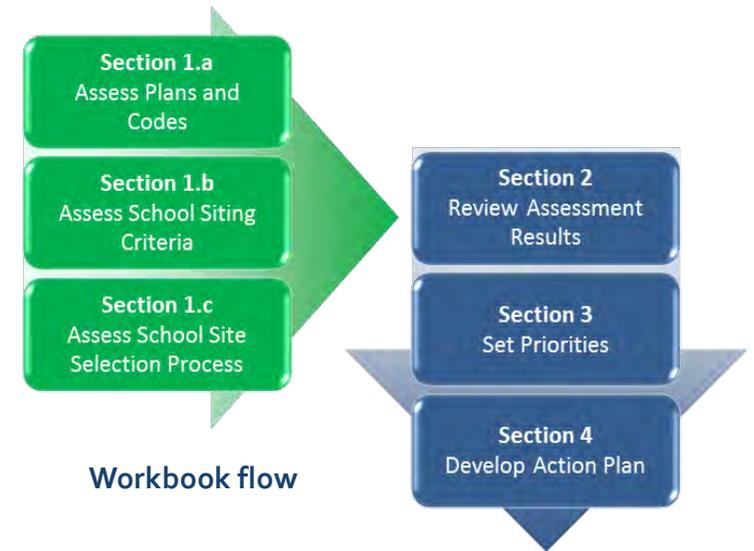
2 **Site Comparison Workbook**
Helps communities compare and evaluate school siting alternatives, including renovation, expansion, and new construction

Smart School Siting Tool

Assessment & Planning Workbook Overview

Design:

- User-friendly downloadable Excel file
- Three assessment sections with ~200 closed (“select one”) questions, with space for comments
- Summary, priority-setting, and action planning worksheets



Yes	To some extent	Unclear	No	Not Applicable	Answer Later
<input type="radio"/>					

Answer choices

Assessment areas:

- Coordination between school and community plans and codes
- Alignment of school siting criteria and community planning priorities
- Coordination between school siting and community planning processes

Smart School Siting Tool Site Comparison Workbook Overview

Design:

- User-friendly downloadable Excel file
- Site summary sheet, 5 worksheets with 25 multiple choice questions, and 2 cost planning worksheets
- High-level and detailed summary reports



Workbook navigation aid

Select the scenario that most closely represents the school site:

One street, dead-ending at the school site.

One street, adjacent to the school site.

Two or more streets, adjacent to the school site.

Score

Typical question format

Site comparison factors:

- Proximity to students and population centers
- Location in the community
- Beneficial site characteristics
- Connectivity with the neighborhood
- Bike and pedestrian accessibility
- One-time capital and recurring annual costs

**Assessment &
Planning Workbook**
A Deeper Look

- 1) **A Deeper Look at the Assessment & Planning Workbook**
- 2) **Enhanced Facility Assessment & Planning : An Example**

**Assessment &
Planning Workbook**
**Why Coordinate
and Collaborate?**

When school siting and community plans are coordinated, school locations...

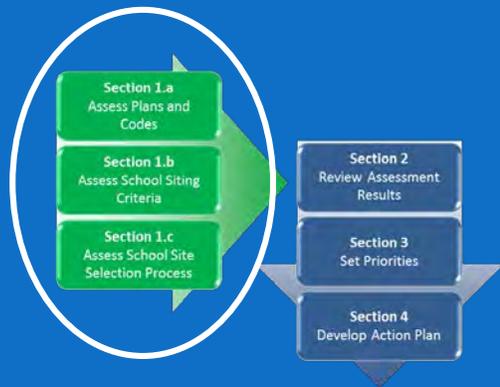
- Reinforce community land use and transportation plans
- Tend to be connected to neighborhoods, fostering walking and biking, better air quality, healthy lifestyles...
- Leverage existing water, sewer, and roads
- Create opportunities for shared uses
- Use public funds efficiently

When the site selection process is collaborative...

- Community interests are reflected in the decision
- Decisions have buy-in and local champions
- Financing approach is vetted and approval is less uncertain

Assessment & Planning Workbook

How to Assess Coordination?



Assess Plans and Codes

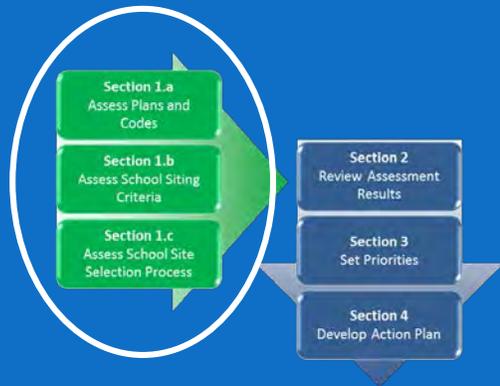
- Long-range School Facilities Master Plan
- School Capital Improvement Plan
- Comprehensive Plan (or Growth Plan)
- Zoning and Building Codes
- Regional and City Transportation Plans
- Community Capital Improvement Plan

Assess School Siting Criteria

Assess School Site Selection Process

Assessment & Planning Workbook

Sample Questions



Assess Plans and Codes

- School facilities plans
- Local and regional plans



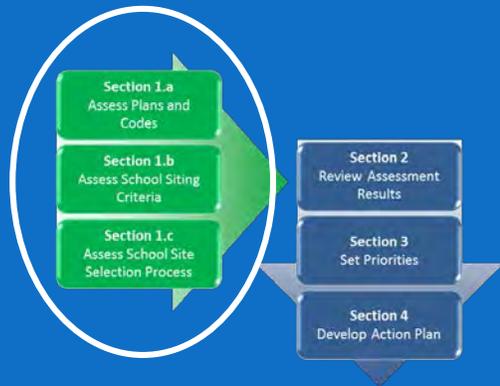
Baseline Planning and Coordination

- **Has a long-range school facilities plan been developed** to establish school needs?
- **Has a school capital improvement plan been developed** to establish projected funding requirements and priorities for school infrastructure?

Enhanced Planning and Coordination

- Was the long-range school facilities plan developed **with local government participation and/or feedback**?
- Does the school capital improvement plan consider **aligning school renovation or expansion with community transportation and transit plans**?
- Do **regional or local transportation plans** directly support development of safe and complete **street networks around schools**?

Assessment & Planning Workbook Sample Questions



Assess School Siting Criteria



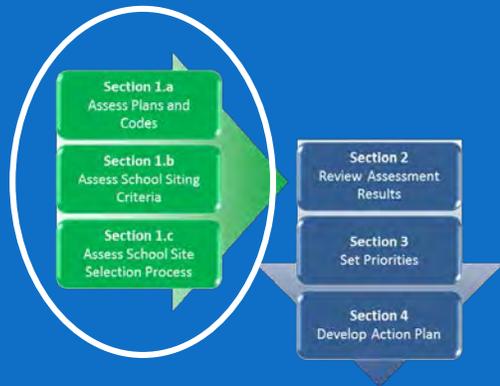
Baseline Planning and Coordination

- Has the local school agency **established siting criteria** for school facilities?
- If yes, do the criteria consider:
 - **Proximity** to student body
 - **Transportation access**
 - **Parking** requirements?

Enhanced Planning and Coordination

- Do the siting criteria reflect your **community's overall priorities** as described by your community's comprehensive plan?
- For each candidate site, will you consider attributes that can contribute positively to **efficient development patterns**, such as:
 - Locations that align with **desired growth patterns**?
 - Total **transportation costs**?
 - Opportunities for **shared use**?

Assessment & Planning Workbook Sample Questions



Assess School Site Selection Process

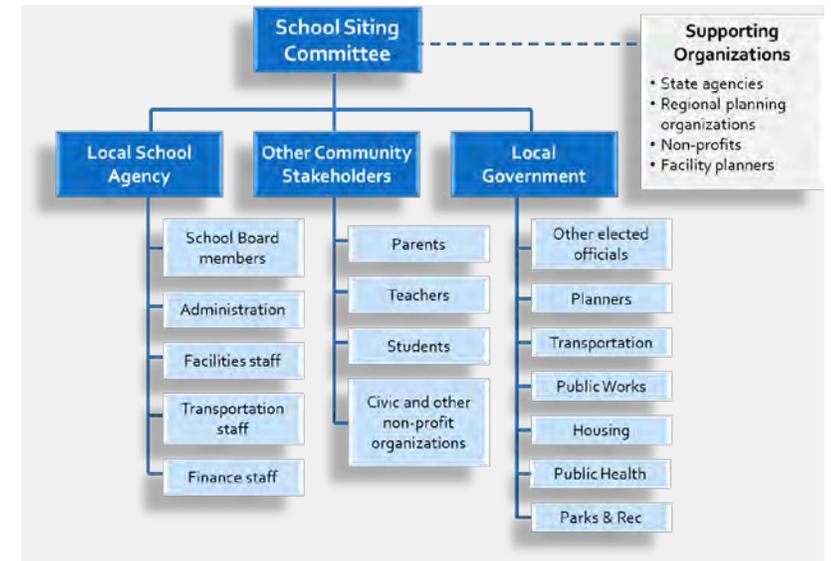


Baseline Planning and Coordination

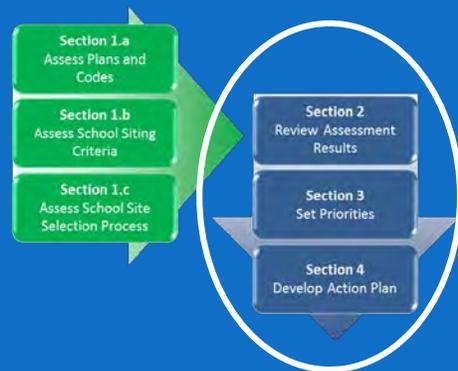
- Has a school siting committee been established?

Enhanced Planning and Coordination

- Does the school siting committee include representatives from:
 - The local school agency, e.g.,....?
 - Local elected officials, e.g.,....?
 - Local government staff, e.g.,....?
 - Other community stakeholders, e.g.,....?



Assessment & Planning Workbook Review Summary



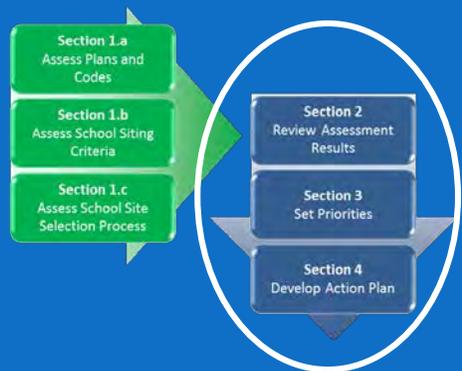
Section 2: Review Assessment Results

Key to Symbols:

- All or a majority of actions have been completed
- Some action has been taken, more is needed
- Actions have yet to be initiated or more action is needed
- "Unclear" was answered for more than half of the questions in this area
- X** One or more questions in this area have yet to be answered (or have been skipped)
- NA** "NA" was answered for all of the questions in this area

Section 1.a	1.a.i Long-Range School Facilities Plan	Baseline planning and coordination	●
		Enhanced planning and coordination	●
	1.a.ii School Capital Improvement Plan	Baseline planning and coordination	●
		Enhanced planning and coordination	●
	1.a.iii Comprehensive Plan/Growth Plan/General Plan	Enhanced planning and coordination	●
	1.a.iv Zoning and Building Codes	Enhanced planning and coordination	●
Section 1.b	1.b School Siting Criteria	Baseline planning and coordination	●
		Enhanced planning and coordination	●
Section 1.c	1.c.i School Siting Committee	Baseline planning and coordination	●
		Enhanced planning and coordination	●
	1.c.ii Coordination between the Local School Agency and Local Government	Baseline planning and coordination	●
		Enhanced planning and coordination	●
	1.c.iii Communication with Community Stakeholders and the Public	Baseline planning and coordination	●
		Enhanced planning and coordination	●
Overall Assessment	Baseline planning and coordination	●	
	Enhanced planning and coordination	●	

Assessment & Planning Workbook Review Summary



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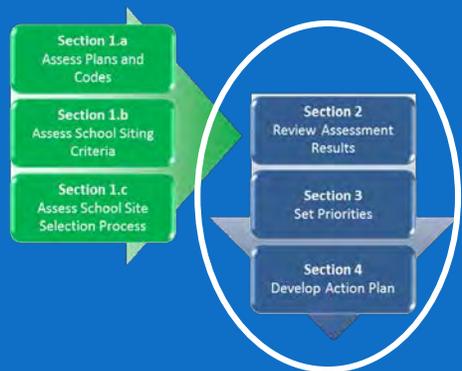
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		Enhanced planning and coordination	<input type="radio"/>
Section 1.c	1.c.i School Siting Committee	Baseline planning and coordination	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
		Enhanced planning and coordination	<input type="radio"/>
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Assessment & Planning Workbook Review Summary



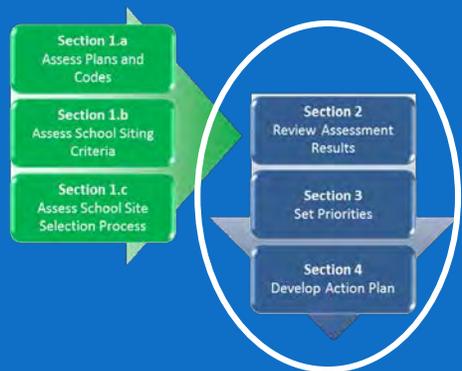
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Assessment & Planning Workbook Review Summary



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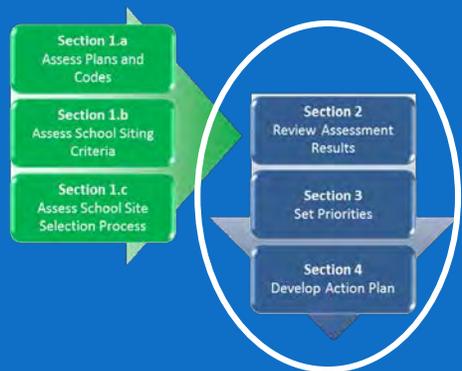
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	1.a.vi Community Capital Improvement Plan	Enhanced planning and coordination	●
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Assessment & Planning Workbook

Action Planning



Section 3: Set Priorities

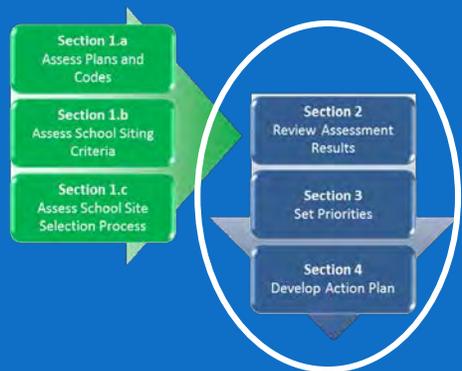
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1.a.i Long-Range School Facilities Plan	Enhanced	Seek broad community input in the development of the long-range school facilities plan	No		Initiate action	Medium	
1.a.i Long-Range School Facilities Plan	Enhanced	Align long-range school facilities plan with priorities of community economic development and neighborhood revitalization plans	Unclear		Gather more information	High	



Section 4: Develop Action Plan

Action	Type	Priority	Action Comments/Notes	Responsible Party	Timeframe
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Assessment & Planning Workbook Action Planning



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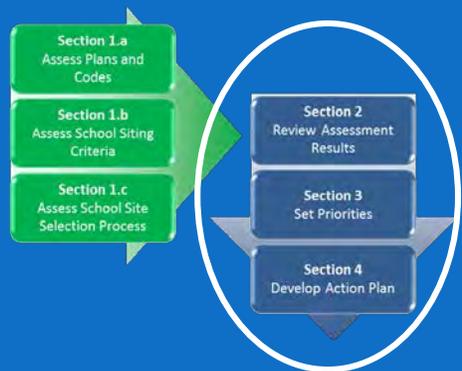
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Assessment & Planning Workbook

Action Planning



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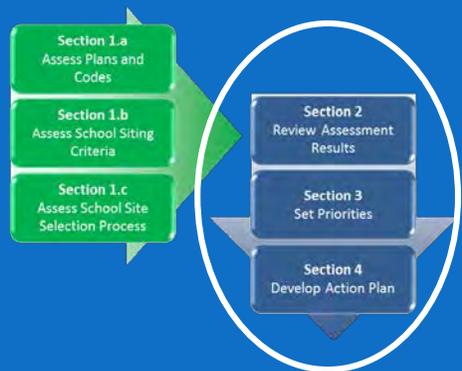


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Assessment & Planning Workbook

Action Planning



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example, associated with public

Enhanced Facility Assessment & Planning Arlington, Virginia, Case Study

Snapshot

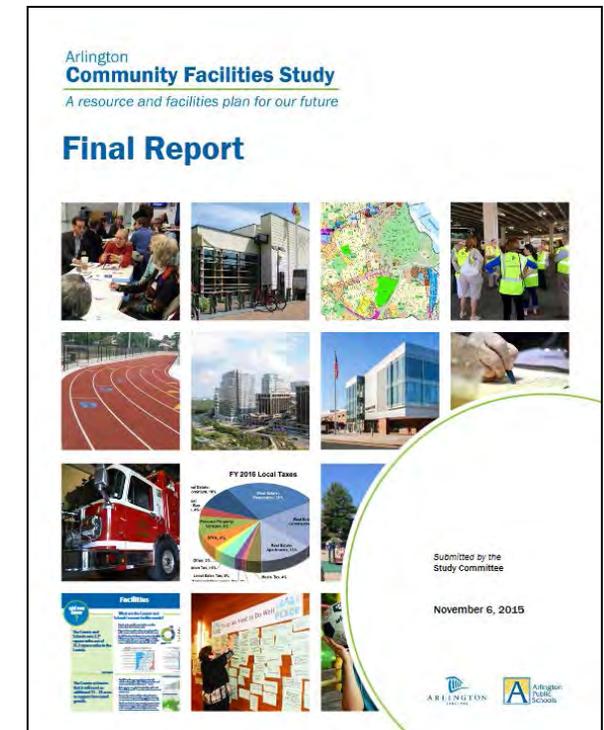
- Smallest and most densely populated county in the country
 - 37% square owned by federal, state or regional bodies or transportation rights of way
 - 55% privately owned
 - 8% owned/managed by county and schools
- Crowded with heavily used community facilities and other public uses
- Expected population increase: up to 31% by 2040
- Schools and other community facilities compete for limited space, funds, and public support
- Facilities are aging and in many cases demand for services exceeds capacity



Enhanced Facility Assessment & Planning Arlington, Virginia Case Study

2015 Community Facilities Study

- One-year process, jointly run by Arlington's County Board and School Board
- 23-member citizen community, 250+ resident member forum
- Addressed 5 challenges:
 - 1: Scarcity of land for public facilities
 - 2: Changing demographics – including short- and long-term projected capacity issues at county schools
 - 3: Threatened commercial tax base
 - 4: Strategic facility planning and priority setting
 - 5: Need to revamp community dialogue

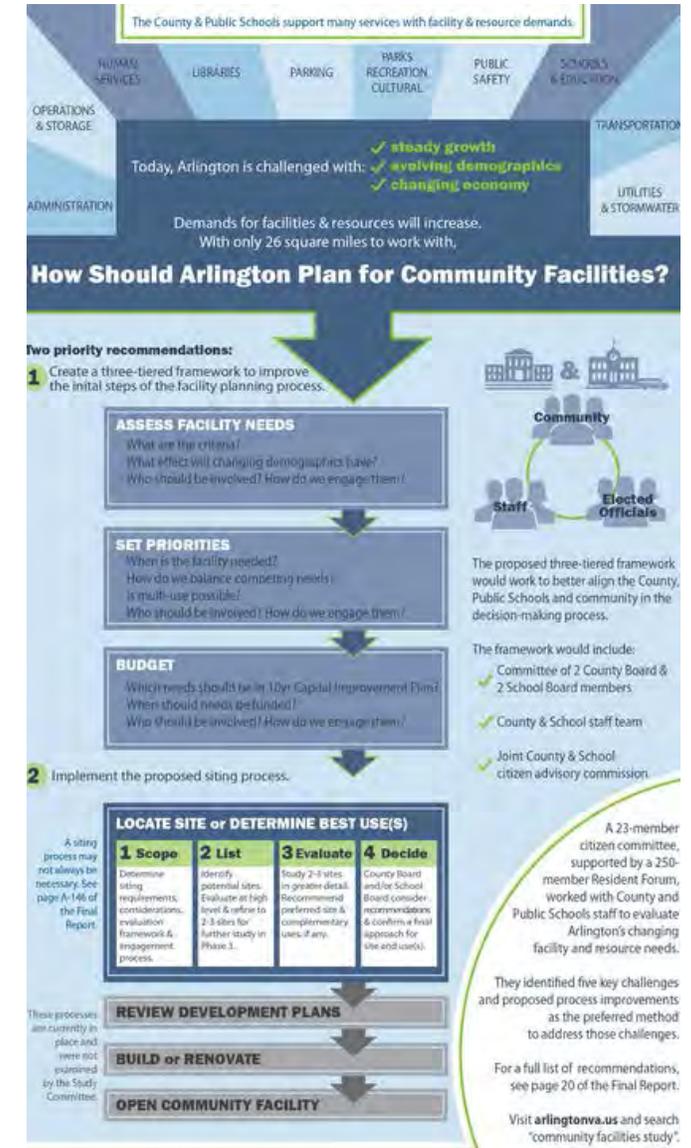


http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/11/CFS_Final_Report_web.pdf

Enhanced Facility Assessment & Planning Arlington, Virginia Case Study

Results...

- 21 recommendations to address 5 challenges: some are already being implemented
- Institutionalized:
 - Joint planning between county and schools, including demographic data analysis
 - Mindset to identify more inclusive, transparent, and collaborative planning approaches
- Won the 2016 American Planning Association Virginia Chapter *Public Outreach and Engagement Award*



Conclusion

Why Use the Smart School Siting Tool?

The tool...

- Encourages collaboration and coordination
- Provides structure to get started and keep going
- Fosters siting decisions that reinforce community goals
- Supports community-focused, and data-driven decision-making

To...

- Reinforce community goals
- Create/maintain school-neighborhood connections
- Efficiently leverage public investments
- Build support for decisions
- Foster stronger, healthier communities
- Improve decision-making transparency

Technical Assistance Opportunity

EPA is looking for pilot communities interested in enhanced coordination of school siting and community planning to pilot the use of the tool

Pilots will receive one-on-one technical assistance from EPA to use the Smart School Siting Tool, and be on the leading edge of school planning



Questions and Answers

Questions?

The Smart School Siting Tool is available at:

<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-school-siting-tool>

For more information, please contact:

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