



Schools at the heart of communities realrenewal

OUR SCHOOLS - OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

IMAGINE SCHOOLS THAT...

- ▶ Are small in size and fit gracefully into the neighborhoods they serve.
- ▶ Are close enough for children to walk or bike to.
- ▶ Act as a neighborhood anchor and are used by the community after school hours.
- ▶ Are well designed and fit the scale and design of the surrounding neighborhood.
- ▶ Make good use of existing resources, including historic school buildings, whenever possible.



“Keeping schools in older neighbourhoods is inherently better for the environment.”

Educational Facility Planners International

HERE’S WHAT OTHER COMMUNITIES ARE DOING

▶ SASKATOON

The Saskatoon Public School Board supports schools in older neighbourhoods that are struggling with enrolment challenges by making them the site of special programs and services.

▶ MOOSE JAW/PRAIRIE SOUTH

The school board is developing a small schools policy aimed at enhancing and supporting its rural and neighbourhood schools. They have re-opened one closed rural school, at Chaplin, which is now a going concern.

▶ VANCOUVER

Carleton Elementary is creating a Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Queen Alexandra School has developed a multi-cultural learning focus. These and other neighbourhood schools once slated for closure will instead have a chance to thrive.

▶ CHICAGO

Nettlehorst School struggled with declining enrolment and shabby, uninviting conditions – until the principal gave parents free rein to turn it into their ‘dream school.’ Now there’s a wait list to get in.

▶ EDMONTON

The public school board has enacted a closure moratorium, giving time to explore “a number of ways to support schools rather than close them.”

WHAT GOOD IS A SMALLER NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOL?

It can be a community hub that includes: ▶ Adult education ▶ Community programs ▶ Daycare
▶ English language learning ▶ Family recreation

Research shows small schools outperform larger ones in:

- ▶ Student academic achievement ▶ Participation in sports and other activities
- ▶ Active walking and biking habits ▶ Integration of special needs students ▶ Student safety
- ▶ Teacher job satisfaction ▶ Parental and community involvement ▶ Cost efficiency

Small schools are especially beneficial for students facing the challenges of poverty and racism.

“The land use and facility planning efforts of local governments and school districts have become increasingly separated in most communities. Their lack of coordination may contribute to the trend toward larger, more distant schools and associated economic, environmental, and social impacts.”

- Meghan Sharp, *Local Governments and Schools: A Community-Oriented Approach*. International City/County Management Association, 2008.

WHEN SCHOOL BOARDS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WORK TOGETHER...

- ▶ Diverse neighbourhoods thrive
- ▶ Traffic is reduced
- ▶ Heritage buildings are saved
- ▶ Green/open space is preserved
- ▶ Quality of life for children and families improves

12 WAYS MUNICIPAL LEADERS CAN SUPPORT ‘SMART GROWTH’ SCHOOLS

1. Establish a process for genuine collaboration and communication with school decision-makers.
2. Develop a shared vision and plan.
3. Establish municipal policies and incentives that support neighbourhood schools.
4. Make schools a focal point of neighbourhood development initiatives.
5. Create safer environments for students to walk or bike, including safe areas for children to store their bikes.
6. Recognize schools as crucial place-based community assets.
7. Integrate schools as rich resources for community economic development plans.
8. Work to stabilize and grow neighbourhoods that are experiencing school enrolment decline.
9. Share responsibility for school grounds. Turn unattractive, unkempt spaces into family-friendly parks that attract new residents.
10. Encourage the adoption of Fix-It-First policies for public buildings, at all levels of government.
11. Encourage school boards to work with Saskatchewan architects, including heritage architects and green architects, who have a sense of connection to the surrounding environment.
12. Create a policy that clearly prioritizes community re-use and preservation of public open space. Establish longer timelines and educational supports to allow neighbourhoods to prepare adaptive re-use proposals.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- ▶ **Local Governments and Schools: A Community-Oriented Approach** (Meghan Sharp, International City/County Management Association, Washington, DC , 2008).
- ▶ **Children and Cities: Planning to Grow Together**. (Juan Torres, Institut d’urbanisme, Université de Montréal, 2009).
- ▶ **Exploring Schools as Community Hubs** (Dianna Graves, Univ. of Regina Community Research Unit, 2011).

MORE PLANNING RESOURCES CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.REALRENEWAL.ORG UNDER ‘RESEARCH.’