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## ABSTRACT

The case studies in this booklet highlight how five communities, in big cities and small towns, overcame the obstacles inherent in creating good new schools in existing neighborhoods. These studies illustrate the creativity that people across the United States have brought to the task of creating new schools in older neighborhoods. There is mounting evidence that small schools provide a better quality education than large ones. Among the obstacles faced in establishing new schools in old areas are: (1) school building standards, codes, and regulations; (2) difficulty in acquiring land; (3) districts have lost the skill to build schools; and (4) building "greenfield" schools is more familiar. The Oyster School in Washington, D.C., is an example of a school modernized through parent efforts when the school system was not able to find the funds for improvement of the facility. Sharing the existing space with an apartment building, at the cost of some space, resulted in a renovated school. In Pomona, California, a school was built at the site of a mall and vacant supermarket. A magnet-type school was built in Dallas, Texas, on the last piece of undeveloped land near a multifamily apartment complex. Two public academies were established in downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee, to attract children whose parents work in town and ensure that both the academies were filled to capacity. Rebuilding on the site of an old school was the solution for Manitowoc, Wisconsin, as it worked to meet the needs of a neighborhood. Some other examples of noteworthy approaches to new schools for old communities are briefly outlined. Such efforts can be models and inspirations for other communities. (SLD)

ED 466 093

# NEW SCHOOLS FOR OLDER NEIGHBORHOODS



## STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING OUR COMMUNITIES' MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS

EF 006 087

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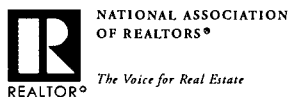
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# NEW SCHOOLS FOR OLDER NEIGHBORHOODS

## STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY'S MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS

**O**pen a new school in a retail mall, build an apartment complex to finance school renovations, keep the school open while rebuilding on-site, target a magnet-school design for a densely populated neighborhood, forge a coalition with the local university and philanthropic organizations.

These are just a few of the innovative approaches some communities have taken to create good new schools in existing neighborhoods.

Over the next decade, we need to build thousands of schools due to deteriorating facilities and increasing numbers of students. While improving our educational system, these new schools in already developed areas can also improve our neighborhoods by helping them become more compact, livable and walkable.

As with other challenges, however, communities face many barriers to building schools in existing neighborhoods. The following case studies highlight how five communities – in big cities and small towns – overcame these obstacles and illustrate the creativity that people across the nation have brought to this task of creating new schools in older neighborhoods.

### *Diverse case studies from around the country –*

- Dallas, Texas
- Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Washington, DC
- Manitowoc, Wisconsin
- Pomona, California



**“A higher percentage of students, across all socio-economic levels, are successful when they are part of smaller, more intimate learning communities.**

**Security improves and violence decreases, as does student alcohol and drug abuse.**

**Small school size encourages teachers to innovate and students to participate, resulting in...higher grades and test scores, improved attendance rates, and lowered dropout rates.”**

**—U.S. Department of Education**

**I**n the next few years, America’s school systems will have to grow at an unprecedented rate to meet a significant increase in school-age population. Enrollment from 2000 to 2006 is expected to increase by one million students, according to U.S. Department of Education estimates. To meet this tremendous enrollment growth, communities across the country will need to both build new schools and renovate or rebuild old, outdated facilities.

Population increase is not the only factor in play in the need for new school facilities and school modernization. In many school districts, small maintenance budgets and subsequent deferred maintenance strategies have accelerated the decline of older school facilities. Schools also need to be updated for technology, and adapted for smaller class sizes and new teaching strategies tied to greater student and staff accountability.

As a result of these factors, we face a school building boom, an

opportunity for a “Golden Age of School Design,” according to a 2000 U.S. Department of Education report.

The full potential of this opportunity depends on what kind of schools we build. We can build energy-efficient schools with state-of-the-art technology. We can build schools with materials that require much less maintenance, making them more cost-effective in the long run. We can build schools with interior features that provide natural light, good indoor air quality, and comfortable temperatures; healthy features that make our schools better places for students to learn and educators to teach.

As communities look for innovative ways to create these technologically advanced, cost-effective and healthy schools, we also have a golden opportunity to build neighborhood-based schools – schools that can help revitalize and stabilize communities, schools that can help create a sense of “place” in communities, and schools that can play a role in making our communities more livable and walkable.

## The Need for “Neighborhood-Based” Schools

Over the past 30 years, most new schools have been built in suburban school districts. Typically, these schools are big, non-descript, one-story facilities on large plots of land located on the fringe of urban development. School districts have been lured by these “mega-schools,” believing that they are more cost-effective. However, there is renewed interest in returning to smaller, neighborhood-based schools. There are many reasons for this:

### Small Schools Are Better

There is mounting evidence that smaller schools provide a better quality education than large ones.

“A higher percentage of students, across all socioeconomic levels, are successful when they are part of smaller, more intimate learning communities,” said a recent U.S. Department of Education study. “Security improves and violence decreases, as does student alcohol and drug abuse. Small school size encourages teachers to innovate and students to participate, resulting in...higher grades and test scores, improved attendance rates, and lowered drop-out rates.”

Educators differ on the optimal size of these small schools but most agree that they should house between 300 and 900 students.

### Concerns about the Health of Youth

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in five children and one in three teens are overweight or at risk for being overweight – a 50-100% increase in just 10 years. Many attribute this increase in overweight children to the lack of physical activity that the built environment offers children today.

Public health officials and walking and bicycling advocates are now encouraging local government and other leaders to change the way we design and build our communities to promote more physical activity. One such change they advocate is the expansion of neighborhood-based schools and “safe routes to school.”



*Joint community use of school facilities is cost-effective, promotes community support of schools, and maximizes an expensive community asset – our schools.*

### How Kids Get to School: Now and Then

Trips to school by walking and bicycling have decreased by 40% in the past 20 years. Among children aged 5 to 15, nearly half are driven to school in cars, another third take a bus, about 13% bike to school, and only 10% walk to school.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Push for Schools to Serve Multiple Purposes**

All over the U.S., educators and community leaders are advocating for community schools – ones that not only educate children, but meet other community needs as well. Joint community use of school facilities is cost-effective, promotes community support of schools, and maximizes an expensive community asset – our schools.

**Maximize Public Resources**

There is also a push for schools to be more cost effective by utilizing other public/private resources. For example, schools can partner with park districts to use a city park to fulfill their playground requirements or use a YMCA gymnasium instead of having to build one as part of a school campus.

**Smart Growth**

Across the country, smart growth advocates are urging local decision-makers to

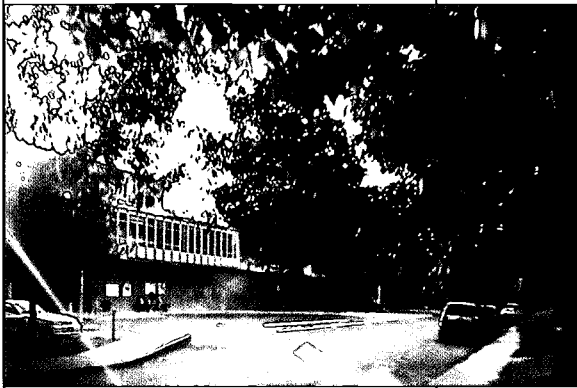
curb sprawl and create less auto-dependent, more walkable, livable communities. Neighborhood schools are considered an essential part of these livable communities.

**Urban Revitalization**

More and more community leaders are recognizing the power of schools to attract and keep residents in a neighborhood. Leaders in many urban communities are building or renovating schools as part of broader strategies for revitalizing blighted areas.

**Nowhere to Grow**

Many school districts have no other choice than to build schools in established areas because there is simply no new land in their districts to develop. These school districts are finding unusual places to put new schools – in old strip malls, on top of parking garages, and in small, odd-shaped parcels of land.



Many school districts have no other choice than to build schools in established areas because there is simply no new land in their districts to develop. These districts are finding unusual places to put new schools – in old strip malls, on top of parking garages, and in small, oddly-shaped parcels of land.



## Barriers to Building Schools in Established Areas

**W**hile districts have many reasons for building and/or modernizing schools in established areas, they also face many obstacles.

### School Building Standards, Codes and Regulations

**S**chool building codes and regulations can work against the building and renovating of schools in established neighborhoods. Funding, parking requirements, acreage-to-student ratios and other regulations often make it difficult to build schools on smaller plots in older, already established areas.

Many older schools also get slated for demolition rather than renovation because of the difficulty in complying with school and building code regulations.

### Difficulty in Acquiring Land

**M**any districts, particularly in more urban areas, have trouble finding land that has not been contaminated in some way. The reluctance of governments to use eminent domain powers (taking land and paying property owners market value for it) has increased the difficulty of acquiring land for schools as well.

### Districts Have Lost the Skills to Build Schools

**S**ome districts have not built schools in such a long time, they've simply lost the staff expertise needed to manage a new building project, or even a large project to modernize school facilities.

### Building "Greenfield" Schools Is More Familiar

**I**n some school districts, it isn't that they haven't built schools in many years, the problem is that they've only built "greenfield" schools, making it challenging for them to "change their ways" and build new schools in already established areas.



*Some districts have not built schools in such a long time that they've simply lost the staff expertise needed to manage a new building project.*

## Overcoming Barriers: Case Studies

**C**ommunities all over the country are overcoming these barriers and getting innovative neighborhood-based schools built that buck the "mega-school" trend and serve as true community resources. The case studies that follow highlight five such efforts and offer some successful strategies for building new schools in older neighborhoods.



## Parental Perseverance Pays Off

**James F. Oyster  
Bilingual  
Elementary  
School  
Washington, DC**



**The community-driven process survived three DC mayors, four superintendents, four school board reorganizations (including one in which Congress took over the DC school system) and seven project managers.**

**W**oodley Park is a highly desirable, upper-middle class, residential neighborhood in Washington, DC. It is home to James F. Oyster Bilingual Elementary School, a school known for its dual English-Spanish language program and whose enrollment area includes not only the Woodley Park neighborhood but also Adams-Morgan – a lower-income, Latino neighborhood.

In the early 1990's, though its bilingual academic program flourished, Oyster's physical plant was severely deteriorated and the school was overcrowded. Conditions were so bad that Oyster parents organized to inventory the school's needs and petition the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) to modernize the school. The school system, strapped financially, could do nothing to help. Determined to improve the school, Oyster parents got the DCPS' blessing to look for alternative funds to modernize the facility.

Oyster School sat on 1.67 acres of land in a highly desirable neighborhood in the middle of Washington, DC. Recognizing the value of this land, Oyster parents came up with the idea of entering into a public/private development deal to sell part of the school's land to developers

to get the necessary funds for the school.

By 1994, the parents concluded that the idea of a public/private development partnership was feasible. They brought their idea to then-Superintendent Franklin Smith. He supported the idea and worked diligently against school board reluctance to adopt a policy that allowed the use of such a partnership to modernize schools.

Once adopted, a group of Oyster parents and other community activists created the 21st Century School Fund to manage the partnership to modernize Oyster.

Over the next five-and-a-half years the 21st Century School Fund (backed by Ford Foundation funding) labored to create a public/private partnership and a new school. In 1998, an agreement was made with LCOR, a private property development firm, to build an apartment building on half of the land.

In exchange for the land and in lieu of property taxes, LCOR agreed to pay the debt service on the bond that would be used to design, construct, and furnish a new Oyster School. LCOR also agreed to set aside \$445,000 of seed money to fund other DC school modernization projects.

In 1998, space was located in a school district facility across town to temporarily house Oyster students and, in 1999, the Oyster School bond was issued. Soon after, the old

school was demolished and construction began on a new facility.

The new school was rebuilt, rather than renovated, to make the best use of a piece of land now only half the size of its former site. On the remaining half, LCOR built a 211-unit, 11-story apartment building (photo at right).

Though the development deal required Oyster School to make sacrifices (including a significantly smaller playground), the Oyster community, in return, got a new school specifically designed to support its bilingual education program.

The key to the success of this public/private development was the value, size and location of Oyster's land. Had the site been smaller, differently shaped, or in a less-desirable neighborhood, LCOR could not have generated a profit on the project and no public/private partnership deal could have been made.

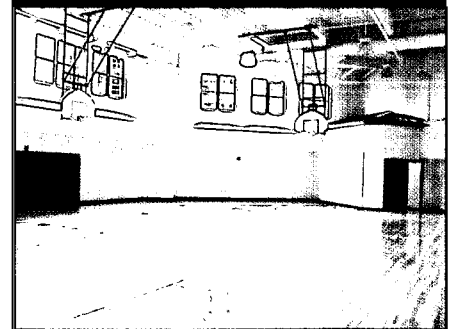
Also key to the project's success was the commitment and perseverance of the Oyster School community, particularly parents and staff.

The process for modernizing Oyster School took nine years. The community-driven process survived three mayors, four superintendents, four school board reorganizations (including one in which Congress took over the DC school system) and seven project managers.

Through it all, Oyster parents, staff and community members worked creatively and diligently to overcome barriers and setbacks. In the process, Oyster activists created the 21st Century School Fund, whose mission is to "build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities." The organization now helps communities and school districts nationwide to create and fund school modernization programs.



*Oyster School activists created the 21st Century School Fund, whose mission is to "build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities." The organization now helps communities and school districts nationwide to create school modernization programs.*



## School Profile

**James F. Oyster School**  
Washington, DC

School District: District of  
Columbia Public Schools

Date of Completion: June 2001

Grades Served: PreK-6

Student Population: 350

Avg. Classroom Size: 900 sf

School Size: 47,984 sf

Number of Floors: 4

Site Size: 0.79 acres

Website: [it.k12.dc.us/  
OYSTER/oyster.html](http://it.k12.dc.us/OYSTER/oyster.html)

## The Village at Indian Hill Pueblo School Complex Pomona, CA

### Old Mall, New School, New Paradigm

**P**omona, California, is a blue-collar suburb of Los Angeles. Much of the city can be characterized as "light industrial." Pomona is speckled with warehouses, small machine shops, and tire stores, as well as other small businesses that cater to a largely Latino population.

students far from their neighborhoods. Under these circumstances, finding new school sites for Pomona's children became critical.

With no open space available and little hope of getting local government officials to support the use of eminent domain to make way for schools, the district was left with old, vacant industrial sites and small, oddly shaped parcels of land as choices. The industrial sites had possible contamination problems and the available parcels were too small for a school. The district had to be creative about developing new facilities.

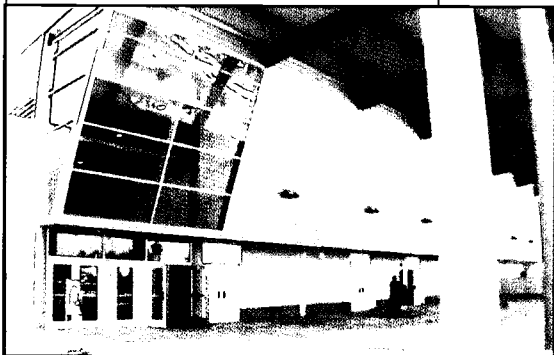
Though Pomona may not be as well known as its neighbors like Santa Monica, Pasadena or Orange County, it boasts a remarkable new school and a new paradigm for weaving public schools into community life.

The Pomona Unified School District built the new Pueblo School Complex into the Plaza at Indian Hill Mall. In the 1960s and 1970s, the plaza was a bustling retail center. However, in the past 20 years, the mall – and the area surrounding it – had deteriorated.

Scouting Pomona for sites, Superintendent Patrick Leier spotted the Indian Hill Mall. Sad and deteriorated in its current condition, Leier saw potential. Building a school at the mall would not only help Pomona Unified School District with their facilities problem, but, by breathing new life into the mall, could help revitalize the surrounding area.

Though there were skeptics in the school district, the mall was the only viable option for acquiring more land for school facilities at the time. As a result, the district approached the mall's owner about buying the site and a deal was struck.

The first phase of Pueblo School was completed in 1996: one part of the mall was converted into classrooms for 600 students. In the second phase, a detached school building was constructed



**Building a school at the mall would not only help Pomona Unified School District with their facilities problem, but, by breathing new life into the mall, the school district could help revitalize the surrounding area.**

Despite these troubling socio-economic conditions, the city's population increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As Pomona grew and was surrounded by other suburbs, its school district found itself with a growing student body, insufficient facilities, and no land on which to build new facilities. The district also wanted to end multi-track, year-round education, reduce kindergarten through third-grade student-to-teacher ratios, and end busing of

behind the mall. Completed in 1998, this building now houses third- and fourth-graders.

The third and most ambitious phase – the conversion of a large vacant supermarket, adjacent to the mall classrooms, into a modern, state-of-the-art school – was completed in September 2001.

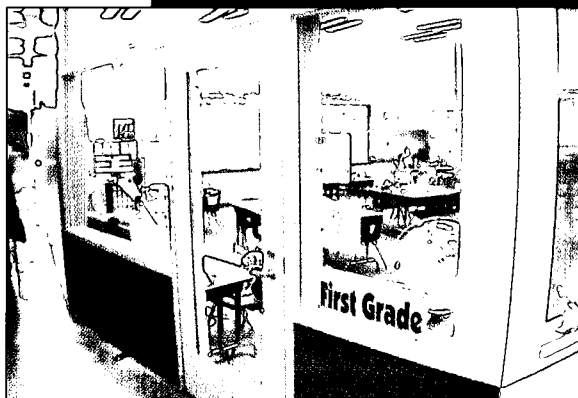
The redevelopment of the mall helped jump-start other neighborhood revitalization efforts. A new transit center is being built in the area as well as a performing arts center. Other changes in the neighborhood include: new housing, rehabilitation of commercial properties, investment in new public infrastructure around the mall, new commercial ventures, and an overall decrease in crime.

The Indian Hill Mall is now called The Village at Indian Hill and the school – the Village at Indian Hill Pueblo School

Complex. “Village” is not just a nice name but describes the plans to transform the mall into a vibrant, mixed use neighborhood center. Plans call for filling the mall parking lot with housing and streets to create a real “village” environment.

Using this village concept, the superintendent sees a new role for Pomona’s schools as anchors for development that can help stabilize and revitalize community areas.

The school district is developing two other villages that will be anchored by Pomona public schools and contain housing, offices, and retail outlets. The district is developing these sites through the Pomona Valley Education Foundation, an independent agency created by the district to handle development and property management work. Hopes are that the new villages will benefit the local community much in the same way that the Village at Indian Hill has impacted its local area.



*“Village” is not just a nice name but describes the plans to transform the mall into a vibrant, mixed use neighborhood center.*

*Plans call for filling the mall parking lot with housing and streets to create a real “village” environment.*

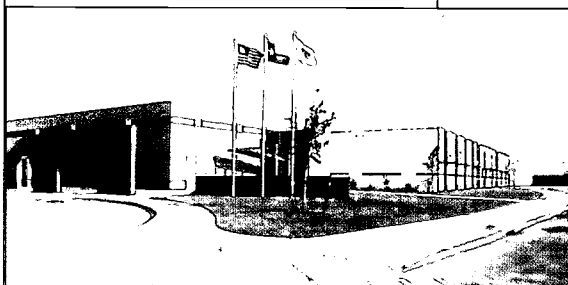
### School Profile

**The Village at Indian Hill  
Pueblo School Complex  
Pomona, California**

School District:  
Pomona Unified School District  
Date of Completion: Sep. 2001  
Grades Served: K-6 and 9-12  
Student Population: 1,800 K-6  
120 H.S.  
Avg. Classroom Size: 900 sf  
School Size: 110,000 sf  
Number of Floors: 1  
Site Size: 9.8 acres  
Website: [qrstuv.com/pueblo/school](http://qrstuv.com/pueblo/school)



**Forest Lane  
Academy  
of Arts and  
Communication  
Dallas, TX**



**Neighborhood children who were being bused 40 to 50 minutes away from their homes, now live within walking distance of their school.**

**School staff and parents worked together to create safe ways for children to cross the busy thoroughfare near the school and, today, nearly 95% of Forest Lane students walk to school.**

## Serving A Multi-Family Housing Population

**T**he Richardson, Texas, Independent School District is a highly rated school system that encompasses an older, first-ring suburb of Dallas and some neighborhoods in North Dallas, a desirable area where single-family homes sell for between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

Within these two middle- to upper-middle income areas are pockets of large, multi-family apartment complexes built in the 1970s and 1980s when “adult living communities” were the rage in Texas.

In 1988, Congress passed the Fair Housing Amendments Act, which made discrimination against families with children unlawful (except in narrowly defined seniors housing), making adult-only apartment complexes illegal. Families moved in and other apartment complexes (including Section 8 affordable housing units) were built. In the 1990s, the population of lower-income apartment residents grew throughout North Dallas.

One of these pockets of multi-family apartment complexes is on Forest Lane near Interstate 635. In the mid-1990s, nearly 600 students from this area were being bused to 13 different schools in the district.

Realizing that the student population from this small, but densely populated area would fill an entirely new school, the

district began looking for a site to create a school within the neighborhood.

The district identified the last piece of undeveloped land in the area and approached the owner about buying it. The owner was already in negotiations with the City of Dallas to develop an apartment complex on the site – with higher density than current zoning allowed. The owner rebuffed the district’s offer.

When the district threatened to go to the Dallas zoning board and oppose the development, the owner sat down to negotiate. The district secured the land and by 1998, the school was under construction.

The board felt that the Forest Lane area students – largely from lower-income households – would benefit from a magnet-school type of curriculum. Magnet schools in the RISD system are created to support a certain educational emphasis (science, technology, etc.) Forest Lane’s facilities and educational format emphasize the arts and communication.

Its “cafetorium” (a cafeteria that converts to an auditorium) has a stage with special lighting equipment for school presentations and plays. The school also has a large art room, complete with a pottery kiln. And the school is outfitted with broadcast facilities and equipment – in fact, every morning students broadcast school news into each classroom.



Now filled to capacity serving children in the immediate neighborhood, the district hopes that, when seats begin to open up, the school will begin to function more like a true magnet school – attracting students from all over the district who are interested in arts and communication.

The building of Forest Lane Academy has had a big impact on the area's rental market. As part of the Richardson Independent School District – a district recently rated as one of the 100 best districts in the nation by *Smart Parenting* magazine – it has attracted new residents to the area.

“People moved into apartments around here so their children could go to a RISD school,” said Principal Robert Bostic.

Enrollment numbers bear witness to this. The year before the school opened, the district bused 587 children out of the catchment area for the new school. When the school first

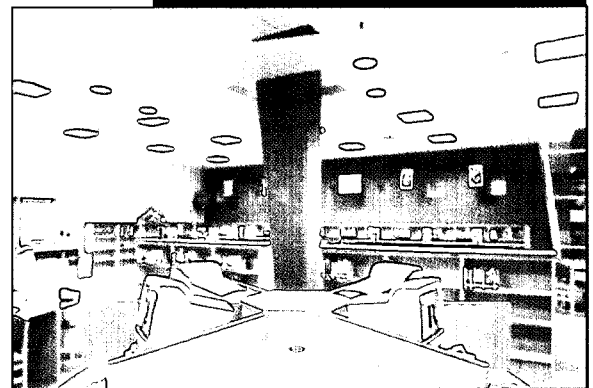
opened, enrollment in the catchment area had grown to 686 and, now, 710 students attend the school.

“The school has been a great marketing tool for local property owners,” Bostic said.

The school has spurred a revitalization in the area. Property owners are fixing up run-down complexes and rental rates are on the rise.

Though rising rents may force some current residents to move elsewhere, the school nonetheless serves an area that desperately needed a new school.

Neighborhood children who were being bused 40 to 50 minutes away from their homes, now live within walking distance of their school. In fact, school staff and parents worked together to create safe ways for children to cross the busy thoroughfare near the school and, as a result, nearly 95% of Forest Lane students walk to school. Because it's conveniently located, the neighborhood-based school also gives parents greater opportunity to be a part of their children's education.



## School Profile

**Forest Lane Academy**  
Dallas, Texas

School District: Richardson  
Independent School District

Date of Completion: 1999

Grades Served: PreK-6

Student Population: 710

Avg. Classroom Size: 850 sf

School Size: 70,000 sf

Number of Floors: 1

Site Size: 10 acres

Website: [www.richardson.k12.tx.us/schools/fla/index.htm](http://www.richardson.k12.tx.us/schools/fla/index.htm)

*“People moved into apartments around here so their children could go to a RISD school. Forest Lane School has been a great marketing tool for local property owners.”*

*— Robert Bostic,  
Forest Lane principal*



## The H.H. Battle Academy of Teaching and Learning and the Tommy F. Brown Academy of Classical Studies

Chattanooga, TN

## Keys to Continued Revitalization

**D**uring the 1960s and 1970s, Chattanooga, Tennessee, – and in particular, downtown Chattanooga – suffered from recession, urban flight, deteriorating schools, and pollution. In the 1980s and 1990s, after years of neglect, the city began the process of revitalization. Public agencies and private organizations worked together to breathe life back into the city's economy, rebuild the social fabric, and clean up what, in the late-1960s, was called the most polluted city in the United States.

Though much progress has been made, many neighborhoods in and around downtown are still economically depressed, crime-ridden and poor. The area has few public schools and the few that are there, are low-performing. Downtown revitalization groups realized

that unless something was done to improve school facilities, their efforts to attract new residents and continue downtown revitalization would be hindered.

In 2000, the River City Company – a community development organization working in downtown Chattanooga – brought together the school board, the local government, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (located in downtown), and the Lyndhurst Foundation (a philanthropic

organization working on revitalization) to talk about economic development, housing, and school facilities in their city center.

As it turned out, enough children were being bused from the downtown area to fill a new school and the Hamilton County Board of Education had started working on plans to build a new school in the downtown area. After meeting several times, the River City coalition members decided that an additional school would need to be built to support revitalization efforts and the population growth anticipated to result from such efforts.

“The question was how do we ensure that the two schools don't open, each half full, with neighborhood kids of the same socioeconomic backgrounds?” said Lyndhurst Foundation President Jack Murrah.

The coalition proposed a solution: open the schools to children whose parents work downtown. The key to enticing downtown workers to send their children to these schools – and to enticing people to move downtown – would be to offer unique educational opportunities at the schools.

The university was asked to “adopt” the schools, and forge a special partnership with them. This partnership would show people that the schools “would not be just ordinary public schools” but rather cutting-edge educational facilities.



The key to enticing downtown workers to send their children to these new schools – and enticing people to move downtown – would be to offer unique educational opportunities at the schools.

The next problem was how to fund an additional public school downtown. Public school systems are not in the habit of building facilities in anticipation of enrollment growth without clear trends. Hamilton County could not finance a second school.

The Lyndhurst Foundation approached other Chattanooga institutions to raise money to build the second school. Lyndhurst donated \$1 million, other philanthropists donated \$4 million, and the rest of the money came from the University of Chattanooga Foundation.

"The most remarkable thing about getting these schools built is how quickly the partnership came up with the \$8 million needed to build the second school," said city planner Karen Hundt. "A year ago, the groups involved had just started talking about a second school being built. Now, a year later, construction has begun and next year, the Brown and Battle Schools will both open."

Working in coalition to get the schools built was a difficult task and particularly difficult for the school board.

"The board has spent the last quarter century building schools by themselves," Murrah said. "They're accustomed to building greenfield schools. It was a challenge for them to build a school in a tight urban area, let alone build a school in coalition with others. So they had to continually bend their normal operating procedures."

By working together, though, the group formed an unprecedented partnership between the public schools, the university, the local government, downtown developers, and private philanthropists.

"That's been the biggest gain," said Murrah. "It's a process that's harder to do together but it produced better results than anyone involved in this project could do alone."

*"There's a sense of partnership between the public schools, the university, the city, downtown developers, and private philanthropists – that's been the biggest gain."*

*— Jack Murrah,  
President, Lyndhurst  
Foundation*

## *School Profile*

**Brown and Battle Academies**  
Chattanooga, Tennessee

School District:  
Hamilton County Schools

Date of Completion: Aug. 2002

Grades Served: K-5 Magnet

Student Population: 450/each

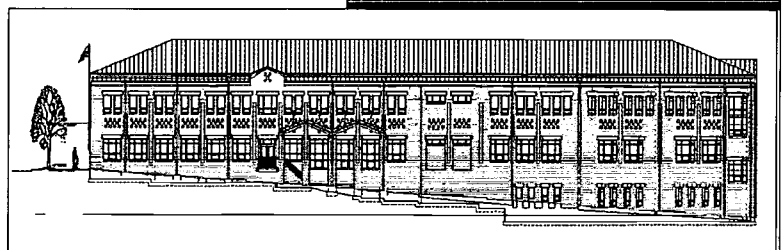
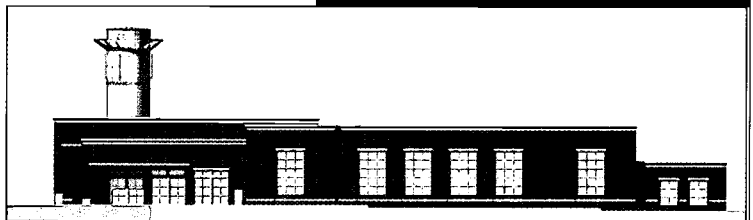
Avg. Classroom Size: n/a

School Size: 85,000 sf

Number of Floors: 2

Site Size: 2+ acres/each

Website: not available



**Jefferson  
Elementary  
School  
Manitowoc, WI**

## Community and Thriftiness

**L**ocated 75 miles north of Milwaukee on the shores of Lake Michigan, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, was settled by Polish and German immigrants and is still much influenced by these cultures today. Manitowocians describe themselves as thoughtful and thrifty, characteristics that played key roles in rebuilding Jefferson Elementary School, a deteriorated school in a working-class neighborhood on the city's south side.

First built in the late 1800s, the original Jefferson school structure was used until 1930, when it was

torn down and another school was rebuilt on the same site. Since that time, Jefferson has been modified, and re-modified, to fit the needs of new educational approaches and growing populations of school children.

By the early 1990s, the school had 11 different levels, was not accessible to people with disabilities, was "functionally undersized" for the number of students it served, and was in need of serious repair.

In 1994, the Manitowoc Public School District was debating how to spend a \$3.5 million surplus for school facilities. The district could use the money piece-meal throughout the district or invest the \$3.5 million solely in Jefferson, the school in most need. After meeting to dis-

cuss options with staff, parents, and community members, the school board decided to use the surplus to modernize Jefferson.

The question then became whether to renovate the old school or build an entirely new facility. The district owned a piece of land on the outskirts of town and floated the idea of building the new Jefferson school there. Neighborhood homeowners were concerned that the school's departure would hurt their property values. They wanted the school to stay in the neighborhood. Jefferson parents and others in the community did too.

Besides concerns about property values, people had a sentimental attachment to the school. There had always been a school on the site and the community wanted to keep it that way.

The school's location is also unique – it's three blocks east of the junior high and four blocks west of the local high school. Parents liked the idea of their children being able to walk to all three schools.

After hearing the concerns and wishes of the community, the school board decided to keep Jefferson where it was.

Next came the decision whether to re-build or renovate, a decision made easily when the estimates for each option arrived. Renovation would include building a 12th addition to the school – an addition that would require an elevator.



**The school's location is also unique – it's three blocks east of the junior high and four blocks west of the local high school. Parents liked the idea of their children being able to walk to all three schools.**

As a result, the price difference between the two was not great: \$2.8 million to renovate and \$3.5 million for new construction.

When the school board and the community looked at how many years of use they would get from each – 30 years from a renovated Jefferson versus 70 years or more from a new school facility—they decided to rebuild.

Architects planned the building in two phases so that Jefferson students could attend school throughout the construction. The part of the new school containing classrooms would be built first, right next to the old Jefferson building. Once the classroom building was completed, students would move into the new facility. The old Jefferson building would then be demolished, and a gym and administrative offices would be built in its place.

To save money, the community asked the district to re-use what they could from the old school

to rebuild the new one. The district salvaged furniture from the old school and held a “fire sale” of items that couldn’t be used in the new facility.

The architects also saved money on trucking and fill expenses by pulverizing old Jefferson School bricks and concrete to fill the hole left by the old building.

The school district and the neighborhood now have a new, economically built, up-to-date, accessible school, designed with Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in mind. Unlike the nondescript, warehouse-like schools that many districts often build, the new Jefferson School inspires civic pride.

“People in Manitowoc have always taken pride in their homes, but since the new school has been built, people in the area have taken even more pride and have kept up their houses a bit more,” said former school principal Steve Kleinfeldt. “People in the community are very proud of the school. They love the final product.”

Classic and dignified, the new Jefferson School will continue to anchor this old neighborhood for years to come.



*“People in Manitowoc have always taken pride in their homes, but since the new school has been built, people in the area have taken even more pride and have kept up their houses a bit more. People in the community are very proud of the school.”*

*—Steve Kleinfeldt,  
former principal*

## School Profile

**Jefferson Elementary School  
Manitowoc, Wisconsin**

School District: Manitowoc  
Public School District

Date of Completion: 1999

Grades Served: 1-6

Student Population: 450

Avg. Classroom Size: 900 sf

School Size: 65,000 sf

Number of Floors: 2

Site Size: 3.7 acres

Website: [www.mpsd.k12.wi.us/  
schools\\_jefferson.cfm](http://www.mpsd.k12.wi.us/schools_jefferson.cfm)

## School Building Efforts Around the Country

Other school districts and communities are taking on the often difficult task of building new schools in older, established neighborhoods. Here are other examples of noteworthy neighborhood-based school building efforts.

### Centennial Place Elementary School Atlanta, GA

In 1996, the nation's oldest public housing, Techwood Homes, was demolished and replaced by a planned community. The City of Atlanta, together with other public and private partners, built apartments, townhouses, a YMCA, a police station, and a new school to create Centennial Place, a mixed-income, mixed-race neighborhood. Centennial Elementary School was built as a model school, supported by Atlanta's Board of Education in partnership with Georgia Tech University.

Date of Completion: 1998  
 Grades Served: K-5  
 Student Population: 507  
 Avg. Classroom Size: 752 sf  
 School Size: 72,850 sf  
 Number of Stories: 1 story  
 Site Size: 9.4 acres  
[www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/schoolsw/cplacew](http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/schoolsw/cplacew)

### Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez Fundamental Intermediate School Santa Ana, CA

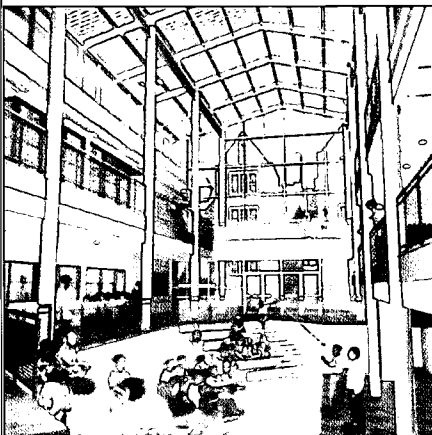
With little to no available land on which to build new school

facilities, the Santa Ana School District had to find new, unlikely spaces to build schools to accommodate its growing student population. One of the most unique schools that the district built is Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez Fundamental Intermediate School, a school built on top of a parking garage behind a shopping mall. By using the parking garage as a base for the school, the architects were able to preserve open space on the site for playing fields. Acquired without the use of eminent domain or the displacement of any residents, the school is a great example of creative school siting and design.

Date of Completion: 1999  
 Grades Served: 5-8 Magnet  
 Student Population: 1240  
 Avg. Classroom Size: n/a  
 School Size: 106,000 sf  
 Number of Floors: 2  
 Site Size: 12 acres  
[www.sausd.k12.ca.us](http://www.sausd.k12.ca.us)

### Minneapolis Interdistrict Downtown School Minneapolis, MN

The Minneapolis Interdistrict Downtown School is another example of a school built on top of an underground parking garage. Using public and private resources, the school was built as part of a larger effort to revitalize the downtown theater district and to racially integrate several Minneapolis-area school districts. Nearby theaters provide students with performance space and neighborhood athletic



Penn-Assisted School atrium



facilities share their space with Interdistrict students.

Date of Completion: 1999  
 Grades Served: K-12 Magnet  
 Student Population: 450  
 Avg. Classroom Size: n/a  
 School Size: 102,500 sf  
 Number of Floors: 5  
 Site Size: 0.8 acres  
[www.idds.k12.mn.us](http://www.idds.k12.mn.us)

**Penn-Assisted School  
 University City, PA  
 (Philadelphia)**

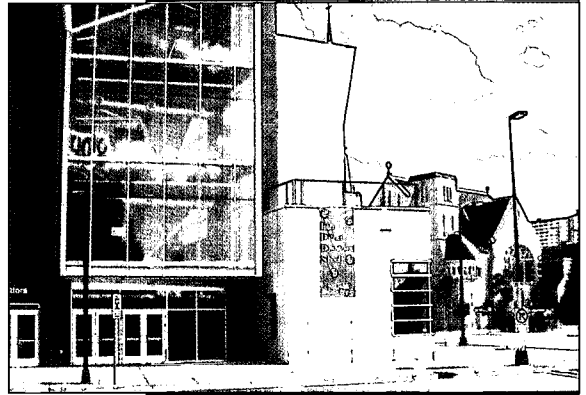
To revitalize the surrounding neighborhood, the University of Pennsylvania formed a partnership with the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers to build a new school. Slated to open in September 2002, Penn-Assisted School has already sparked renewed interest in the area. "The promise of a state-of-the-art elementary school sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania has caused a mad scramble for homes in the surrounding neighborhood," according to the Philadelphia Daily News. The school is being built on the site of a former divinity school. Divinity school buildings will be remodeled and additional new facilities will be built to create the PreK-8 school.

Date of Completion: 2002  
 Grades Served: PreK-8  
 Student Population: 700  
 Avg. Classroom Size: 800 sf  
 School Size: 110,000 sf  
 Number of Floors: 3  
 Site Size: 4.5 acres  
[www.upenn.edu/publicschool](http://www.upenn.edu/publicschool)

**Tenderloin  
 Community School  
 San Francisco, CA**

The Tenderloin Community School is home to an elementary school, a child development center, medical and dental facilities, a counseling center, adult education facilities, a community garden, and a community kitchen. The school serves the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, a neighborhood populated largely by Southeast Asian and Russian immigrants. Prior to the school being built, 1,000 children from this neighborhood were being bused to 47 different schools in the city. The Bay Area Women's and Children's Center, a local community group, launched a campaign to bring an elementary school to the neighborhood. The group partnered with the San Francisco Unified School District to get the school/community center built. It's the first neighborhood school ever built in the Tenderloin District.

Date of Completion: 1998  
 Grades Served: PreK-5  
 Student Population: 325  
 Avg. Classroom Size: 960 sf  
 School Size: 66,000 sf  
 Number of Floors: 3  
 Site Size: 0.73 acres  
[www.sfusd.k12.ca.us](http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us)



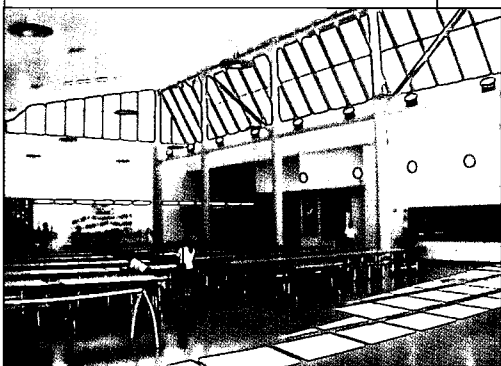
Minneapolis Interdistrict  
 Downtown School



San Francisco's Tenderloin  
 Community School



**Small, neighborhood-based schools are best positioned to respond to the calls for schools to be more accountable, better integrated into communities, and more resource-efficient.**



## The Power of Neighborhood-Based Schools

**O**ver the next decade, we have to build thousands of new schools. Current trends point to the wisdom of building new schools in existing areas.

Pressure is mounting for regions to accommodate both population growth and preserve open space, farmland, and environmentally sensitive areas. Urban service boundaries and other growth management techniques are being implemented to make regions grow more compactly. Building new schools in already established areas can help regions encourage compact development, preserve open space, and accommodate population growth.

Nationwide, school districts and community leaders are beginning to understand the power that schools have in the life of local communities and are using neighborhood-based schools strategically to revitalize and keep communities healthy. In Pomona and Chattanooga, school districts, local government officials, and community leaders are using schools to bring new life to deteriorated neighborhoods. In Manitowoc and Washington DC, the rebuilding of Jefferson and Oyster schools strengthened nearby communities.

States are pushing school districts to make better use of their facilities – such as renting out

classrooms after hours and letting community organizations have access to school gyms and kitchens. Districts are also being asked to enter into joint-use partnerships with other public and private agencies. Some policymakers even want such joint uses to be required for school districts to receive public bond money. Schools built in already established areas are best positioned to respond to these calls for more efficient use of public facilities.

Concerns about the link between obesity and the lack of physical activity in children are mounting. Public health officials point to our sprawling, auto-oriented communities as a prime culprit for the lack of physical activity among both children and adults. Schools built on the fringe of urban areas require that children be bused or driven to school. Schools built in already existing areas give children the opportunity to walk to school and get desperately needed physical activity.

**N**ot only do we have an opportunity to build new schools in existing communities, but we also have an opportunity to build better schools by building smaller schools. Studies indicate that small schools foster a greater sense of belonging among children and teachers. Studies also show that students' attendance rates, grades and test scores are higher, and that violence and drug/alcohol abuse rates are lower, in small settings.

In fact, the relationship between small-sized schools and positive educational outcomes has been “confirmed with a clarity and at a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research,” according to a 1999 Hofstra University review of school size literature.

**S**mall, neighborhood-based schools are best positioned to respond to the calls for schools to be more accountable, better integrated into communities, and more resource-efficient. Given the enormous need for new school facilities in the coming decade, we need to quickly reduce the barriers to renovating and building new, small-sized schools in existing neighborhoods.

State and local policies that affect school size, location, and design should be examined for policies that favor “greenfield” schools, and revised to accommodate the unique challenges of building schools into existing neighborhoods.

School districts need to be innovative in their approach to siting new schools. And they should also look for public/private partnerships that can help get schools built in existing communities.

As the case studies in this report have shown, many communities, school districts, community leaders, and government officials are being creative about school sites, modifying policies to create neighborhood schools, and breaking out of “greenfield” school building habits. These efforts can serve as models and inspiration for other school districts to build small, neighborhood-based schools – schools that better educate our children, promote healthier lifestyles, and that revitalize and strengthen our communities.



*Nationwide, school districts and community leaders are beginning to understand the power that schools have in the life of local communities and are using neighborhood-based schools strategically to revitalize and keep communities healthy.*

## Neighborhood-Based School Resources

### ■ 21st Century School Fund

Works to build the public will and capacity to improve urban public school facilities.

2814 Adams Mill Rd. NW  
Washington, DC 20009-2204  
tel (202) 745-3745  
fax (202) 745-1713  
info@21csf.org  
www.21csf.org

### ■ Coalition for Community Schools

Works toward improving education and helping students learn while supporting and strengthening their families and communities.

c/o Institute for  
Educational Leadership  
1001 Connecticut Ave. NW,  
Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20036  
tel (202) 822-8405  
fax (202) 872-4050  
ccs@iel.org  
www.communityschools.org

### ■ National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities

Created by the U.S. Department of Education, this free service disseminates information about K-12 school planning, design, financing, construction, operations and maintenance.

1090 Vermont Ave. NW, #700  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
tel (888) 552-0624 and  
(202) 289-7800  
www.edfacilities.org

### ■ National Trust for Historic Preservation

Provides leadership, education and advocacy to save America's historic places and revitalize communities. In 2000, published *Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl: Why Johnny Can't Walk to School*, a report about the difficulties of renovating older neighborhood schools.

1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
tel (202) 588-6000  
fax (202) 588-6038  
www.nthp.org

### ■ The New Rules Project

Comprehensive resource for policymakers, organizations and activists looking for innovative public policies that can be used to make communities vibrant and strong.

1313 5th St. SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
tel (612) 379-3815  
fax (612) 379-3920  
www.newrules.org

### ■ New Schools / Better Neighborhoods

Promotes new schools as centers of neighborhoods and neighborhoods as centers of learning.

811 W. 7th St., Suite 900  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
tel (213) 629-9019  
fax (213) 623-9207  
info@nsbn.org  
www.nsbn.org



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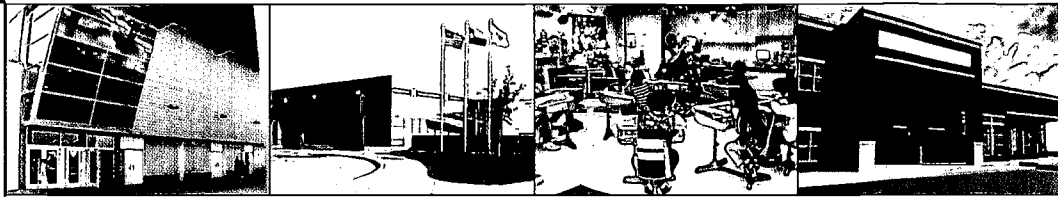
NAR's Smart Growth initiative, **On Common Ground: REALTORS® and Smart Growth**, focuses on providing resources to REALTORS® and state and local REALTOR® associations to enable them to become more valuable community partners in addressing the challenges of growth in their communities.

■ [www.REALTOR.org](http://www.REALTOR.org)

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

A nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership organization, the Local Government Commission is composed of forward-thinking, locally elected officials, city/county staff, and other interested individuals. The LGC inspires and promotes the leadership of local elected officials to address the problems facing our communities by implementing innovative policies and programs that lead to efficient use of civic, environmental and economic resources.

■ [www.lgc.org](http://www.lgc.org)



**O**pen a new school in a retail mall, build an apartment complex to finance school renovations, keep the school open while rebuilding on-site, target a magnet-school design for a densely populated neighborhood, forge a coalition with the local university and philanthropic organizations.

These are just a few of the innovative approaches some communities have taken to create good new schools in existing neighborhoods. And, as this report illustrates, these neighborhood-based approaches work in big cities and small towns.



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