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ABSTRACT

The Los Angeles Public School District is experiencing considerable overcrowding and deterioration of its public schools without adequate funding or planning to build new ones. This document presents the recommendations of a task force that assessed the district's public school crisis in the following areas: school maintenance; new facilities construction; better use of existing facilities; and legislation. Task Force recommendations include speeding up new school construction and conversion of existing commercial structures, aggressively pursuing State financial assistance, renovating existing overcrowded schools to reflect the school-within-a-school concept of design, and establishing a joint development plan to generate the appropriate facilities to meet student needs now and into the future. Specific action plans are listed for each recommendation. (GR)

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FACILITIES TASK FORCE

INTRODUCTION

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The Los Angeles Unified School District is facing a facilities crisis. Projections suggest that the school district will add another 100,000 students before this decade is over. The District must provide effective schooling for every student in a structurally appropriate facility.

Many of the schools are already at the bursting point. In the last decade, the enrollment in the district grew by over 110,000 students. Much of this growth was absorbed by adding temporary, portable buildings to already overcrowded school campuses; by creating "multi-track year round" schools which limit the number of days an individual child can attend school; and by re-configuring existing high schools from three-year to four-year institutions which the district is able to do in part because of the high dropout rate.

As a result of the problems created by overcrowded campuses, nearly 25,000 students are transported every day out of their neighborhoods to less crowded schools. This number is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years. Some of these children have up to an 100 mile daily commute which often requires them to spend over two hours in rush hour traffic. Studies show that this group of students is the lowest achieving group in the school district and its test scores are significantly below those of the students who are able to remain in the home school.

Hampered by a lack of funds and an unyielding, complex state school construction bureaucracy, the school district has fallen short of its long-range goals of constructing more neighborhood schools in the overcrowded communities. Facility design and placement must facilitate District policies in regard to enrollment, academic achievement, racial and economic isolation, and social service delivery systems.

These children and all children ought to be at schools where their parents are able to participate in their education; where we can increase their educational opportunities; where there is room to run and play and enjoy their childhood; where they will achieve educational outcomes consistent with their highest potential; and which ensure exposure to multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-class experiences.

FACILITIES TASK FORCE

SCHOOL MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Highest Long Term Priorities

- 1. Adequate funds for major deferred maintenance, preventative maintenance, and building

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security to restore basic safety and comfort to classrooms.

2. Flexibility in State laws and local policies to permit more cost-effective bidding, employment, and procurement practices, thereby reducing the ultimate cost of maintenance operations.
3. Programs to cultivate a neighborhood's sense of "ownership" of their schools, and expanded civil/criminal penalties for students and their parents when students are found guilty of theft or property damage to schools.

### **Long Term Solutions**

1. Aggressively pursue State matching funds for major deferred maintenance expenses.
2. Obtain firm commitment of maintenance funds from School Board and State to facilitate orderly scheduling and bidding of needed repairs, possibly via 2-3 year budgets.
3. Reduce the cost of major repairs by preparing thorough plans and standardized specifications for the work, establishing certification program for outside contractors, and opening major jobs to competitive bidding by District and certified contractors.
4. Give school principals discretionary authority and funds to hire pre-qualified outside vendors for minor repairs and supplies.
5. Reinstate and train on-site plant engineers to complete minor repairs and competently diagnose major repairs.
6. Reinstate and expand the trailer-based repair program for scheduled major maintenance and repairs.
7. Increase business and union participation in the Adopt-a-School Program and broaden scope of their contribution to include maintenance.
8. Acquire computer hardware (software is in place) for an effective preventative maintenance program to avoid replacement costs of deteriorated plant and equipment.
9. Provide voice communication in classrooms for teacher/student security.
10. Install security grills, solid doors, and durable locks for ground floor classrooms. Ultimately, install more sophisticated building security systems to schools that request it.
11. Support tort reform to reduce District liability when school property is vandalized.
12. Establish a "quality-control committee" of teachers, administrators, classified/tradesmen to review maintenance process and increase efficiency.

### **Short Term Solutions**

1. Expand use of trained vocational students and of the union apprenticeship program for minor repairs and assistance on major repairs.
2. Utilize individuals sentenced to community service and youth employment programs for maintenance work.
3. Capitalize on current community motivation and federal support of "Rebuild LA" for organizing project-specific neighborhood work parties and funding major deferred maintenance projects.
4. Perhaps consider on-site 24-hour resident security.

### **New facilities recommendations**

#### **Solutions (General):**

1. Speed up process of new construction.
2. Make it easier and faster to convert existing commercial structures.
3. Expand existing schools.

4. Encourage the development of primary centers.
5. Encourage different criteria in applicable codes for different school levels.
6. Use facilities which are not being currently utilized as sites for new schools.

### **Solutions (Specific):**

1. Speed up process of new construction.
  - a. Set shorter time limits for review of plans for permit.
  - b. Consolidate the permit process for new school construction.
  - c. Reduce obstacles to school district's ability to acquire new sites.
  - d. Streamline the district process for new school construction.
  - e. Develop Adult Education Division sites for use as classrooms (mostly church classrooms only used on weekends, but also storefronts, etc.).
  - f. Revise Office of Local Assistance allocation timing to occur at one time instead of over time.
  - g. Immediately distribute state bond funding to local level for distribution. Distribute state funding according to severity of overcrowding projected by district.
  - h. Create improved mechanisms for joint ventures between school district and public or private sector entities (i.e., LACTC, transit station joint development, utilize public infrastructure and air space).
  - i. Encourage high-rise urban schools in areas where available sites are scarce and costs are high.
2. Make it easier and faster to convert existing commercial/industrial facilities.
  - a. Modify codes to encourage the conversion of appropriate commercial/industrial structures into schools.
  - b. Create state tax credits to encourage conversion.
  - c. Tailor the size of the school to the size of the existing structure; force school districts to be more flexible in analyzing potential structures.
3. Expand existing schools.
  - a. Build new buildings on exiting playground space where appropriate and utilize roofs as new playgrounds.
  - b. Convert existing surface parking to new buildings with underground parking.
  - c. Where structurally feasible, add additional stories to existing buildings.
4. Develop additional special school options: primary centers, magnet schools/centers,

language/newcomer centers, and special focus centers, etc.

5. Provide access to special school options for special status students (LEP, special education, etc.).

6. Develop different criteria in applicable codes for different school levels.

a. Revise codes to allow schools to be located in high rise and other structures (as in NYC)

b. Review current building and safety codes and revise archaic requirements.

7. Use facilities which are not being currently utilized as sites for new schools.

a. Relocate current district/administrative offices to commercial sites and allow these sites to be used for new school construction.

b. Utilize portions of parks that are not presently available for public use as new school sites per community desire to enhance utilization of parks. No diminishment of total amount of park land. Replace with other park space.

8. Utilize input from school administrators, faculty, staff, parents and private sector professionals in the design of new schools.

9. Schools within schools:

### **Better use of existing facilities recommendations**

#### **Creating a Sense of Smallness at a Large, Crowded Site\_**

1. Schools within schools: theme/interest based houses; houses/families/casas (also consider this for new schools.).

1. Inter-cluster choice: identify and use all available classroom space. Modify policies re: attendance areas.

1. Identify and Build on Building Space on Existing Campuses Where Appropriate: i.e., consider the use of public facilities/joint ventures for athletic fields provided that issues of density, equality, and adequacy are addressed. Use roof-tops for recreation.

1. Use Current District Offices for Schools: 450 N. Grand, 3rd St. Annex, Osage, Hesby Street... Consider cost effectiveness of moving administrative offices to reasonably priced commercial space and/or improve site utilization to create income streams for building new schools.

1. Consider Use of New Technologies: create a sense of smallness, free up teachers for small group instruction.

1. Explore a Variety of Alternative Scheduling Options.

1. Phase-out and eliminate the CAP program within one year. Ensure that no school population is in excess of current District policy re: density. Develop programs to remove barriers to academic achievement (racism, linguistic grouping, etc.). Every student must have a "home school" held

accountable for his/her academic achievement.

1. Ensure parent participation in decisions governing placement of their children. Also ensure student placement at a particular facility results in improved student achievement and not disparate achievement by race, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status.

### **Legislation recommendations**

Elements of legislation include:

1. Establishment of a financial/construction authority in Los Angeles, patterned after the New York model. The purpose will be to start a process allowing circumvention of the state regulatory board and process.
2. Develop a formula for allocation and quick distribution of bond funds rather than the cumbersome political process of the State Allocations Board.
3. Provide Local control of developer fees collected in local agency jurisdictions.
4. Allow bond funds to be used to re-open closed schools within a school district.
5. Immediate vesting of funds committed by schools for construction of schools. This is to prevent the starts and stops once a project has been given a green light from the state.
6. Permit leasing of space and development of joint use projects with bond funds.
7. Allow school district flexibility in creating developer incentives for joint use projects.
8. Consider closed schools in neighboring school districts. Make these schools available to neighboring school districts who need them. Give school districts first priority for use.
9. Don't limit joint development to parks/current schools.

**JOINT DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS****A. Basic Goal:** To generate the appropriate facilities (existing and new) to meet the needs of LAUSD students, now and over time.

### **B. Strategies:**

1. To support legislation as needed to gain flexibility, local control, and money.
2. To use all existing resources aggressively.
3. To promote and develop the concept of a comprehensive financing plan for existing and new education facilities.
4. To work for enhanced cooperation among public agencies.
5. To ensure that the quality of educational facilities be such as to encourage and reinforce the education process.

### **C. Sources of Funding:**

1. Possible sources of early funding:

a. Work with the C.R.A. to direct redevelopment funds to the construction of school facilities; specifically, the 20 percent of its funds set aside for housing should be spent on mixed use school and residential development.

b. Move forward prudently on public-private joint ventures with the private sector and place

emphasis upon aggressive and meaningful asset management.

- c. Make energetic efforts to cooperate with the City of Los Angeles in the development of playgrounds (with grass) and defensible space.
- d. Institute a major effort to coordinate the expenditure of existing capital improvement funds at the highest levels among public agencies. These funds could be coordinated to benefit neighborhood schools and specialized magnet facilities.
- e. Evaluate the size and composition of the District's Building Division to determine if basic building goals can be achieved through smarter spending and better coordination with the private sector.

2. Elements of a comprehensive revenue producing strategy:

- a. Bond revenues (locally raised).
- b. Developer fees--used locally.
- c. State facility funds (with fewer restrictions).
- d. Public-private joint venture income.
- e. Asset management income.
- f. Port of entry funding (federal).
- g. Redevelopment funds (including housing funds).
- h. Quimby Act funds.

**D. We must work with the State to achieve legal and regulatory changes to provide for:**

- 1. Faster processing of facility applications.
- 2. Greater local control over construction and inspection.
- 3. Customized standards to meet local needs.
- 4. Child care facility standards that reflect urban land forms.
- 5. Mixed uses of schools and other land uses. This could require a comprehensive re-evaluation of the various codes that apply to such mixed uses.

**E.**

**Recommendations related specifically to joint development:**

1. Private Development of School Facilities:

**a. Provide incentives for private developers to include school facilities in their**

**developments.** Such incentives might include increased FAR, decreased fees, or expedited processing. School facilities could work in any product type (residential, industrial, office, or retail). Building standards would have to be relaxed in order that the developer be able to build the facility economically. Other requirements, such as square feet per child and open space per child, should also be open to review.

**b. Provide incentives for employers to create facilities for younger children at the work place.** Such incentives might include tax credits. Again, building and open space requirements would need to be relaxed. We would also recommend that employers be encouraged to include children from their neighborhood in their facilities.

## 2. Private Sector Involvement in the Development and Management of District Assets:

**a. Evaluate the operation of the LAUSD Building Division.** On the development side, the LAUSD should make greater use of consultants in such areas as demographics, market studies, and planning. Through attrition or other means, the Building Division should reduce its staff. On the asset management side, the LAUSD must generate a significantly higher return on its assets. Again, experts should be hired on a consulting basis to help the District evaluate its assets and then to structure ground leases, joint ventures, sales, development, or simply more intensive use.

## 3. Cooperation Among Government Agencies:

**a. School facilities planning must have a higher profile in the planning processes of governmental agencies.** General plans should address schools. Plans for parks should include the investigation of joint use with schools. Community centers should be planned for educational use in off hours. Redevelopment Agencies should consider the need for schools. To the extent they are not at capacity, colleges and universities should make their facilities available to younger students.

## **b. New government or public buildings should include school facilities.**

- Consider the use of Transportation funds. Metro-rail stations may be good joint-use opportunities.
- Look at site opportunities related to infra-structure.
- Look at most cost-effective use of district office facilities.
- Give benefits to schools who improve management of assets.
- Expand coordination with several cities not just Los Angeles.
- Improve construction quality.

Please [click here](#) for any suggestions or to contact the School Reform Office.

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