



Guideline for Educational Facility Site Selection

160-5-4-.16 (a) 6

Facility Site, Construction, and Reimbursement

**Georgia Department of Education
Facilities Services Unit**

Kathy Cox, Superintendent of Schools

Guideline for Educational Facility Site Selection

O.C.G.A. 20-2-260 (c) (7) requires in part that the GaDOE “review and approve proposed sites.”

1. This guideline applies to the purchase of all new sites on which an educational facility will be constructed, the purchase of additional acreage for an existing educational facility site, existing sites on which a new educational facility will be constructed, or any leased or privately owned site on which public school students will be attending school. Property owned by the State of Georgia being used for post-secondary instruction does not need to be approved.
2. Site approval should occur before a new site or additional acreage is purchased and must occur before a new facility or an addition to an existing facility is constructed on the site.
3. Once site approval is obtained from the Facilities Section of the Georgia Department of Education, a site code will be issued. A facility code must be issued before any activity related to the construction of a facility on the site including GaDOE approval of plans and specifications. A facility code will be issued after the school system submits a copy of a title or warranty deed for the property. Applications for state funding for a project cannot be submitted until a facility code has been obtained.
4. If there are existing buildings on the site and the buildings are going to be used to house students, then the buildings must be modified to meet all facility requirements listed in GaDOE Guideline for Square Footage Requirements for Educational Facilities and GaDOE Guideline for Educational Facility Construction. All plans and specifications for modifying the building must comply with the GaDOE Guideline for Submission of Documents for Review of Planning, Bidding, and Construction of Educational Facilities.

Requests for approval of all proposed sites for educational facilities should be directed to:

Facilities Services Unit
1670 Twin Towers East
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5050
Telephone Number (404) 656-2454

The minimum useable acreage requirements of the State Board of Education are:

Elementary School Facilities - five acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.

Middle School Facilities- 12 acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.

High School Facilities- 20 acres plus one acre for each 100 students in FTE.

In developed areas, a variance of the minimum useable acreage requirements may be made by the GaDOE Facilities Section Director when requested by the local board of education if the reduced acreage is considered appropriate and can accommodate all facility, parking, and outdoor areas as documented by an architectural plat locating all needed areas on the plat.

Although minimum useable acreages are established, large acreages are highly desirable. Also, those responsible for selecting sites must remain aware of development limitations imposed by certain physical factors of the acreage being considered.

The size of the facility should not be the only criterion affecting site size. The possibility of expansion, anticipated community use of the educational facility or area, and the school program are other factors to consider.

A good, well-developed site and a well-equipped, functionally designed educational facility is a basic physical tool for a quality education. Without one or the other, the educational program may suffer. Current school programs include many activities that must be carried on outside the walls of the educational facility. Well-planned and properly developed outdoor areas are essential to support outdoor activities, provide vehicular circulation, adequate and convenient parking and also be conducive to the safety of children. The site is an integral part of the total instructional facility and may enhance or inhibit the achievement of a school's educational objectives.

Environment is an influential factor in the lives of young children. Therefore, the site should contribute positively to the health, safety and social aspects of a child's life at school.

Choosing a good site is one of the important early steps in overall planning. Success or failure in this initial step will be reflected in every subsequent stage in the developmental process.

For these reasons, the choice of a site requires careful study, including a thorough and objective evaluation. Much thought should be given to the basic principles involved in good site selection.

These principles, when studied in the light of their relation to the local situation, should provide a basis for the objective selection of the best site available. Undue consideration given to just the value or acquisition cost of the site can be false economy, unless all of the cost of development of the site are also addressed.

Criteria for Selection of Educational Facility Sites

Utilities:

Utilities essential to the operation of a modern educational facility must be available.

Electricity, gas, water, sewage, telephone services, and high speed internet access are essential to the operation of an educational facility and must be accessible to the proposed site. Costs associated with obtaining these utilities should be considered as part of the total site purchase.

The desirability of public water and sewage service to an educational facility site cannot be over emphasized. The cost of installing private systems, along with the continuing maintenance costs, plus environmental considerations must be considered. In locations which cannot be served by public sewage systems, documentation that an on-site system can be located on the site must be submitted .

Road Access:

An evaluation of site accessibility and the flow of traffic will need to be performed to determine any road improvements that must be incorporated in the site development. Site access from two different roads is preferable. Bus traffic and car traffic should be separated whenever feasible. At a minimum the following items will need to be checked in the evaluation:

1. Adequate sight distance for vehicle speeds on the main highway and for vehicles departing the proposed facility.
2. Access point to nearest signalized intersection with adequate spacing between the proposed driveway and the intersection
3. Depending on the main highway traffic volumes, consideration should be given for driveways that are one way in and one way out. This is especially true for proposed high school facilities where new student drivers will represent a higher percentage of the traffic.
4. Posted speed limit on the main highway
5. The need for left and right turn lanes must be evaluated
6. Adequate campus and entrance way
7. Adequate pedestrian movement for access into the proposed site, including handicap access

Cooperation between the school system, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and/or the local road commission is necessary to plan and complete any road improvements related to the opening of a facility. The school system will need to send a notification letter to GDOT and the local road commission stating their proposed plans for the site and requesting that an evaluation be performed on the roadway. A copy of the letter must to be submitted with your package for site approval.

If the site is approved, GDOT or the local road commission will perform the evaluation depending on whether the site is on a state route or a local road. This effort will need to be coordinated by the school system to ensure the evaluation is completed in a timely manner. A

copy of the evaluation will be sent to the local school system. This evaluation does not obligate GDOT to spend state motor fuel tax to fund any of the needed road improvements. The County or City government may make a request through the State Aid Office for funding assistance if needed.

The notification letter to GDOT should be mailed to the following address:

State Aid Office
Georgia Department of Transportation
One Georgia Center
600 W Peachtree St NW
Atlanta, GA 30308

Site Development:

The physical characteristics of the site should be such that the cost of grading, drainage and development will be relatively low.

The GaDOE strongly recommends obtaining a professional geotechnical evaluation for physical development prior to purchasing the property. The evaluation of a site as it relates to physical development is a technical task, requiring the knowledge and experience of a qualified professional. The investment required to obtain a professional evaluation for physical development may result in considerable future savings.

Geographical and Related Factors:

The site should provide convenient accessibility, be supportive to an efficient transportation system, be accessible to community services needed by the school and be appropriately located with respect to other schools and the population to be served.

All site approvals must be accompanied by a letter of assurance that sufficient acreage for buildings and structures is outside the 100 year floodplain or the Coastal High Hazard Area. This letter of assurance must be from the Floodplain Management Coordinator of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. When part of a site is located in a 100 year floodplain, the architect must submit a plat designating the flood plain, the amount of acreage in the flood plain, and showing that all buildings and structures can be located outside the 100 year floodplain.

To obtain the letter of assurance, complete and submit the Floodplain Determination Request form found in the GaDOE Regulations /National Flood Insurance Program Guideline to the Floodplain Management Coordinator, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and enclose:

1. County or City Road Map with the location of the site clearly marked
2. Site Plan with the location of existing or proposed structures identified.

The request should include a brief description of the location with directions from a given point, such as a town or city, and the names of roads and highway numbers, and the approximate acreage of the site. The State Floodplain Management Office is authorized to request any additional information as needed to complete the evaluation of the proposed site. Additional

information may include a Surveyed Plat using a point of reference with the site tied to the centerline of an intersecting road. In the event a Surveyed Plat is necessary but unavailable, no final determination may be given. Allow from 7 to 10 days for the floodplain determination review process. A form for the request of a floodplain determination is available in the Guideline entitled Regulations and Procedures to Comply with the Standards and Criteria of the National Flood Insurance Program. The address of the Floodplain Management Office follows:

Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Floodplain Management Office
4220 International Parkway Suite 101
Atlanta, Georgia 30354
Telephone: (404) 362-1757
Fax: (404) 362-2757

Environmental Factors:

The site should possess physically desirable characteristics and be located so surrounding areas reflect characteristics conducive to the development of attitudes and responses in children considered to be socially, culturally and educationally desirable.

Protected species and waterways that may be impacted by development of the site should be identified. Any special permits required in relation to disturbing protected species and waterways should be obtained before a site is purchased.

Whenever possible, the selection of an educational facility site in an area zoned for commercial or industrial development should be avoided. The location should be insulated from business and industrial development. The routes to and from the site should not expose children to hazardous environmental materials or safety hazards.

The location of a site should be acceptable to the school patronage community from the standpoint of general environmental surroundings and vehicular accessibility.

A Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment will be required for each educational facility site. The Phase I- Environmental Site Assessment shall follow the methodology of the current ASTM Practice E. A Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment Report must be attached to each completed "Site Approval Form" submitted to the Department of Education for review and approval.

Safety Hazards:

The site should be free of conditions and installations which endanger the life, safety and health of children. If one or more of the potential hazards identified in the Georgia Department of Education's Guideline for a Risk Hazard Assessment of an Educational Facility Site exists on or near a proposed site, further consideration should be given to (a) evaluating other sites where these potential hazards do not exist, or (b) determining how the potential risk posed to students and faculty by an existing hazard could be minimized. Costs associated with implementing risk reduction measures should be considered when making a final decision regarding a proposed site.

A Risk/Hazard Analysis completed in accordance with the requirements of “Guideline for Risk Hazard Assessment of Educational Facility Sites” must be completed by a registered, professional engineer licensed to do business in the State of Georgia and shall include the following information at a minimum:

- (1) Identification of each hazard;
- (2) An evaluation of each hazard;
- (3) Options for mitigating each identified hazard (if appropriate);
- (4) A statement from the engineer based on his or her professional judgment and the findings of the Risk/Hazard Analysis regarding the suitability of the site for an educational facility.

The Department of Education reserves the right to request information in addition to that provided in the Phase I-Environmental Site Assessment and/or the Risk/Hazard Analysis. Additional information may be needed prior to reaching a decision regarding the appropriateness of a proposed site if any of the above named hazards exist on or up to the area located within a three-mile radius of the proposed educational facility site.

All mitigations recommended by the engineer performing the risk hazard study must be included in the site development and design of the instructional facility. These mitigations must be specifically addressed on the plans and specifications submitted to the GaDOE for approval.

The site cannot be located within 1000 feet of a current business that operates or sells products that would violate the school safety zone as defined in O.C.G.A. 16-11-127.1 (a)(1) and/or within the designated distance from a current business selling alcohol as defined in O.C.G.A. 3-3-31.

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL FACILITY SITE EVALUATION
AND APPROVAL FORM**

School System: _____ _____	Name of Superintendent*: _____ Person to Contact (designee): _____
Mailing Address: _____ _____ _____ _____	Phone Number: _____ FAX Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

I. LOCATION OF PROPOSED SITE

Address of Proposed Site (if available) and/or legal definition of the property: _____ _____ _____ _____	
Acreage in proposed Site: _____ Acreage in 100 year flood plain: _____ Does this acreage meet the minimum requirements? (Circle One) Yes No Please attach a rationale and request by the local School Board for requesting a variance to the minimum size requirements if the answer to the above question is "No".	Clear Title Obtainable? (Circle One) Yes No This property will be () owned () leased by the school system or This property will be () owned () leased by _____ and used for _____ _____

*For State and Commission Charter Schools, the principal will sign in this blank.

**II. PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL FACILITY TO BE LOCATED ON THIS SITE
(BASIC INFORMATION)**

Name of Proposed Facility: _____		
Proposed Grades: _____	Approximate Number of Students: _____	
Number of Instructional Units Proposed: _____	Is this the maximum size planned for this facility? (Circle One) Yes No	Is this facility being designed for future expansion? (Circle One) Yes No
Estimated date facility is to be completed and occupied: Date: _____ Comments: _____ _____		If expanded, maximum number of instructional units proposed in the future: _____ I.U.

III. UTILITIES AVAILABLE ON THE PROPOSED SITE

(If Utilities are not currently available on the site, please indicate when utility providers anticipate delivery of utilities to the site.)

UTILITY	CURRENTLY AVAILABLE?		WHEN AVAILABLE?	OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS	
	Yes	No	(Date)		
(a) Electricity				Voltage: _____	Phase: _____
(b) Natural Gas				Line Size: _____	Line Pressure: _____
(c) Telephone					
(d) Cable					
(e) Water*					
Public				Line Size: _____	Line Pressure: _____ Attach FLOW TEST results (See Note Below)*
Private				Line Size: _____	Line Pressure: _____ Attach FLOW TEST results (See Note Below)*
(f) Sewage*					
Public					
Private					

* If changes to the planned water or sewage systems indicated above are made, then the site must be resubmitted for approval and the current approval will be voided.

MISCELLANEOUS SITE INFORMATION

(For each item, circle the appropriate response. If Other is selected, please enter appropriate response.)

(a) Property Zoned	Residential	Industrial	Commercial	Other: _____
(b) Adjacent Development or Existing Community Design	Residential	Industrial	Commercial	Other: _____ _____
(c) Traffic Conditions Around Site	Congested	Moderate	Light	Other: _____
(d) Topography	Steep	Rolling	Gently Sloping	Flat
(e) Grading for Building	Excessive	Moderate	Minimal	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(f) Rock Excavation	Unlikely	Some But Not Excessive	Excessive	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(g) Area Available for Parking	Adequate Space	Limited Space	Inadequate Space	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(h) Vehicular Access to Site	Excellent Potential	Development Restricted	Development Difficult	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)
(i) Area Available for Athletic and Recreation Area Development	Adequate	Limited	Inadequate	Comments: _____ (Continue on reverse)

VI. SYSTEM REQUEST FOR SITE APPROVAL

After having considered the findings from all studies completed and evaluating the potential sites available for this facility, the _____ Board of Education requests approval of the proposed site identified on this form by official board action on (date) _____. An initial investigation had been conducted, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment has been conducted, and a Risk Hazard Analysis has been completed. Costs associated with the development of this site including grading, obtaining utilities, and road improvements have been evaluated.

Signature of Board Chairperson ** (Date)

Signature of School Superintendent* (Date)

*For State and Commission Charter Schools, the principal will sign in this blank.

**For State and Commission Charter Schools, the charter board chair will sign in this blank.

ATTACHMENTS:

The following documents must be submitted to the Facilities Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Education to evaluate your system's request for approval of a proposed educational facility site:

- 1 Preliminary Site Approval Form with Sections I-VI completed;
- 2 A copy of the letter of assurance from the Flood Plain Management Coordinator of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources stating that this proposed educational facility site is not in a flood plain or Coastal High Hazard Area;
- 3 A copy of the rough plat of the proposed educational facility site;
- 4 A copy of the Flow Test results taken at the potable water hydrant nearest to the educational facility site;
- 5 A copy of the Phase I – Environmental Site Assessment; and
- 6 A copy of the Risk/Hazard Analysis;
- 7 A copy of the letter to the Georgia Department of Transportation or local roads commissioner requesting that a road study for this site be conducted;

The Facilities Section of the Georgia Department of Education is authorized to request any additional information on any criteria (section) when such information is needed to complete the evaluation of the proposed site.

VII. SITE APPROVAL

Consultant, Facilities Services Unit _____
Signature Date

**Representative,
Local Sewer Department Official** _____
Signature Date

**Representative,
Local Building Codes Official** _____
(if an existing building on the site will be used for educational purposes) Signature Date

Remarks:

The section below is for use by the Georgia Department of Education Facilities Section

Based on our visual inspection of the site and/or evaluation of the documentation submitted by the school system, the decision of the GaDOE Facilities Section is that:

- THIS EDUCATIONAL FACILITY SITE IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.**
- THIS EDUCATIONAL FACILITY SITE AND DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED BY THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ARE APPROVED WITH COMMENTS (See Attachments).**
- THIS SITE IS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL.**

Director, Facilities Services Unit _____
(Facilities Services Director's Signature) (Date)