

New Model Recommendation:

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Create a K-8 Neighborhood School at Chase Street School to promote educational cohesion, increase student achievement, encourage neighborhood engagement and build a strong community of life long learners

What is a K-8 School?

- A school where students progress from kindergarten through eighth grade together
- A school that offers appropriate curriculum and instruction at each grade level

Why K-8 being considered?

- K-8 schools promote cohesion, neighborhood pride and increase accessibility for family engagement and provide a natural focal point for the value of civic engagement and social interconnectedness
- A neighborhood K-8 school will fit particularly well with “Smart Growth Community School Initiatives” by utilizing neighborhood community learning centers
- Students at K-8 schools show a greater growth in achievement, a decrease in absenteeism and have fewer discipline problems
- Students enrolled in small K-8 schools are less likely to “fall through the cracks”
- K-8 school models increase student achievement and provide opportunities to close the achievement gap for minority students and prepare them for high school
- Smaller neighborhood K-8 schools improve the academic achievement of non-traditional students, bringing about increase graduation rates, obtaining greater student involvement in school co-curricular activities, and reducing student discipline problems
- K-8 empowerment plan studies (controlled for the effects of poverty and race) found 8th graders who attended a K-8 school scoring significantly higher than those in middle school on standardized tests of achievement in reading, mathematics and science
- Neighborhood schools do not sort kids and their families by narrow focus, but rather ask people to come together and create a community school based on the best interest of all of the children, regardless of their background and interest to build strong connections within their communities
- The K-8 plan is intended to stem the exodus of students and sprawl from low performing districts after completing K-5 elementary schools
- Neighborhood schools make it easier for families to get involved with their child’s education, develop a sense of pride in their community, discourage sprawl, decrease environmental impacts, allow for shorter bus rides, lower transportation costs, reduce parking requirements and encourage community engagement

What kind of action or resources would be necessary to implement the recommendation?

- Local Community Support and a desire for high achieving schools, integrated design, and smart growth planning.
- Clarke County School District, Mayor and Commissioners, Clarke County Planning and Zoning, UGA, business community, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic foundations and individuals and private investors

Forces That Support (please list):

Athens, Georgia, is a small but diverse city. Over the past decade, Athens-Clarke County, the University of Georgia, and surrounding counties have been growing at a tremendous pace. We are all at a critical point in our growth. Particularly vulnerable is (our gateway to downtown) the Prince Avenue neighborhood corridor with planned redevelopment of the Navy School and new neighborhood school. Our city needs careful planning in every avenue so that we can have “Smart Growth.” One of the key elements for smart growth is strong and thriving school systems. Smart Growth will be crucial to our environment, health and well-being. Where and how schools are built is critical in every city for a strong economy. Community-centered schools, which invest in walkable neighborhoods and mixed land use plans, are being built across the nation by community leaders and their local school boards. One of the biggest challenges to Athens-Clarke County and the Clarke County School System are costs associated with planning transportation. Athens should not only work in the same manner, but strive to be one of the best examples in the nation for smart growth planning and new models in education.

It is our greatest hope to work with the Clarke County School District to become partners with Chase Street’s School plans for expansion and make a K-8 neighborhood school. It is our belief that education for our children and hard work by our citizens are keys to success for a sustainable community for all. This is a golden opportunity for Athens to support education and urban planning. We have been given a challenge to grow and have the opportunity to excel.

The Prince Avenue Neighborhood corridor in which the Chase Street School zone is located has a multi-faceted development and revitalization strategy. Our community goal is to stabilize the historic neighborhood and greenspace, increase homeownership, encourage thriving mixed use developments and promote smart growth with multi modes of transportation. We support a pedestrian friendly neighborhood to serve our diverse urban community which supports a large number of University faculty, staff and students, hospital employees, medical professionals, small business owners, laborers, artists, retail workers, city employees, Clarke County School District employees, a growing retirement community and most importantly our school aged children.

Our neighborhood school needs to be competitive academically with the best public and private schools in the area. Without a neighborhood preference for enrollment, the school's ability to attract homeowners to the neighborhood is greatly diminished. A well-designed new school building that supports an integrated multiple intelligence curriculum is important for generating interest and enrollment to Chase Street School, particularly among our diverse middle-class parents with choices. Strategies to improve public education relate directly to our future goals. Attracting homebuyers to live in our neighborhood and enroll their children in Chase Street School is a primary goal of neighborhood stabilization. The Boulevard, Cobbham, and Normaltown neighborhood students, parents and community members in Chase Street Attendance zone are very supportive of K-8 neighborhood schools and integrated building design.

Why does a K-8 Configuration Work at Chase Street?

- A Chase Street K-8 configuration fits well with the planned expansion capacity for 525 pupils because the projected 10 year growth for K-5 is 265 students according to the MGT audit that says that Chase Street School will be at 65% utilization after Splost II.
- The Chase Street attendance zone is in an urban neighborhood with sidewalk connections and many opportunities for alternative transportation modes, which promote health and well being. Our neighborhood school capacity should not be designed for dependence on busing or vehicle transportation of students.
- The Chase Street School zone is an urban walking neighborhood that strongly supports safe routes to school and does not support expansion that increases traffic associated with student transportation that endangers our pedestrian and biking children and citizens.
- Supported neighborhood schools will substantially decrease CCSD transportation cost, promote health and well being and encourage safer pedestrian neighborhoods.
- CCSD is the smallest district in the state and spends nearly double the state average (6.8%) on transportation. Saved cost from transportation can be used more appropriately for education in the classroom to address the 65% spending mandate.
- Chase Street is currently not a neighborhood school. Approximately 50 children (18% of school population) currently enrolled live in the neighborhood zone and around 175 students are transported from attendance Zone One.
- Approximately 100 children live in the Chase Street School zone are enrolled at Barrow Elementary, which provides the quality and type of educational programs our students and parents desire.

Forces that oppose (please list):

1. School Choice with transportation provided is counter to the promotion of walking neighborhood schools and smart growth planning.

- Current student assignment policies designed for UGA/CCSD partnership with transportation provided to Chase Street School are no longer appropriate because the partnership has ended. This policy is counter to neighborhood cohesion, has increased traffic in our neighborhood, increased CCSD transportation cost, and divided our community with no significant gain in holistic achievement.
- “Open school choice” options, which can be beneficial to increase diversity and enrollment in neighborhood zones, are no longer necessary with a K-8 configuration at Chase Street. School choice options should not prohibit the school from instituting a preference for children in neighborhood zones.

2. Lack of space in attendance zone one

- Inadequate space is available for students in attendance zone one. There is a clear need for a new school to be built immediately in attendance zone one to accommodate overflow of students that are currently attending Chase (estimated 175 students or 63%), Oglethorpe and Timothy.
- A current study is needed to pinpoint number of students attending Chase Street, Timothy, and Oglethorpe schools to determine associated transportation burdens, traffic patterns and costs.
- A new K-8 school location would support a diverse community and promotes family engagement. Easy access to school and facilities in attendance zone one would reduce transportation time for students and families.

Additional Elements Key to Facilities and Long Range Community Planning:

1. Green Building and Integrated Design

Chase Street School’s location by historic design and neighborhood desires qualifies it for many funding opportunities by meeting the requirements for many LEED Standards in developing high performance sustainable buildings.

2. Investing in Neighborhood Schools and our future

Many communities are discovering the benefits of using Smart Growth principles in creating Smart Growth Schools that meet the needs of both parents and students.

3. Integrating School Reform and Neighborhood Revitalization: Opportunities and Challenges

Without good schools that deliver a sound instructional program to students, neighborhoods go from revitalized to demoralized. It would not matter how magnificent the dwellings, over time, residents would stop sending their most valued possessions – their children – to schools that do not function. The next step would then be a mass exodus of residents to areas with better performing schools, which would shrink the tax base and keep those schools in disenfranchised areas in a downward spiral.

– Testimony of Dr. Beverly Hall, Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, before the Millennial Housing Commission, March 2001.

4. Health and wellness plans and safe routes to school

Land development and transportation investments are interactive processes that collectively have a tremendous influence in shaping the built environment. New school locations serve as a bridge that interfaces the built environment between physical activity and health; transportation systems and physical activity; and land development patterns and physical activity.