

Site Selection and Design

School Districts shall comply with the site selection requirements of A.C.A. § 6-21-809(b)(3), as amended by Act 858 of 2019.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the School District and the Design Professional with informative guidelines to consider prior to selection, purchase, and development of a site. DPSAFT has not established standards with respect to site selection and design. Information is included for informational purposes only.

Site Selection Criteria

At first look, a potential site may appear to be a good acquisition. There are many factors, however, that can distort the picture. A site may be reduced in size if wetlands the site or if part of the area is in a floodplain. There should be a watershed nearby to allow for adequate storm drainage. Irregular topography can escalate site development costs. Adequate area is needed to retain and release storm water from the site.

Access to and from the site, from a major highway or road artery is an important factor. In addition to understanding surface characteristics, sub-surface conditions may require exploration. Preliminary soil borings should be considered to ascertain the presence of poor soil, high water table, voids, or other impediments. A Phase I environmental study should be a requirement.

Site Design

With a good site available, site design and layout becomes the next task. Good site design includes separate bus and car circulation, safe passage for students entering or exiting buses, and bus parking arranged in a continuous line or a 45 degree parking arrangement.

Site Design (continued)

Visitor and staff parking and a separate service drive is recommended.

Orientation of the building is an important factor when considering energy usage. A majority of the windows should be located on the north or south side of the building. Easy access to the main entrance should be obvious to all.

Good site design requires careful and thorough planning to provide maximum safety, and efficient utilization of site features.

Site Size

The recommended minimum site size found in this section should be considered when considering a new school site. The size guidelines are consistent with those recommended in the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI), *Guide for School Facility Appraisal*.

Fencing

Site design should incorporate adequate fencing for the safety of students. Fencing should be considered along perimeters of playgrounds and play areas and in other perimeter areas to prevent students from wandering off of school property. Fencing should be considered along vehicular traffic ways to prevent students from accidentally entering traffic.

Fencing of potentially hazardous areas, such as: railroad tracks, trash enclosures and compactors, outdoor storage areas, storm water detention ponds, electrical transformers, mechanical equipment areas, etc., should also be considered.

Fencing materials may vary widely, but should be durable and low maintenance.

Site Size

- Recommended minimum site sizes are:
 - Elementary School: 10 acres plus 1 acre per 100 students
 - Middle School: 20 acres plus 1 acre per 100 students
 - High School: 35 acres plus 1 acre per 100 students
 - Combination Schools:
 - K-12 School: 40 acres plus 1 acre per 100 students
 - K-8 School: 20 acres plus 1 acre per 100 students
- Deviations from recommended minimum site sizes may be needed because of extenuating circumstances, especially in urban areas.
- Larger site sizes or additional acreage may be needed to allow adequate land for storm water detention, building expansion, topography features, subsurface sanitary sewage systems, etc.

Urban Site Size

It is recognized that not all sites, especially those found in urban areas, will be able to accommodate new or replacement facilities. Therefore, it may be necessary to modify/reduce areas such as parking and circulation to “fit” the facility on the smaller site. A list of reductions to consider is provided to assist the School District and Design Professional in analyzing different size options.

- Decrease the amount of visitor and staff parking to be provided
- Decrease the amount of student parking provided
- Decrease the amount of mechanical yard space to be provided
- Delete the bus drop-off and parent drop-off areas and provide curbside service only
- Reduce the amount of greenspace to be provided
- Reduce/decrease the size/number of playfields/playgrounds to be provided

Parking

- The following chart is intended to assist in the development of the recommended parking for new facilities.
- Provide the suggested number of accessible parking spaces as indicated in the chart below.
- Confirm all parking quantities with local building, planning, and/or zoning departments.
- It is suggested that staff parking be located in a secured area separated from other facility parking.
- Check to see that the number of parking spaces equals or exceeds the requirements of the local governing agencies.

Description	Elementary Schools				Middle Schools				High Schools					
	200	350	550	700	200	350	550	700	250	500	1000	1500	2000	
Building Capacity	200	350	550	700	200	350	550	700	250	500	1000	1500	2000	
Teaching Stations	8	14	22	28	8	14	22	28	14	23	44	62	81	See Note 1
Staff Parking														
Teachers	8	14	22	28	10	16	26	33	16	27	52	73	96	See Note 2
Ancillary Staff	4	7	11	14	4	7	11	14	2	5	10	15	20	See Note 3
Administration	3	4	7	9	3	5	8	11	5	7	12	16	20	See Note 4
Custodial/Maintenance	2	3	4	5	2	3	4	5	2	4	7	10	14	See Note 5
Food Service	2	3	5	6	2	3	5	6	3	5	10	15	20	See Note 6
Total Staff Parking	19	31	49	62	21	34	54	69	28	48	91	129	170	
Total Visitor Parking	4				7				11					See Note 7
High School Student Parking									50					See Note 8
Minimum Required Parking	23				38				60					See Note 9
Minimum Number of Accessible Parking Spaces	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	4	6	8	9	12*	*See Note 10
A. Van Accessible with minimum 96" wide access aisle	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2*	*See Note 11
B. Accessible Parking Spaces with minimum 60" wide access aisle	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	3	5	7	7	10*	*See Note 12
Note 1:	Teaching stations are determined at a percentage of 1 per 25 students.													
Note 2:	Teachers are calculated at the following utilization of teaching stations: Elementary 100%; Middle 85%; High School 85% Calculation: Teaching Station/Utilization percentage = Number of Teachers (24/.85 = 29)													
Note 3:	Ancillary staff includes teaching aides, media center specialist, special education staff, etc. Total is calculated as percentage of the student population as follows: Elementary 2%; Middle 2%; High 1%.													
Note 4:	Administration includes principals, secretarial, and itinerant staff.													
Note 5:	Custodial/maintenance staff includes full-time staff for regular school hours. Calculation: 1 staff per 150 students													
Note 6:	Food service staff is calculated at 1 staff per 100 meals served with 80% building capacity participation for a full-service kitchen. Satellite kitchen would reduce staff by approximately 50-75%.													
Note 7:	Visitor parking is calculated at 2% of building student capacity.													
Note 8:	Student parking is calculated at 20% of all High School students.													
Note 9:	Minimum required parking is determined by the total of staff, visitor, and student parking or by required zoning.													
Note 10:	2% of total parking provided in each lot.													
Note 11:	One (1) out of every eight (8) accessible spaces.													
Note 12:	Seven (7) out of every eight (8) accessible spaces.													

Outdoor Athletic and Recreation Fields

- When selecting a site, consideration should be given regarding the size and configuration of type and quantity of outdoor athletic and recreation fields to be accommodated.
- The designer should consider drainage, circulation, access, and the need for bleacher seating when determining school site sizes.

Site Design

General

Following are additional factors to consider when determining the merits of a potential site:

- Topography
- Vehicle Access
- Soil Characteristics
- Site Utilities
- Site Preparation
- Codes and Zoning
- Adjacent Property
- Easements/Rights-of-Way
- Environmental Restrictions
- Testing
- Aesthetic Considerations
- Vehicular Circulation
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Storm Sewer System
- Detention Pond
- Sanitary/Sewage
- Directional Signage
- Playgrounds
- Lighting
- Landscaping
- Positive Drainage

School Districts shall submit site selection(s) to the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) for their consideration of a traffic study per Act 858 of 2019.

Topography

- A reasonably level area is needed to accommodate buildings, parking, student playgrounds, and physical education areas.
- There should be sufficient slope to allow for positive drainage to storm sewer outlets or other discharge points.
- Retain natural features.
- Land whose elevation is lower than 5 feet above the elevation of the 100 year flood as defined by FEMA should not be considered for development.

Vehicular Access

- A traffic study may be needed to predict the impact of the school at peak times of arrival and dismissal.
- Consult local street or highway department for turn lane, drive widths, and radius requirements.
- Review site distances at proposed entry exit for hazardous conditions.
- Two or three entry/exit points into the site are recommended to provide appropriate separation of car and bus traffic.

Soil Characteristics

- Obtain preliminary soil borings to obtain characteristics for foundation design, pavement design, storm sewer design, and excavation requirements.
- The presence of high ground water may result in the need for an underground drainage system.
- Erosion characteristics may affect the need for temporary measures, such as silt fence, etc.

Site Utilities

- Storm water may need to be detained on site and released at a rate that will not exceed current runoff rates and meets requirements of the authority having jurisdiction.
- Sewage from school buildings should be discharged into an approved sewage system per applicable codes.

Site Utilities - cont'd

- A water flow test will provide data on the available water flow in gallons per minute (gpm), static pressure available, and available residual pressure for fire protection systems.
- If a local water service is not available, an on-site well system may be needed. An on-site well system may be needed to provide water for domestic use and fire protection systems. The Environmental Protection Agency should be contacted to make an evaluation of the proposed well system.
- The Site Design Professional should evaluate the need and method of providing gas service to the building. If natural gas service is not available, the installation of liquid propane (LP) gas should be investigated.
- Utility Services should be placed underground, where possible. Overhead lines, if required, should be placed away from play areas and playgrounds.
- Electrical transformers and other utility appurtenances should be placed away from play areas, playgrounds, and pedestrian walkways, or adequately fenced to prohibit student access.

Site Preparation

- Consider clearing - site vegetation only as necessary for building, parking, roads, and walks.
- Adequate space should be available on-site for construction staging - location of stockpiles, portable field offices, storage of construction materials, and equipment.
- Consider methods to reduce the loss of soil during construction by storm water runoff and/or wind erosion, including topsoil.
- Sediment should be prevented from running off into storm sewer or receiving streams.
- Every effort should be made to minimize disruption to the site.

Codes and Zoning

- Incompatible or nonconforming zoning may necessitate a zoning change variance or a special exception land use permit.
- Zoning ordinance restrictions such as building height, setback, fence height, landscaping, screening requirements, placement and design of site signage and size of parking spaces can affect site development costs and flexibility.

Adjacent Property

- Screening of noise and views may be required. Minimize environmental pollution.
- Consider the safety of children walking to and from the school site during use of outdoor athletic and play facilities.
- Adjacent railroad rights-of-way or busy streets may require the use of earth berms, landscaping, and/or fencing.

Easements/Rights-of-Way

- Easements and rights-of-way for roads, sewers, gas, power, water, and oil lines should be researched for potential development restrictions.
- Acquisition of additional rights-of-way may be required to accommodate left turn lanes, tapers, passing blisters, and utility extensions.

Environmental restrictions

- Wetland delineation must be performed if the presence of a wetland is suspected.
- A designated wetland may prevent site development.
- Mitigation may be needed if a wetland is to be disturbed.
- Consider air pollution reduction methods.

Testing

- A Phase I Environmental Assessment should be completed to evaluate the potential for environmental liabilities associated with current and past property use and to assess regulatory compliance.
- Consider performing a site investigation and records search of hazardous materials used, stored, or disposed of on the property; proximity to landfills; adjoining property uses; proximity to properties listed on the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System.

Testing - cont'd

- A Phase II Environmental Assessment may be required for areas of the site which indicate the potential for asbestos and other contaminants.

Aesthetic considerations

- It is preferable to choose a site with natural features compatible and complementary to the proposed building and site development.

Vehicular Circulation

- Maintain separate car and bus circulation areas. Buses should not be required to back up.
- Diagonal bus parking spaces should be 12 feet to 13 feet wide by the length of the bus. Spaces may be aligned at a 45-degree to 60-degree angle to the curb.
- Angle diagonal bus parking spaces so the bus exit door will allow children to exit in front of the adjacent bus.
- Provide parking spaces near delivery/receiving area for food service and custodial staff.
- Locate staff parking near visitor parking for economy of pavement design where possible. Staff parking can also be located to one side of the bus parking lot in the area not required for bus traffic.
- Consult building codes for parking space number and size.

Pedestrian Circulation

- Consider constructing walks a minimum of 8-foot wide and a maximum of 12-foot wide from major drop-off drives to major entrances. Minor connecting walks are to be a minimum of 5-foot wide.
- Walks should be reinforced concrete, a minimum of 4 inches thick, with light broom finish. Consider thickened or reinforced edges.
- Walk slope should be a minimum of 1 percent and a maximum of 1:20. If walk exceeds 1:20, it should be designed as a ramp.
- Provide bollards at main entrance walk to block vehicles.

Storm Sewer System

- Create positive drainage away from building. Collect storm water in a series of inlets or swales to be detained and filtered on-site.
- Connect the building site storm drainage system by means of downspouts or roof drains to the building storm drainage system.
- All storm piping should be designed using the 10-year return period and intensity-duration curves consistent with the region.
- All storm piping and culverts should have a smooth interior. All pipes with a diameter greater than 24 inches shall be concrete, aluminized steel, or HDPE.
- Design the project site to maintain natural slope and water flows by promoting infiltration.
- Reuse storm water volumes generated for non-potable uses such as landscape irrigation, toilet and urinal flushing, and custodial use.

Detention Pond

- Detention ponds should be designed to prevent storm water from flowing off the site at a rate greater than permitted by the authorities having jurisdiction. Detention ponds are normally dry except after rainfalls.
- Side slopes should not exceed 4:1 and may be increased to 2:1 in the immediate vicinity of headwalls or other discharge control devices.
- All detention ponds which serve an area greater than 15 acres should be designed using an appropriate hydrograph method. The inflow hydrograph shall be routed through the pond using standard engineering methods to obtain the discharge hydrograph.
- Provide riprap or other erosion control measures at inlet and outlet of pond.
- Storm water detention/retention ponds should be placed away from play areas and playgrounds, where practical. Safety of the student should be considered to prevent accidental access or accidental drowning. Fencing, landscape barriers, transition zones, or other buffers may be utilized where student safety is a concern.

Sanitary/Sewage

- The disposal of sanitary sewage to the local utility should be approved by the local authority having jurisdiction.
- Appropriate methods for the disposal or treatment of sanitary sewage consists of conventional gravity sewer, force main, septic with leach field system, or sand filter and on-site treatment plants.

Directional Signage

- Provide "Stop", "Yield", "No Parking", "One-Way", "Do Not Enter", or other signs as necessary to maintain a fluid traffic stream.
- Signs, and the installation of signs, are to meet the requirements of the authority having jurisdiction.

Playgrounds

- Play equipment to be in compliance with “ASTM F 1487-95 or most current version of the Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use” and the current guidelines for public play equipment by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- The design of play equipment should comply with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.
- Provide a firm, stable, slip-resistant, and resilient soft surface under and around play equipment. Depth and type of soft surfaces should comply with ASTM F 1292-99 or most current version of Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment.
- Provide an accessible route of travel through soft-surface play area. Choice of surfacing and minimum areas of surfacing required should comply with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.

Lighting

- Provide a minimum 10-footcandle illumination level at main building entrances. Provide a minimum 5-footcandle illumination level at all entrances except main entrance.
- Light fixtures should incorporate either high-density discharge or LED type lamp/fixtures located directly over doors, or recessed in overhangs or soffits located directly over doors. Fixtures shall be designed for exterior use. Wall-mounted fixtures shall be vandal resistant.
- Provide a minimum illumination level of 0.5 foot-candles at entrance/exit drives. Provide a minimum illumination of 1.0 foot-candles within parking areas and a minimum of 3.0 foot-candles at bus drop-off/pick-up areas.



Lighting - cont'd

- Lighting should incorporate either high-intensity discharge or LED type lamp/fixtures located on poles with a concrete base. Pole height shall be a maximum of 39 feet designed to withstand wind loading and overturning of the selected pole and fixture. Where possible, light poles should be placed behind curbs to prevent vehicular contact. Lighting shall be controlled by photoelectric cells, time clocks, or time management system. The Site Design Professional should have discussions with the School District to determine light fixture switching and time clock programming.
- Site lighting should be coordinated with the architectural outdoor lighting.
- Minimize site lighting where possible and model the site lighting using a computer model.
- Consider shielding all site lighting and minimize uplighting.

Landscaping

- Should not exceed 3:1 slope on lawn areas where mowing is required.
- On slopes greater than 3:1, provide slope controlled vegetation to retard erosion. Consider safety of children.
- Provide low maintenance shrubs and flowering trees to emphasize main building entries.
- Consider limiting or eliminating the use of potable water for landscape irrigation.
- Landscape design should include attention to appropriate plant selection on the basis of: plant hardiness zones, avoidance of hazardous plant material (toxic, poisonous, thorny, etc.), avoidance of plant materials with undesirable litter/fruit dropping, species that are indigenous or well adapted to the region, and plant material that is less susceptible to insect issues. Native species and drought tolerant species should also be considered.

Positive Drainage

- At building perimeter, exterior grade should be 8 inches or more below first floor level, except at entrances. The ground around the building perimeter shall slope down and away from the building for a minimum of 20 feet to eliminate any standing water.