

**CHAPTER OUTLINE**

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**I. CHAPTER FOCUS**

Quality primary and secondary education is essential to the health of the community. Early community leaders understood the importance of education, and as the decades passed they maintained a high level of support for the community's schools. Today, St. Charles enjoys an exceptionally high quality educational system.

Quality schools are one of the main factors that attract families to St. Charles, which in turn means population growth. School districts are charged with providing a quality education to each student. As the population of the City grows, the school district must accommodate the additional students while trying to maintain high quality and minimize tax increases.

Maintaining a high quality educational program requires community support. While adequate tax revenues are an essential element, participation and commitment are also necessary. By including this Chapter in the St. Charles Comprehensive Plan, the City signals its commitment to work cooperatively with the school district in planning for growth and to recognize the critical role education plays in maintaining St. Charles' vitality and character.

## II. FINDINGS

### A. School District Overview

Unlike municipalities, school districts do not expand geographically over time because there are no “unincorporated” areas -- all land is within one school district or another. Also unlike municipalities, school districts cannot control the type or quantity of development that occurs within their boundaries. A city can decide whether to extend its boundaries and services to a new area; a school district must deal with all growth that occurs within its boundaries. School districts are also limited as to their sources of revenue. Property taxes remain the primary funding source in Illinois.

The City of St. Charles is served by Community Unit School District No. 303. Although there are a few small properties within Elgin District U-46 that could be annexed to the City in the future, all of the currently incorporated area of St. Charles is within District 303. Part of the Royal Fox PUD was within District U-46, but was transferred to District 303 at the request of its residents.

Community Unit School District No. 303 covers approximately 57 square miles and currently serves over 9,500 students within the City of St. Charles and the unincorporated areas west, north and east of the City. Parts of the Village of Wayne, South Elgin, and the City of West Chicago are also served by District 303. Approximately 50 percent of the District’s students reside within the City of St. Charles. Since its formation in 1949, District 303 has built nine elementary schools, three middle schools (Wredling Middle School was opened in September 1995) and a high school.

### B. District 303 Strategic Plan

St. Charles School District #303 believes that planning for educational services is essential to achieving its goals. With this in mind, the District involved community members, students, and District representatives in developing and adopting a Strategic Plan in 1991 which was revised in 1993 and 1995. Components of the Strategic Plan include the District’s beliefs, mission, strategic parameters, objectives, strategies and action plans. The mission statement reads:

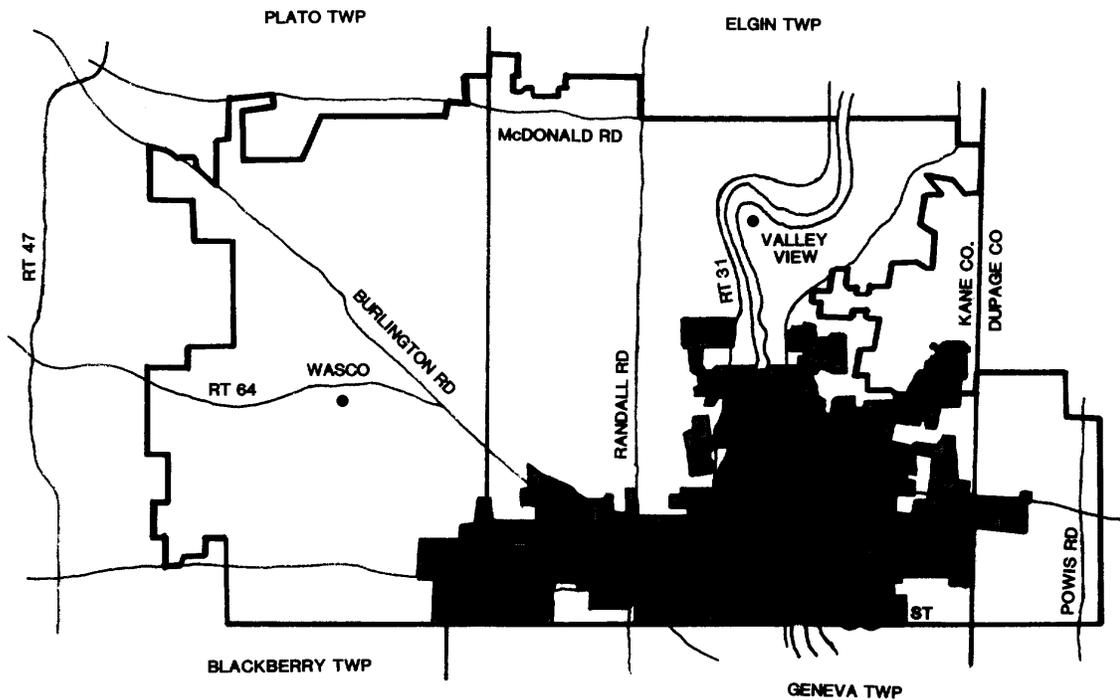
**The mission of the St. Charles School District is to educate students who will:**

- think critically
- communicate effectively
- value and demonstrate high ethical conduct
- possess positive self-esteem
- contribute to their community

- excel among people throughout the world
- by providing a vigorous and dynamic educational system characterized by:
- caring, dedicated and highly competent staff
  - innovative instruction
  - emerging technology, and
  - comprehensive programs
- in partnership with an involved and supportive community.

The Strategic Plan serves not only as a blueprint for the school district to follow for every area of operation but also as a resource when determinations are being made on how a program or curriculum will be implemented. It also provides guidance for physical facilities, which are addressed in detail in the School Facilities Standards.

**FIGURE 4-1  
COMPARISON OF BOUNDARIES  
DISTRICT 303 AND CITY OF ST. CHARLES**



**C. School Facilities**

District 303's strategy concerning school facilities is "We will ensure that we have adequate facilities, equipment and staff to meet the needs of the increasing student population." (Strategic Plan, 1995) To implement this strategy, the Board of Education formed the Facilities Advisory Commission, which included members from all sectors of the community. The Commission developed standards for building size and capacity, school locations, physical environment and maintenance, curriculum and educational programs, technology, communications, district level facilities and support services. Each level (K-5, middle school, high school, central administration and support services) was assessed and evaluated by examining current standards used in St. Charles as well as standards recommended by the State of Illinois Board of Education and similar school districts.

The Commission determined that St. Charles school facilities would be analyzed in terms of both a "technical capacity" and a "practical capacity". Technical capacity means the number of students that could be accommodated if all space were utilized to its fullest extent through the school day by an evenly distributed student population. Practical capacity means the number of students that can reasonably be expected to be accommodated on a regular basis in actual practice. The practical capacity is less than the technical capacity due to grade by grade enrollment variations, varying student interest in electives, staff availability and specialties, specific activities or subjects, inflexibility of teaching space, and scheduling and other administrative limitations.

The Facilities Advisory Commission considered practical capacity in establishing its standards for classroom size, core facilities and school buildings. For example, the standard for class size ratio is "Where practical, a student-teacher ratio of 25 to 1 will be maintained at all levels; the ratio will vary depending on enrollment and particular subject taught". The standards have been adopted by the Board of Education and represent the level of service supported by the community. They are used to evaluate needs for space and other facilities and to provide a consistent benchmark as the District's enrollment grows.

The Board of Education determines where new schools will be located. The City is involved, however, when school site selection coincides with the review of a proposed development. Chapter 16.38 of the Municipal Code contains the applicable standards for school sites obtained as part of the subdivision process.

**D. Projected Enrollment Growth**

As the City and other areas develop, additional school facilities will be needed to maintain a high quality educational program. It is projected that by the year 2010, the St. Charles School District will need to construct additional elementary schools, an additional middle school, and a second high school. Growth should be properly managed so that these facilities can be provided for new residents without overburdening current residents or causing a decline in standards. To do so, the City and the School District must have accurate estimates of future enrollment.

Recognizing the importance of accurate estimates in planning for future facilities, District 303 hired a professional demographer to prepare projections for future enrollment. The findings are contained in a report entitled Community Unit School District #303 St. Charles, Illinois Demographic Trends and Enrollment Projections prepared by Dr. John Kasarda, which was updated and re-issued in October 1992. A revision of this report is anticipated in 1996.

The component of enrollment projections most closely related to land use planning is the growth produced by new housing constructed within the school district. The report lists all of the residential developments in the District that either are under construction or have been approved by a municipality or county. It lists an expected buildout schedule as well as the number of students expected to be generated for each development. It should be noted that the Demographic Trends and Enrollment Projections report does not include land designated for future development where no specific project has been approved. As the report is updated, newly approved developments are included and their projected enrollments are added to the total.

Other components of the enrollment projections include birth rates and student migration patterns, as well as turnover of the existing housing stock. As neighborhoods age they go through a cycle where the original residents are replaced by those who tend to be younger and are more likely to have school age children.

The report analyzes the components of student enrollment and identifies three alternative growth scenarios or series: (A) the absolute minimum number of students that may be anticipated, (B) the most likely number of students to be expected, and (C) the absolute maximum number of students that can possibly be foreseen. District 303 is using the "Series B" projections.

**E. The Impact of Development**

New development has a dual impact on the school district. It generates a demand for additional capital facilities such as school buildings and sites as well as for additional operating expenditures such as teachers, transportation and books.

Significant capital expenditures such as buildings can be made only after voter approval of a referendum for bonds to finance the building project or projects. Other methods of funding capital expenditures would be desirable, but would require changes to state law. Proposed development that exceeds the student enrollment anticipated for a parcel, such as when a residential project is proposed for a planned commercial or industrial site, should be carefully scrutinized. Increases in anticipated enrollment may be difficult for the School District to handle because of capital funding limitations and the time required to construct additional space.

The Municipal Code requires a land or cash contribution whenever land is subdivided for residential purposes. These funds are used to help purchase school sites and to improve existing school sites to serve new development. The fair market value per acre of improved land, established by ordinance, determines the level of cash in lieu of land contribution. It should be updated on a regular basis to reflect market conditions.

School district operational expenses such as teacher salaries are funded by primarily by property taxes. Property tax receipts from new development lag behind the enrollment of new students by six to eighteen months. In other words, a student residing in a new dwelling receives a full year of instruction at an average cost of \$5,700 before the School District receives any additional tax revenue from that dwelling.

In general, 60 to 65% of property taxes within St. Charles go to District 303. In 1995, annual property taxes on a \$200,000 home would be \$4,435. District 303 would receive 65% of that, or \$2,833. That amounts to about half the cost to educate one student in District 303 in 1995. Fortunately, other properties such as commercial and industrial generate taxes but not students and so help to make up the tax shortfall.

From the point of view of long-term operating costs, the impact of a new development may be either negative or positive. In general, the taxes on residential development do not pay the full cost of educating its residents; the difference is made up primarily by taxes on commercial and industrial development. Table 4-1 compares the categories of assessed valuation from which the School District obtains its real estate tax revenue, and also shows the percentage of District 303 assessed valuation located within the City of St. Charles.

<p align="center"><b>TABLE 4-1</b> <b>SCHOOL DISTRICT #303 EQUALIZED ASSESSED VALUATION</b> <b>BY CATEGORY</b></p>					
Tax Year	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Rural & Railroad	Total
% of total 1994	76.17%	14.45%	8.38%	1.00%	100.00%
1994 City % of Dist. 303 EAV	50.2%	88.6%	76.9%	3.9%	57.5%
1994	\$797,639,476	\$151,348,362	\$87,777,323	\$10,474,772	\$1,047,239,933
1993	745,431,306	144,782,577	82,739,032	10,269,324	983,222,239
1992	693,518,170	141,503,593	81,241,724	9,984,731	926,248,218
1991	634,001,291	132,680,208	76,267,157	9,875,450	852,824,106
1990	559,593,330	107,725,590	67,969,470	9,966,482	745,254,872
1989	467,375,047	98,715,154	53,206,970	9,412,013	628,709,184
1988	412,824,004	84,562,470	46,064,870	8,598,725	552,050,069
1987	333,376,684	66,356,129	41,760,824	8,578,668	450,072,305
1986	290,031,347	56,750,392	38,579,052	8,700,810	394,061,601
1985	264,718,348	52,781,978	38,055,291	8,757,663	364,313,280

Usually, a higher assessed valuation per dwelling will be more beneficial to school district finances. However, it should be noted that if the type of housing tends to generate fewer students, developments with a somewhat lower assessed value per dwelling may be more beneficial. The determining characteristic for fiscal impact is the amount of assessed valuation per dwelling in relation to the number of students produced per dwelling

To the extent that new development does not cover the operational costs of providing educational services, it creates a negative impact on current residents by forcing a reduction in the level of service or creating a need to increase the education tax rate. Therefore, it is important to provide for an adequate quantity of commercial and industrial land use to balance residential growth

Both capital and operating costs should be considered when evaluating the impact of new development. District 303 has developed a Summary of Development Impact Form to analyze the potential fiscal impacts of residential development projects.

**F. Intergovernmental Cooperation**

It is in the best interest of the City and St. Charles School District #303 to communicate concerns and to work together on planning decisions that will affect the community. In addition, both should foster increased intergovernmental cooperation with the St. Charles Park District as well as the adjoining jurisdictions of West Chicago, the Village of Wayne, South Elgin, the three townships of St. Charles, Campton and Wayne, and with Kane and DuPage Counties. The School District should be included in discussions regarding annexation of residential projects so that potential issues can be identified early in the process. Consideration should be given to school issues, concerns and needs when the City enters into annexation agreements.

Some communities have developed unique tax or fee requirements for new residential development projects to help address fiscal issues faced by school districts. These requirements have been used primarily in annexation or other voluntary agreements, where the land owner or developer agrees to pay the additional tax or fee to help compensate for the impact of the development. Consideration should be given to this kind of alternate funding mechanism particularly if a project will produce a significant impact on the District's capital facilities in a short period of time.

Participation by School District 303 in the development review process will also enhance intergovernmental cooperation. In addition to fiscal concerns, design issues such as bus access or pedestrian routing require participation by all concerned. Continued cooperation between the School District and the St. Charles Park District on joint use and development of park and school sites provides a significant benefit to the community and should be encouraged.

### III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**A. Provide school sites in appropriate locations to accommodate additional school facilities.**

1. Identify general locations of future school sites before development occurs and in advance of need. When doing so, consider expected development in the City, within the City's 1-1/2 mile jurisdiction, and within the School District but outside the City's jurisdiction.
2. Continue to require school sites or cash in lieu to be contributed by new developments.
3. Assist School District 303 in locating elementary school sites within neighborhoods so that they function as a focus of the neighborhood, wherever possible.
4. Use specific, consistent standards for the size, location, and other characteristics of future school sites, to ensure that the land acquired or donated can fulfill all appropriate needs.
5. Update the school and park site land/cash dedication ordinance annually.

**B. Support the school district in its goal to ensure that it has adequate facilities, equipment and staff to meet the needs of the increasing student population.**

1. Support the Strategic Plan adopted by St. Charles School District #303 in September 1995.
2. Support and utilize the Facilities Standards as prepared by the Facilities Advisory Commission and adopted by the District #303 Board of Education in 1992.
3. Utilize the Demographic Trends and Enrollment Projections prepared by the School District's consultant to monitor two to five year enrollment trends.
4. Utilize the Summary of Development Impact Form or similar tool to analyze the capital and operational impact of new development on the school system.
5. Work cooperatively with the School District, Townships, Counties and State of Illinois so that adequate roads and utilities are provided for school facilities.

- C. Plan for land uses and manage annexations and new development so that growth does not hinder the St. Charles School District #303 in maintaining a quality educational system without increasing taxes.**
1. Monitor and control the rate and type of residential development within St. Charles' jurisdiction to avoid sudden student enrollment peaks.
  2. Provide a balance of land uses to ensure that nonresidential property maintains its proportionate share of the real estate tax base.
  3. When legally feasible, require residential developments to make a significant contribution to funding capital facilities needed to meet the needs of the new residents generated by the development.
  4. Discourage development proposals that exceed the original student population projections for a site or that request a change in planned land use that will increase District enrollment projections, unless a significant community interest is served by the change.
- D. Foster an environment where the different jurisdictions that affect educational quality in the community work cooperatively for the good of our children.**
1. Work closely with the St. Charles School District to maintain good communications between elected and appointed officials of both entities.
  2. Continue to include the School District as part of the development review process at the staff level and Plan Commission.
  3. Develop and maintain a partnership with St. Charles School District #303 to foster community involvement.
  4. When appropriate, provide input to the School District regarding the siting of educational facilities.
  5. When appropriate, solicit input from the School District regarding the impact of development and related matters.
  6. Advocate and support state legislative efforts to help ensure adequate funding of school districts, for both operational and capital needs.

#### **IV. IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT**

In the past five years, the School District and the community have made tremendous progress in planning for school facilities in St. Charles. There is now a Strategic Plan that is regularly updated with community involvement, a set of facilities standards, professional estimates of future enrollment, and tools to evaluate the impact of specific development projects. With widespread community support, a major building referendum was approved in 1993 and most of the projects it authorized are completed or nearly completed. A Board of Education member has been appointed to the Plan Commission, which has fostered closer communication between the City and School District.

The challenge to the City in the next five years will be to support the essential need for a quality educational system in the community while still adhering to other goals such as housing diversity, attainable housing, quality commercial development and redevelopment of obsolete commercial and industrial areas.

In the next five years, the School District may need to begin looking at expanding its facilities once again. If growth can be managed, the need for another building program will occur later than if growth is unchecked. Improved cooperation between the City and School District will put the community in the best possible position to meet its goals.