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**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** July 15, 2004

**TO:** Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale  
Members, County Mayor's Task Force on School Overcrowding

**FROM:** Dave Hill, Executive Director 

**SUBJECT:** ***IMPACTS OF LAND DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION GROWTH ON WEST KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS:***  
***A Report to the County Mayor's Task Force on School Overcrowding***

The Metropolitan Planning Commission is pleased to serve as an information resource for the Mayor's Task Force on School Overcrowding. The attached report is intended to assist task force members make informed decisions regarding tough decisions facing the Knox County School System. The specific topic addressed in the report is the projected physical capacity demands anticipated for west Knox County high school facilities, for both short term and long term time horizons. The specific high schools addressed in the report are Farragut, Karns, Bearden, and West high schools.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission is also engaged with Knox County Schools to produce a broader ranging report for the entire school system, with completion of the study expected by June 2005. The "School Enrollment Assessment Plan" will contain four major components: (1) Rankings of Fastest Growing School Service Areas; (2) School-Age Population Forecasts for 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020; (3) Inventory of Land Suitable for School Development; and (4) Quarterly Submissions of Development Activity. The information provided for the task force has also been requested by Knox County Schools; therefore, a copy of the report will be provided to Knox County Schools.

A summary of the report is provided in this memo. If you or the task force members have any questions or need additional information, MPC staff will be available for continued support.

Copies: Metropolitan Planning Commissioners  
Knox County Schools

[Attachment]

**IMPACTS OF LAND DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION GROWTH  
ON WEST KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS:  
*A Report To The County Mayor's Task Force On School Overcrowding***

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

➤ **Population Growth**

Knox County's population is growing. While a moderate 5 percent increase was seen during the 1980s, the pace quickened to 14 percent in the 1990s, adding nearly 4,600 new residents annually. Census Bureau estimates for 2003 showed the countywide population at 393,000, up an additional 11,000 persons since the 2000 count was taken.

- Fastest population growth occurred in the Southwest, North, and Northwest County Sectors, combining for more than 85 percent of the countywide increase.

➤ **School Age Population Growth**

The geographic pattern of school age population growth was the same as that of the overall population:

- Largest increases in Southwest, Northwest, and North County Sectors. Represented nearly 95 percent of the county's net growth.
- The Southwest County Sector alone accounted for half of all school age population increase during the 1990s.

➤ **Growth in Development**

To accommodate new residents over the past 10 years, more than 22,000 subdivision lots were approved in Knox County, adding 33,000 new single-family and multi-family homes to the area's housing inventory.

- The Southwest County Sector led all others with its one-quarter share of all new subdivision lots, and, when combined with the North and Northwest County Sectors, 65 percent of the inventory was represented. The only other sector with a double-digit share of building lots was the Northeast County.
- Similar to the pattern of subdivision lot generation, the west and north portions of Knox County reported the bulk of building permit activity, holding 60 percent of the permits issued.

➤ **High School Impacts**

Early in the 2003/2004 school year, 2,400 students were enrolled at Farragut High School, the largest student body of all 12 area facilities. By contrast, Austin-East enrolled about 750 students, roughly one-third the Farragut total. Bearden High was the second largest operation, with an enrollment of 1,879 students. Karns High School was third in size, and West High ranked fifth.

Farragut High School housed 239 students over its facility limit. Karns was at capacity, with a leeway of only 31 students, representing 98 percent occupancy. The only other facility nearing its limit was Austin-East, just 48 students shy of being full.

According to 10-year enrollment forecasts:

- Bearden High School is well-suited to accommodate enrollment increases over the next seven years. It will reach critical limits by 2012, and exceed capacity by 2013 if growth continues at its forecasted pace.
- Farragut High School's overcrowding situation will worsen over the next 10 years.
- Karns High School enrollment will exceed the facility's carrying capacity beginning with the 2004/2005 school year and worsen thereafter.
- According to one growth scenario, West High School is equipped to handle enrollment growth for the next 10 years. Excess capacity will shrink over the period, but it will not be exhausted. A second scenario, based on existing enrollment numbers and anticipated housing development, shows several years of tight conditions where enrollment will near capacity and exceed it briefly in 2007 and 2013.

➤ **Conclusions**

- School zone adjustments among the four west area high schools (Farragut, Karns, Bearden and West High Schools) would provide relief from overcrowding for only a very short period. Unless adjustments are made to all 12 high school zones (shifting students out of rapidly growing west and north Knox County to other schools in the city and county that have considerable room to spare), overcrowding in west county high schools will not be resolved without new facility construction.
- For the next ten years, Knox County School System high schools have a total capacity capable of accommodating projected high school enrollment if redistributed equally among all twelve facilities. However, by 2013 new development and projected population growth will result in system-wide overcrowding.
- If pursuit of a new high school facility is considered appropriate, the new facility should be sited within either the Southwest or Northwest County sector. The North County sector is the third fastest growing area in Knox County, and although not included in the report, may need to be considered if and when location of a new high school facility is discussed.
- A very sharp disparity is evident when comparing recent and projected growth trends for city and county sectors. Unless the factors that contribute to these trends are understood and addressed, Knox County Schools will continue to face overcrowding in county sectors and underutilized facilities in city sectors. Issues related to disproportionate growth cannot be addressed by Knox County Schools alone.