



Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions concerning school construction.

1) WHY doesn't UCPS build two-story schools?

It cost more money to build multi-story buildings because of the need for additional structural support and the requirements for elevators. In some areas of Union County, the cost of land is so expensive, however, that it is more cost effective to absorb those higher construction costs and "build up" rather than "out." Marvin Ridge Middle School and the newer UCPS high schools have portions of their buildings that are two-story.

2) WOULD metal buildings not be cheaper to build?

Metal buildings are built without regard to maintainability and life cycle cost whereas schools should be built to last 50 years and should consider maintainability, sturdy construction techniques, and materials that stand the test of time. Metal buildings utilize the idea of minimal structure to meet the building code -- schools should be built to exceed building code requirements to protect the children. UCPS will, however, continue to research the applicability of using pre-manufactured metal buildings as a viable construction method.

3) WHY does UCPS frequently open a new school and then immediately put trailers on the campus?

Union County is the fastest growing county in North Carolina, and the 16th fastest in the nation. It is a challenge to continue to get ahead of the building boom and place schools where they are needed as quickly as feasible, but despite best efforts, often by the time the school is built, the number of students attending that school has exceeded the school building's capacity, necessitating mobile classrooms.

4) WHY doesn't UCPS build larger schools in areas known to have increasing population?

Research shows that bigger isn't always better when it comes to a school environment. Larger campuses can also cause safety challenges for administrators and social challenges for some students. At present, UCPS builds schools to meet standard and capacity requirements set by Board of Education policy. Those policies would have to be changed to build larger schools.

5) WILL UCPS use lease/purchase options for future schools?

UCPS is studying this option, as well as other "project delivery methods" or various methods the school system could use to build schools. With a lease/purchase situation, a private developer would build the school and then lease it to

the school system for a number of years, until the school system ultimately owned the building. This would offer little cost up front and possible time savings for the school system, but just like paying rent vs. purchasing a home, in the long run, ownership is a better investment, because the school system has cheaper financing options (such as school bonds) available than the private developers.

6) WHY doesn't UCPS use local contractors to build schools?

UCPS currently works with local contractors and local suppliers. North Carolina General Statutes, however, require that all school construction projects must be open for public bid. Local contractors and subcontractors are always encouraged to bid on school projects; however, UCPS is bound by law to take the lowest "responsive" bid.

7) WHY does UCPS sometimes have to condemn land to build schools?

Unfortunately, in some rare instances, condemnation is the only method that school officials have to acquire land. This is used as a last resort when all other avenues have been exhausted. This can happen when a school needs to be built in an area where there is limited land available and an unwilling landowner refuses to agree on fair market value purchase terms.

8) WHY doesn't UCPS utilize land banking?

UCPS currently has 150 acres in what is referred to as "land banking," or buying land now for a lower price in areas where high growth is anticipated. It is, however, often difficult to determine with exact accuracy where growth will occur in the future and where the need for schools will materialize.

9) HOW much land does it take to build a school?

The suitability of land (i.e. flood plains, wetlands, etc.) determine how much land will be required to build a school. Historically, an elementary school can be built on about 30 acres of land. Because generally middle and high schools are built in close proximity, it takes about 100 acres of land for a middle/high campus.

10) WOULD it not be easier to find land for an elementary, middle and/or high school separately rather than trying to find a tract of land large enough to build all three?

Unless a large tract of land is available at a very good price or land is donated, usually elementary schools are built separately from middle and high schools due to the high cost of land. As middle and high schools can share athletic fields, bus parking, main heating and cooling facilities, it is common practice to build middle and high schools in close proximity. Because these students are similar in age, middle and high school children can ride the same buses, which saves on time and fuel.

