



January 28, 2006 01:01 PM

[Front Page](#)

[Loudoun County](#)

[Leesburg](#)

[Towns & Villages](#)

Schools

[Print](#) | [E-mail](#)

School Construction Costs Soar

Charlie Jackson

Jan 26, 2006 -- It isn't getting any cheaper to build schools.

When proposed in January of 2004, a new elementary school for Brambleton was projected to cost about \$16.5 million. Two years later, with the project delayed, the cost of the Brambelton school — which is proposed to be built in FY 2010 according to Loudoun County Public Schools' recently adopted Capital Improvement Program — is estimated at \$28.6 million.

Let's take one more example.

Again in January of 2004, a new high school at an undetermined location was projected to cost about \$65 million. In the new CIP, the high school — now named a Dulles-area school — is projected to cost more than \$97 million when it is funded in FY 2009.

But that's where Supervisor Jim Burton (I-Blue Ridge) says stop.

"Price estimates for future [projects] have been excessively high," Burton said. "You can probably take 10 percent off the price of the CIP for starters."

Assistant Superintendent of Support Services Evan E. Mohler detailed the expected increases in a November 2005 memo to school board members. Citing rising energy costs, rising interest rates, export demands for concrete, steel and other construction components and reconstruction requirements in the Gulf Coast as causes for increased cost for new infrastructure.

A new high school built in 2006 would cost more than \$83 million, the report states, but in 2011 that same school would cost more than \$122 million, a 31 percent increase. Burton sees two other areas the school board can battle infrastructure costs, if prices do continue to rise. He'd like to see the school board re-examine the structure it builds for various schools, adding that a 75-acre high school is "getting to be ridiculous."

"I would be very interested in saving money any way we could," school board member Sarah B. Smith (Leesburg) said, "as long as we are not taking chances with the kids. We don't build schools for a few years, we build them to serve us for a long, long time."

Click On News Section Below

- [Loudoun County](#)
- [Business News](#)
- [Courts](#)
- [General Assembly](#)
- [Land Use Scene](#)
- [Leesburg](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Public Safety](#)
- [Resource Room](#)
- [Roads & Transit](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [Towns & Villages](#)

Click Story Title To Quickly Read

- [Loudoun County Arts Center Bids Too High, Opening Delayed \(01/27/2006\)](#)
- [Schools School Construction Costs Soar \(01/26/2006\)](#)
- [Leesburg Candidates List Grows For May Elections; Zoldos Won't Run \(01/26/2006\)](#)

Supervisor Eugene Delgaudio (R-Sterling), didn't offer suggestions to trim infrastructure costs, but hammered the school system for frivolously spending taxpayer dollars, citing the DARE and ESL programs as offerings that the private sector will provide for free. Burton said he would also like to see the school board, and he admitted this is a change in his position, look at capacity and redraw its school divisions to better serve the county.

Over the next six years, the schools CIP calls for more than \$980 million in construction to keep up with population growth. For the county's part, it charges developers, in the form of proffers, thousands of dollars to offset impacts of new developments. But Burton said any increase in proffers is not an option.

"If we pushed any further we'd be vulnerable to claims that we are charging an impact fee," Burton said. Impact fees are not allowed in the state.

The county's capital intensity factor for school facilities requires developers to pay \$29,750 for single-family detached dwelling units, \$15,619 for single-family attached dwelling units and \$7,809 for multifamily dwelling units. The county estimates 0.8 students per residence to determine the capital impact of new development.

That is what school board member Bob Ohneiser (Broad Run) would like to see changed. He said he would like to see the operating cost impact of new developments included in proffers and a recount of the average number of students per household.

"The game has been loaded," Ohneiser said, "in favor of developers."

Ohneiser said he would like to see the county make determinations about how much impact a new development will have, adding that some new communities average far more than 0.8 children per residence.

"Basically we have a development oriented society in Loudoun that is building homes faster than we can build schools to satisfy educational needs," Ohneiser said. "It's all about how you define the problem."

[Post to Reader's Forum \(Share your thoughts on this article\)](#)

There is 1 related Posting in the **Reader's Forum**.

- [GREAT quote!!!](#) Barbara Munsey (01/26/06 at 05:20 PM)

Questions? Comments? [Let us know!](#)

Read more articles by [Charlie Jackson](#)

Schools
[A Hair Raising Win For Heritage Coach](#)
(01/25/2006)

Loudoun County
[Football Complex Faces Delays, Higher Costs](#)
(01/25/2006)

Land Use Scene
[Speakers Call For Less Dense West](#)
(01/24/2006)

Courts
[Horne To Rule On Sims House Motions](#)
(01/24/2006)

Public Safety
[County Mum On Puppy Death Report](#)
(01/21/2006)

Public Safety
[Crime Commission Sponsors Child ID, Fingerprinting Program](#)
(01/21/2006)

Schools
[51 Opt Out Of Recruitment List](#)
(01/20/2006)

Roads & Transit
[Candidates Differ On Kaine's Controlled-Growth Initiatives](#)
(01/20/2006)

Towns & Villages
[Salamander's Boundary Shuffle; Town, Council Eye Temporary Reverse Annexation](#)
(01/19/2006)

▫

NewsFinder

Advanced Search

[Front Page](#)

[Loudoun County](#)

[Leesburg](#)

[Towns & Villages](#)

[Calendar Events](#) |

[Classifieds](#) |

[Display Ads](#) |

[E-Business Card Guide](#) |

1 East Market St. Leesburg VA 20176 Telephone 703-771-8800 Fax 703-771-8833
P.O. Box 591 Leesburg, VA 20178

If you have questions or comments regarding our web site
contact the [Webmaster](#)

For press release or editorial comments contact the [Editor](#)

© 1998-2006 Content Produced by Leesburg Today
All Rights Reserved



Designed & Maintained By:
Leesburg Today