

SITEOPS® SAVES TAXPAYERS MONEY

Project Description: Site evaluations for middle school and elementary school prior to purchase

Civil Engineering Firm: Little Diversified Architectural Engineers

Site Locations: Surry County, North Carolina

A Tale of Two Schools

Surry County initially approached Little Diversified Architectural Engineers to design and evaluate two school sites prior to purchasing the land. The sites—for a middle school and an elementary school—were on two different properties, each with special challenges.

Realizing that neither site presented an easy choice, Little deployed SITEOPS to help estimate costs early in the process and provide the county with critical decision support.

Middle School Site

Surry County is located in the northwest corner of North Carolina, near the Blue Ridge Mountains. Much of the land here is hilly and rolling. This 15-acre parcel was no exception.

“This particular site contained extreme terrain changes,” recalls Little Land Development Studio Principal David Powlen.

Little responded by proposing a multi-level design that could step up and down with the hill. However, the potential cost of grading and retaining walls remained a large concern.



AS COUNTY PLANS NEW SCHOOLS

“SITEOPS was very useful to us in that the grading was generated more quickly—and not only generated but quantified,” says David. “It was much easier to present to the client knowing that we had some physical data to back up where these numbers were coming from.”

Faced with an estimated cost of half a million dollars in retaining walls alone, the county realized that the site would not meet its program and budget requirements and chose to investigate other property options.

Elementary School Site

The elementary school site presented a different challenge—and ultimately, a different outcome. While the 26-acre site was quite large, an existing farm pond and stream limited the site’s usable area.

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— David Powlen, Studio Principal, Little Diversified

“We were initially skeptical that we would be able to fit everything on and be able to grade it without impacting the pond,” explains David. “We didn’t want to have to get into any kind of wetlands permitting through the state.”

SITEOPS ran six different layout scenarios, verifying that the school, parking lot, bus lot, and playing field would all fit without disturbing the wetland. With this new data, the county is moving forward with the purchase process and hopes to open the new school in Fall 2010.

“Surry County did it right,” David reflects. “They researched and obtained options to buy property before they actually purchased. Too often, decision makers don’t realize that while the cost of land may be inexpensive—the cost to develop may be very expensive.”

