

Less costly schools

Your Feb. 3 article "Cafeteria of ideas for building schools without raising property taxes" focused on a few narrow sources of revenue. Impact fees, real estate transfer taxes and other forms of funding will not raise enough funds to scratch the surface of our real needs. Other counties have shown that these short-term solutions will not provide enough revenue to keep up with growth. Relying on an impact fee or a real estate transfer tax (with legal limitations) to tackle our school construction needs is like trying to kill an elephant with a fly swatter.

Durham County has raised only \$7.5 million from its impact fee over the past two years. That pays for approximately one half of an elementary school. And, as the real estate market slows down, so does the revenue stream (as we saw in Cary).

Your chart showed land is not the most expensive part of building schools -- it's the construction costs (\$71 million for a new high school in Wake County, versus \$35 million in Chapel Hill and \$43 million in Chatham County).

There are creative solutions to consider. The Triangle Community Coalition supports private/public partnerships to help build our schools. Wake County can no longer afford to ignore the option of public-private partnerships to build schools to keep pace with increasing demand. This approach has proven successful in comparable communities in the Southeast. It has the potential to enable us to build much-needed schools more quickly and cost-effectively than the other options on the table.

We look forward to a community discussion about this practical, realistic solution to Wake County's school infrastructure needs -- beyond impact fees and transfer taxes.

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