



South Carolina School Facilities Planning and Construction Guide

Pursuant to Section 59-23-210 of the SC Code of Laws

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Content changes from the previous edition were approved by the South Carolina Public School Facilities Committee on January 21, 2026.

The 2023 South Carolina Public School Facilities Committee approved a motion that the annual meetings should be scheduled to take place on the third Wednesday of January of each year starting in January 2024.

Per statute, the Guide must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis by a committee appointed by the South Carolina Department of Education. Public comments are welcomed but must be written to be considered. Comments will be directed to the appropriate subcommittee for consideration. All submittals need to be received no later than March of the year to be considered by both subcommittee and the South Carolina Public School Facilities Committee for inclusion in the South Carolina School Facilities Planning and Construction Guide of the following year. Any entries beyond this deadline may not be timely for proper review for that year and will be deferred to the next year.

Please submit comments by e-mail to the Office of School Facilities at:
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Contents

Contents.....	3
DIVISION 1: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.....	4
Section 1.1 Related Statutory Authority	4
Section 1.2 Acronyms and Definitions	6
Section 1.3 Basic Codes and Standards	7
Section 1.4 Administrative Requirements	8
DIVISION 2: SITE ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT AND DISPOSAL.....	9
Section 2.1 Evaluation and Approval of Site Acquisition or Lease	9
Section 2.2 School Sites.....	11
Section 2.3 Existing Site Additions or Changes	12
Section 2.4 Land Disposal	13
DIVISION 3: SPECIAL DESIGN CRITERIA	14
Section 3.1 Plumbing Requirements for Stadiums	14

DIVISION 1: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Section 1.1 Related Statutory Authority

- A. [SC Code §59-23-210](#) requires all construction, improvement, and renovation of public school buildings and property to comply with the latest standards and specifications set forth in the South Carolina School Facilities Planning and Construction Guide and requires that plans and specifications receive approval before bidding and before construction. It also requires plans and specifications be coordinated with county officials such as traffic engineers and zoning administrators.
- B. [SC Code §59-23-220](#) requires the State Superintendent of Education or the superintendent's designee inspect all public school buildings and issue written approval before occupancy.
- C. [SC Code §6-9-110](#) exempts school district facilities, reviewed and approved by the State Department of Education, from county, municipal or other local ordinances or regulations which require the purchase or acquisition of a permit, license, or other device utilized to enforce a building standard. However, it does not exempt the district from other applicable Federal, State, or Local requirements. Please refer to the South Carolina Office of School Facilities Policy and Procedures Manual for more information on the additional permits and approvals from other authorities that may be applicable to a project, such as zoning ordinances.
- D. **Clarification on Overlapping Authorities:** Where school buildings and property subject to the requirements of Title 59, Chapter 23 (School Buildings and Other School Property) are also state owned or leased facilities subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the State Engineer [per Sections 10-1-180, 10-5-270, etc.], they shall be regulated by the Office of State Engineer in lieu of the Office of School Facilities and governed by their requirements in the Manual For Planning and Execution of State Permanent Improvements in lieu of the South Carolina School Facilities Planning and Construction Guide.
- E. [SC Code §6-10-30](#) provides the South Carolina Energy Standards Act of 2009, as modified by 2012 Act 143, which requires that all buildings be designed and constructed in compliance with the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code.
- F. [SC Code §6-29-770](#) requires the State to comply with local zoning ordinances.
- G. [SC Code §10-5-210 et. seq., "South Carolina Accessibility Act,"](#) sets accessibility standards and requires that all plans for buildings, structures, and facilities for elementary and secondary public schools to be constructed or altered be reviewed and approved for compliance with these standards by submission to the State Department of Education for approval.
- H. [SC Code §23-43-10 et. seq., "South Carolina Modular Buildings Construction Act,"](#) requires that all Modular Buildings be certified by the South Carolina Buildings Code Council.

- I. [SC Code §40-3-280](#) and SC Regulation 11-11 requires all construction documents to bear a seal of a licensed architect, when required to be prepared by a licensed architect.
- J. [SC Code §40-22-270](#) requires all construction documents bear a seal of a licensed engineer, when required to be prepared by a licensed engineer.
- K. [SC Code §40-10-250](#) requires a Fire Sprinkler System Specification Sheet to be completed for every fire sprinkler system to be installed in South Carolina.
- L. [SC Code §1-34-40](#) allows the use of the latest editions of the building codes adopted in this Guide. Note that newer editions are not always the latest edition.
- M. [SC Code §59-19-190](#) allows that whenever a board of trustees deems it expedient to acquire lands for public school purposes with any State funds, it may purchase, subject to the prior written approval of the State Board of Education, the lots or parcels of land necessary for such purchase. However, it also requires that the reassignment or disposal of such parcels of land purchased after 1952 with any State funds be subject to the prior written approval of the State Board of Education.
- N. [SC Code §59-23-245](#) provides specific allowances for plumbing fixture ratios in middle school and high school stadiums that supersede the building code requirements where they conflict.
- O. [SC Code §59-23-250](#) requires school districts receive approval from the South Carolina Department of Education prior to property acquisition or additions on existing properties.
- P. [SC Code §59-17-160](#) requires school districts adopt a policy and program for school facility fire and safety, including inspections; and, required the creation of the model fire and safety policies and program guidelines available on the SC Dept. of Education website [[Click here to view the Model Fire and Safety Program Guidelines for South Carolina School Districts and Charter Schools](#)].
- Q. [SC Code §59-40-50](#) requires a charter school adhere to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to public schools.
- R. [SC Code §59-40-40](#) defines a charter school and states in (A)(1) that it is, for purposes of state law and the state constitution, considered a public school.

Section 1.2 Acronyms and Definitions

Building Codes are a set of rules that specify the minimum acceptable level of safety for constructed objects such as building and nonbuilding structures as well as other manmade improvements. The applicable building codes for school construction in South Carolina are adopted from national consensus standards and are listed in Section 1.3 [Basic Codes and Standards].

Charter Schools are public schools and must comply with the requirements of this Guide. See SC Code §59-40-40(1) & (2) and SC Code §59-40-50(B)(1).

Code See Building Codes

Construction Documents consists of the final drawings, specifications, and bidding documents. See the South Carolina Office of School Facilities Policy and Procedures Manual.

Construction is the means of the creation of something new, rather than repair or improvement of something existing.

Design Development Phase is the preparation of detailed preliminary drawings along with supporting data. See the South Carolina Office of School Facilities Policy and Procedures Manual.

District Delegated authorities of the applicable school district, as defined in SC Code §59-1-160. See also SC Code §59-17-10 et. seq.

ICC International Code Council

IZC International Zoning Code

NFPA National Fire Protection Association

OSF Office of School Facilities, South Carolina Department of Education

Renovation is the means of the repair or improvement of something already existing (S.C. Attorney General Opinions, 1954 and 1968).

SC South Carolina

SCDES South Carolina Department of Environmental Services

SCDOT South Carolina Department of Transportation

Schematic Design Phase is a study by the Design Professional of the project requirements, followed by the preparation of schematic design drawings with supporting data as outlined herein.

Section 1.3 Basic Codes and Standards

- A. In accordance with [SC Code §§1-34-10 thru 70](#), and [SC Code §59-23-210](#), the OSF has adopted the following codes with all SC modifications as adopted by, and when implemented by, the [SC Building Codes Council](#):
1. International Building Code (IBC),
 2. International Existing Building Code (IEBC),
 3. International Fire Code (IFC),
 4. International Energy Conservation Code (IECC),
 5. International Fuel Gas Code (IFGC),
 6. International Mechanical Code (IMC),
 7. International Plumbing Code (IPC), with the following insertions:
 - a) Section 305.4.1, insert “24” and insert “24”
 - b) Section 903.1.1, insert “8”
 8. International Private Sewage Disposal Code (IPSDC),
 9. National Electrical Code (NEC) [NFPA-70],
 10. Latest edition of ICC A117.1, Standard for Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities. Note that this standard is the standard adopted by the South Carolina Accessibility Act, but this requirement does not relieve the district or the design professional from the Federal Statutory requirements that design and construction comply with the [Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Standards](#).
 11. International Code Council Performance Code for Buildings and Facilities (ICCPC), upon Director of OSF written approval,
- B. The adopted codes and standards in effect at the time of the initial submittal (design development or schematic), must establish code requirements for the remainder of the project. Where a code is listed in Section 1.3.A as adopted by OSF but is not directly adopted by the SC Building Codes Council, the editions of such codes adopted by the SC Building Codes Council shall be used, unless otherwise specified in Section 1.3.A.

Section 1.4 Administrative Requirements

- A. The SCDE shall publish separately from this South Carolina School Facilities Planning and Construction Guide (Guide), a companion South Carolina Office of School Facilities Policy and Procedures Manual (Manual) which shall specify the administrative requirements for implementation of the requirements in the Guide. The SCDE is authorized to separately publish and revise the Manual, and any associated forms used to administer the requirements in the Guide. They shall be published and made publicly available on the SCDE website at least one month ahead of implementation of the initial version, and all subsequent versions. To the extent that any of the Basic Codes and Standards listed in the preceding section may be deemed to contain administrative requirements and/or administrative processes and procedures, the administrative requirements and/or administrative processes and procedures contained in the South Carolina Office of School Facilities Policy and Procedures Manual shall apply and be used.

DIVISION 2: SITE ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT AND DISPOSAL

Section 2.1 Evaluation and Approval of Site Acquisition or Lease

- A. All real property subject to acquisition by a district, whether unimproved land or land with existing improvements, for purchase or for lease, regardless of cost, must first be approved by the OSF per [SC Code §59-23-250](#). All property must be acquired as per state statute.
- B. Site inspections must be made of all property prior to acquisition. The design professional, if engaged by the district, should be present at the site inspection along with a representative of the district, a representative of SCDOT Traffic Engineering Division and all other interested parties.
- C. Reference the School Facilities Portal for the information to be provided on the Description and Utilities tabs prior to the site inspection. Provide the following information to the extent information is available:
 1. Boundary map or plat indicating wetlands or other special areas of interest.
 2. Aerial map showing roads adjacent to the proposed property.
 3. Buildings plans if a structure is existing.
- D. After the site visit, the OSF Site Evaluation information will be provided in the School Facilities Portal by OSF on the Site Visit and Demographics tabs. The written report with recommendations from SCDOT will be uploaded to the School Facilities Portal.
- E. On a site where a septic tank system is planned, the district must receive preliminary approval from SCDES before site acquisition can be approved by the OSF.
- F. If, after consideration of the recommendations by the OSF, SCDOT, and any other resources the district engages in order to exercise due diligence when evaluating the property, the district elects to proceed with the acquisition or lease, the district must submit the following supporting documentation:
 1. Plat complying with Section 2.1.G.
 2. Topographic information, if available.
 3. Phase 1 Environmental Report.
 4. Phase 2 Environmental Report, if required.
 5. Geotechnical Report, if available.
 6. SCDOT Site Traffic Report.
 7. Evidence of SCDES preliminary approval per Section 2.1.E, if applicable.
- G. The plat referenced in the Section 2.1.F must meet the following criteria:
 1. Be prepared by a SC registered Professional Land Surveyor.
 2. Meet the Class A Survey requirements (see [R.49-440 of the SC Code of Regulations](#)).
 3. Meet the Closing/Loan or Mortgage Survey Type requirements (see [R.49-460 of the SC Code of Regulations](#)).

4. Contain Wetlands Survey information, where applicable.
5. Show flood plain information, where applicable.
6. Be properly sealed, signed, and dated [SC Code §40-22-270](#) and completed as required per the Standards of Practice Manual for Surveying in South Carolina ([Article 4 of Chapter 49 of the SC Code of Regulations](#)).

Section 2.2 School Sites

- A. The school district is required by [SC Code §6-29-540](#) to comply with local zoning ordinances and to consult with the local planning commission as to the compatibility of the proposed school site with the comprehensive plan of the community. In the event the planning commission finds the proposal to be in conflict with the comprehensive plan, the commission must transmit its findings and the particulars of the nonconformity to the district. If the district determines to go forward with the project which conflicts with the comprehensive plan, the School Board must publicly state its intention to proceed and the reasons for the action. A copy of this finding must be sent to the local governing body, the local planning commission, and published as a public notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the community at least thirty days prior to awarding a contract or beginning construction.
- B. Parking is determined by local zoning ordinance. In the absence of a local zoning ordinance, districts may use the IZC of the same edition as the adopted building code, or other code as approved by the OSF.
- C. Roadway improvements requisite to access requirements and adequate to address any potential safety hazards are the responsibility of the school district. Districts must consider both the cost and impact to schedule when considering a site. The SCDOT must be consulted for roadway improvements whenever stacking loops or access to a school is modified, or whenever a new school is planned, or an addition that increases the number of students is planned. Access to a school site must be as defined by the SCDOT Traffic Engineering Division, as part of the application process for an encroachment permit. [Chapter 4: “School Access Design” in the Access & Roadside Management Standards \(ARMS\), latest edition.](#) developed by the SCDOT’s Traffic Engineering Division provides additional criteria.
1. County or state road frontage must be ample enough to allow for separate car and bus entrances and exits, unless otherwise agreed to in conjunction with SCDOT and/or the appropriate city/county authority.
 2. On-site school bus traffic must be physically separated from visitor, parent, and student traffic at all schools unless approved by the OSF.
 3. School automobile and bus loops must operate in a one-way counterclockwise direction or in a manner that assures that the loading/unloading of students occurs from the right-hand side of the vehicle adjacent to the building to prevent pedestrians from crossing traffic lanes.
 4. A site plan showing traffic and parking improvements must be submitted to and approved by SCDOT Traffic Engineering Division prior to bidding the project. The current OSF Form F6 [School Transportation Information Form] must be shown on the site plan. This approval is required for any improvement affecting traffic or parking on or adjacent to the site, even if the work does not require an encroachment permit. Technical assistance necessary to this objective is available from the SCDOT, Traffic Engineering Division.
- D. Pedestrians and bicyclists must have a designated safe path between the adjacent roads, school drives, parking areas and the school building.

Section 2.3 Existing Site Additions or Changes

- A. When additions or changes are made to an existing site, the additions or changes must comply with the requirements of this Division.

Section 2.4 Land Disposal

- A. In accordance with [SC Code §59-19-190](#), the reassignment or disposal of land purchased with any state funds after 1952 must be subject to the prior written approval of the State Board of Education. Request for disposition of such parcels must be made through the OSF for submission to the State Board of Education.
- B. Parcel(s) may contain internal roads identified as being on the State Highway System regardless of purchase date. These are roads that are owned and maintained by the SCDOT and will require the SCDOT to remove the road(s) from the system prior to the disposal of the property. Providing a boundary survey (if available) of the parcel with the disposition request to the OSF will aid the SCDOT in determining if any road(s) are on the State Highway System.
- C. The Parcel(s) may also contain one or more buildings. If so, in accordance with [SC Code §59-40-170](#), if a school district declares a building surplus and chooses to sell or lease the building, a charter school's board of directors or a charter committee operating or applying within the district must be given the first refusal to purchase or lease the building under the same or better terms and conditions as it would be offered to the public.

DIVISION 3: SPECIAL DESIGN CRITERIA

Section 3.1 Plumbing Requirements for Stadiums

A. Toilets and Lavatories

1. In accordance with [SC Code §59-23-245](#), the minimum numbers of required plumbing fixtures for stadiums in middle and high schools shall be calculated as:
 - a) Toilets for male restrooms required for a stadium are:
 - (1) One per two hundred for the first fifteen hundred occupancy,
 - (2) One per two hundred fifty for the next fifteen hundred occupancy, and
 - (3) One per five hundred for the remainder occupancy.
 - b) Toilets for female restrooms required for a stadium are:
 - (1) One per one hundred for the first one thousand five hundred twenty occupancy,
 - (2) One per one hundred fifty for the next one thousand five hundred twenty occupancy, and
 - (3) One per three hundred for the remainder occupancy.
 - c) Lavatories for male restrooms required for a stadium are one per three hundred.
 - d) Lavatories for female restrooms required for a stadium are one per three hundred.