

# **REPORT**

## ***Climate Action, Planning and Development***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** July 10, 2023

**From:** Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development  
**File:** 01.0195.10

**Item #:** 2023-477

**Subject:** **New Westminster School District's 2023-2024 Eligible School Sites Proposal**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Council accept the proposals included in School District 40's 2023-2024 Eligible School Sites Proposal; and

**THAT** Council direct staff to send a letter to the School District:

- a. including the resolution regarding the Eligible School Sites Proposal;
  - b. expressing interest in continued collaboration on school planning; and
  - c. encouraging budgetary consideration for child care and other community amenities on school sites, on-site recreational/open space facilities, and high construction costs in Queensborough.
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### **PURPOSE**

To seek Council's acceptance of the School District's Eligible School Sites Proposal for 2023-2024.

### **SUMMARY**

This report brings forward School District 40's 2023-2024 Eligible School Sites Proposal (ESSP). The proposal outlines anticipated 10 year growth and student yield estimates, as well as anticipated land acquisition needs. The ESSP informs the establishment of School Site Acquisition Charges (SSACs), which the City collects for the School District, though provincial legislation caps the amount of SSACs that can be collected. The

ESSP is also directly related to the School District’s Capital Plan, which reflects land acquisition costs, and capital costs related to expansions, renovations and new school projects.

Staff suggest the ESSP includes student yield projections that are reasonable, and reflects proactive planning for new school site needs. The Capital Plan also appears to be consistent with the ESSP. Staff recommend accepting the 2023-2024 ESSP, and sending a letter to the School District encouraging sufficient budgetary consideration for items such as on-site child care and other community amenities, recreational/open space facilities, and the higher construction costs experienced in Queensborough.

**BACKGROUND**

**2023-2024 Eligible School Sites Proposal**

The *Local Government Act* (LGA) requires that the School Board consult with the City and make all reasonable efforts to reach agreement on: (1) student projections; (2) the size and number of school sites required to accommodate these students; and (3) the approximate location of these school sites. The Board must prepare a written Eligible School Sites Proposal (ESSP) summarizing these items, forward a copy of the proposal to the City, and request City consideration.

The 2023-2024 ESSP was presented to the Board at their public meeting on June 20, 2023. The Board approved a resolution to adopt the proposal and forward it to the City for acceptance. With the referral of this report, the City has 60 days to review and respond. The proposal is included in Attachment 1.

As outlined by the LGA, the City has three options for a response:

- 1. accept the ESSP;
- 2. do not accept the ESSP, which will result in a facilitator being appointed by the Ministry; or
- 3. decline to provide a written response, which will result in the City being deemed to have accepted the ESSP.

The ESSP then informs the establishment of School Site Acquisition Charges (SSACs), which the City collects on behalf of the School District. These charges are levied against all eligible development, reflecting that new development typically brings more school-aged children. SSACs can then support the School District’s purchase of additional lands for school development, though significant funding is also needed from the Province as SSAC rates are limited by provincial regulation and do not reflect the true cost of land acquisition. As such, although the estimated cost of land acquisition has increased in this year’s ESSP, the SSAC rates will be staying the same, as they reflect maximum allowable rates.

**DISCUSSION**

**Development and Student Yield Projections**

The ESSP is based on 10 year projections for different forms of housing. The School District is projecting 16,300 new dwelling units in the next ten years – a high projection that their staff noted is based on the applications for dwelling units that are currently under consideration in the city. City staff have shared feedback that applications under consideration are likely to come to fruition in a staggered fashion and some applications may not proceed. The growth projected by the School District represents more growth than is anticipated in the City’s Official Community Plan, which projects an increase of approximately 6,000 dwelling units over the next ten years, and 11,500 more dwelling units by 2041.

Although the efforts to expand missing middle housing continue, the School District’s projections for growth in rowhouse forms seem particularly high when compared to past trends and land availability. Staff anticipate the proportion of growth in rowhouses and townhouses will be smaller than reflected in the ESSP.

While the dwelling unit projections may exceed the City’s anticipated growth, the estimated yield rates from new forms of housing have not changed in recent years and do not seem to reflect recent trends around more children living in multi-family forms of housing and fewer in single detached dwellings.

Given that most of New Westminster’s growth is anticipated to be in multi-family forms, despite the higher dwelling unit projections, the overall projected school age yield is almost the same in the 2023 ESSP (1,956 students over 10 years) as it was in the 2022 ESSP (1,963 students over 10 years). As such, and because the City continues to look to accommodate growth in accordance with Provincial direction, City staff suggest that the School District’s projected school age yield is reasonable.

**Proposed New School Sites and Site Expansion**

The 2023-2024 ESSP includes site expansion and new site acquisition for four schools, in various school zones (map of School District zones included as Attachment 2):

- An expansion to the Queensborough Middle School site to accommodate the growing secondary school-aged population in Queensborough;
- New acquisition for a middle school in the Fraser River Zone: The School District is prioritizing acquiring a site within the West End, and has received provincial support to pursue site identification and land acquisition;
- Site expansion for a new elementary school in the Glenbrook Zone, currently anticipated to be in the form of an expansion to the School District owned Home Learners Program site adjacent to Hume Park; and

- New acquisition for an elementary school in the Fraser River Zone, in addition to the future Fraser River Elementary School being planned for the Fraser River Middle School (FRMS) site. City and School District staff are exploring the potential to create a site within a large development, such as at 88 Tenth Street (Columbia Square).

The above expansions and acquisitions are in line with the School District's 2021 Long Range Facilities Plan, with the exception of the elementary school in the Fraser River Zone, which is a new proposal, additional to the elementary school proposal being advanced for the FRMS site (no land acquisition is needed for that project). Given enrollment pressure at Qayqayt Elementary and other schools in the vicinity, and the potential for the elementary school at the FRMS site to be at capacity at opening, staff consider the inclusion of this additional school site to reflect proactive planning.

### **2024-2025 Major Capital Plan Submission**

At the same June 20, 2023 School Board meeting, the Board approved the 2024-2025 Major Capital Plan for submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care (see Attachment 3). This plan reflects the land acquisition identified in the ESSP, as well as capital costs related to additions, new schools, renovations, and seismic upgrades. The Capital Plan appears to be consistent with the ESSP, and includes other significant projects such as the expansion to the Queen Elizabeth Elementary School, and the creation of a new elementary school on the FRMS site. Staff suggest the following feedback be provided with the letter regarding acceptance of the ESSP:

- In alignment with the draft guiding principles related to child care, the City hopes to work with the School District to deliver additional important community amenities on school sites, such as before and after school care, and pre-school age child care where possible. Regarding these principles, it is proposed that the School District primarily focus on before and after school care and the City primarily focus on pre-school age child care. The City encourages consideration of these items in budgeting processes and would be pleased to jointly advocate for sufficient funding.
- Historically the City has allowed joint-use of city parks to support outdoor recreation for schools. Many existing City sports fields are at capacity with current shared use by schools and the growing community. Due to this, it is anticipated the School District will need to plan for additional recreational/open space needs within a portion of the school sites in some zones.
- Budgeting for projects in Queensborough should account for the higher cost of construction in the neighbourhood (e.g. due to soil quality, floodplain requirements, and off-sites servicing upgrades).

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities Plan**

The City’s ongoing collaboration with the School District on new school projects and exploration of opportunities to jointly serve the community is closely aligned with Council’s Strategic Priorities Plan and the focus area on community belonging and connecting. Planning for these major community facilities and the services will involve inter-departmental coordination and consideration, and will also be aligned with the focus area on asset management and infrastructure.

**NEXT STEPS**

Should Council accept the School District’s 2023-2024 ESSP, staff would forward a copy of the resolution in a letter to the School Board, with a copy to School District staff. The feedback suggested above would also be included, as well as a reiteration of the City’s continued interest in working collaboratively with the School District to support the delivery of new schools in New Westminster that achieve the best outcomes for students and the community as a whole.

**OPTIONS**

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

- 1. That Council accept the proposals included in School District 40’s 2023-2024 Eligible School Sites Proposal;
- 2. Council direct staff to send a letter to the School District:
  - a. including the resolution regarding the Eligible School Sites Proposal;
  - b. expressing interest in continued collaboration on school planning; and
  - c. encouraging budgetary consideration for child care and other community amenities on school sites, on-site recreational/open space facilities, and high construction costs in Queensborough; or
- 3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Options 1 and 2.

**ATTACHMENT**

- Attachment 1 - School District 2023-2024 Eligible School Sites Proposal Referral
- Attachment 2 - School District Zones Map
- Attachment 3 - 2024-25 Major Capital Plan Submission Staff Report

**APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:  
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