

# REPORT

## *Climate Action, Planning and Development*

**To:** New Westminster Design Panel  
**From:** Wendee Lang, Development Planner  
**Date:** January 23, 2024  
**File:** PF007111  
**Item #:** [Report Number]

**Subject:** **921 Salter Street (Queen Elizabeth Elementary School): Design Review of Proposed New Elementary School Addition**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

*THAT the New Westminster Design Panel review the design submission and provide comments for applicant and staff consideration.*

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### **PURPOSE**

A Development Variance Permit application has been received to develop a new three-storey addition to the existing Queen Elizabeth Elementary School at 921 Salter Street. The proposal includes approximately 2,926 sq. m. (31,495.2 sq. ft.) of new school space and would replace 10 existing on-site portables. In excess of Zoning Bylaw requirements, the development would provide 65 off-street parking stalls, and 10 long-term and 88 short-term bicycle parking spaces. Four pick-up and drop-off spaces are proposed alongside a number of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives. Variances are proposed to building height and various minor vehicle and bicycle parking requirements.

It is the City's practice to require all significant institutional projects participate in a design review process, including review by City staff, engagement with the local Residents' Association and public open house, and review by the New Westminster Design Panel (NWDP). The purpose of this report is to provide information to the NWDP with regard to the overall project design, and to receive comments from the Panel, with special consideration given to items noted in the Design Considerations section of this report.

**POLICY AND REGULATIONS**

*Official Community Plan Land Use Designation*

The subject site is designated (P) Major Institutional in the Official Community Plan (OCP). This designation applies to areas used for large scale institutional uses such as schools and hospitals. The proposed development is consistent with the intent of the land use designation and therefore, no OCP amendment is required.

*Development Permit Area*

The site is located within the QE1 Flood Hazard Development Permit Area (DPA), the intent of which is to minimize the potential for loss of life and property damage in the event of Fraser River flooding. As such, the project is required to comply with all flood construction level requirements.

The site is not located within a form and character DPA. However, it is the City’s practice to require all significant institutional projects participate in a design review process, including review by City staff, engagement with the local Residents’ Association and a public open house, and review by the New Westminster Design Panel. The proposed design has been prepared in light of design guidelines provided by the City (see Attachment 1).

*Zoning*

The subject site is zoned Public and Institutional Districts (Low Rise) (P-1). The intent of this district is to allow low-density institutional uses. As the proposed building addition would be consistent with the use and density of this zone, a rezoning is not required. However, a Development Variance Permit (DVP) would be required for other aspects of this project. The anticipated Zoning Bylaw variances have been grouped into two main categories, outlined below.

Building Height

Confirmation of funding for a third storey of educational space was received from the Ministry of Education in 2023. As the zoning district limits building height to two storeys, the project would require a variance to facilitate a three-storey building form.

Transportation

The Zoning Bylaw includes a range of off-street transportation related requirements, such as vehicle parking and siting of bike parking. The application is seeking variances to permit parking in the front yard setback (adjacent to the Howes Street property line), provision of more than 30% of spaces sized for small cars, and siting of long-term bicycle parking lockers.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

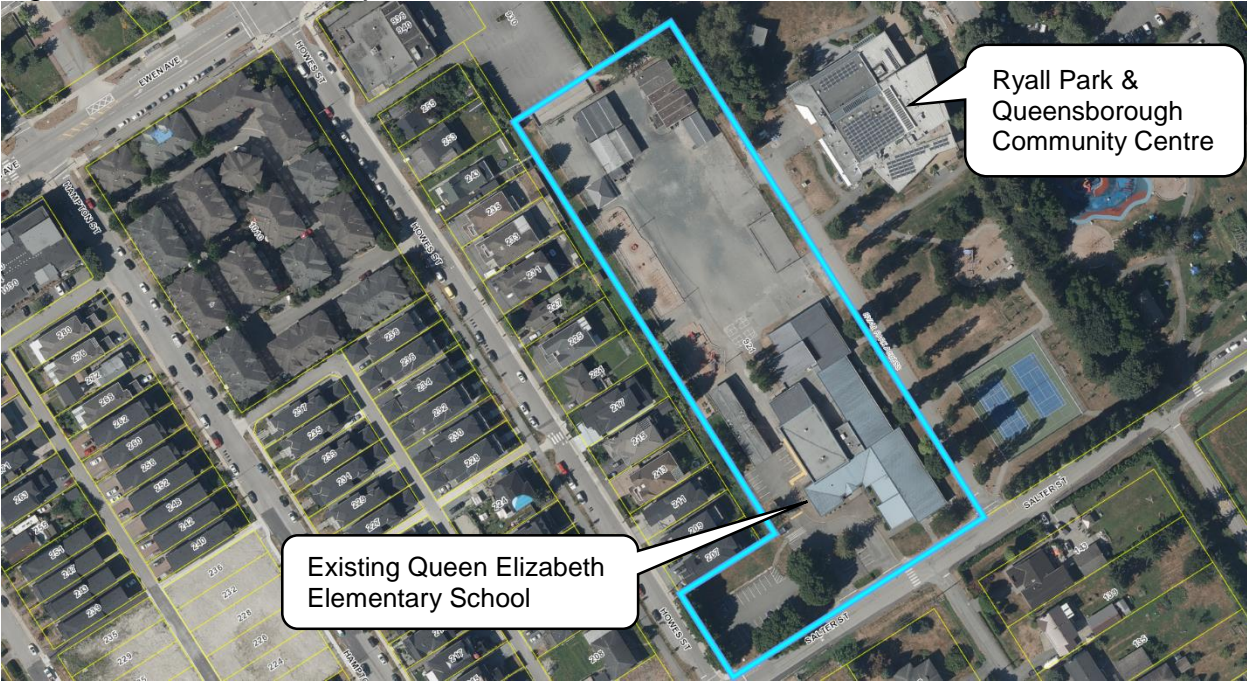
**Site Characteristics and Context**

The subject property is 18,011 sq. m. (193,868.8 sq. ft.) and is located in the Queensborough neighbourhood. It is the site of the existing Queen Elizabeth Elementary School, which comprises the existing one-storey school building, modular classrooms, portables, and off-street parking and playground space. The school has a total capacity of 491 students and an approximately floor area of 2,896 sq. m. (31,172.3 sq. ft.).

The property is bounded by Ryall Park to the east, Salter Street to the south, Howes Street to the west, and the Roma Hall parking lot to the north. Ewen Avenue, a designated Great Street and part of the Frequent Transit Network, is proximate. Howes Street and Ewen Avenue contain off-street cycle paths, and are part of the core Active Transportation Network, as is Salter Street.

The site is largely flat. Surrounding land uses are primarily single-detached residential, save for the adjacent Ryall Park and Queensborough Community Centre, and the Roma Hall. Queensborough Middle School is located opposite Ryall Park, at 833 Salter Street.

*Figure 1: Site Context Map with 921 Salter Street in blue*



**PROPOSAL**

The proposed Queen Elizabeth Elementary School addition comprises approximately 2,696 sq. m. (29,019.5 sq. ft.) of new elementary school space and 230 sq. m. (2,475.7 sq. ft.) of Neighbourhood Learning Centre space, which would be used for before- and

after-school child care. Drawings indicate an overall proposed density of 0.33 FSR. The addition would replace 10 temporary portable classrooms at the rear of the site and facilitate the integration of grade 5 students who are currently accommodated in the adjacent middle school. The existing permanent modular classrooms would remain. Through the application, the total school capacity would be increased from 491 to 763 students.

The addition would be located at the rear of the site and connected to the existing school via an enclosed building link. The primary entrance to the addition would be at-grade in a south-west facing courtyard, with pedestrian connections provided from Salter Street and Howes Street, as well as the Roma Hall parking lot. Play space would be concentrated at the north end of the site and existing playground areas maintained.

**Project Statistics**

	<b>Permitted / Required Under P-1 Zoning</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Lot Area	-	18,011 sq. m. (193,868.8 sq. ft.)
Site Frontage	-	38.1 m. (125.0 ft.)
Average Lot Depth	-	227.2 m. (745.3 ft.)
Building Area	10,806.6 sq. m. (116,321.3 sq. ft.)	5,822 sq. m. (62,667.5 sq. ft.)
Total Floor Space Ratio (FSR)	0.6 FSR	0.33 FSR
Site Coverage	40%	24.1%
Building Height	9.14 m. (30 ft.) 2 storeys	16.8 m. (55.1 ft.) 3 storeys
Setbacks		
Front Yard (Howes Street)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	63.49 m. (208.3 ft.)
Rear Yard (Ryall Park)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	8.21 m. (26.9 ft.)
Side Yard (Salter Street)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	12.88 m. (42.3 ft.)
Side Yard (West)	4.57 m. (15 ft.)	52.46 m. (172.1 ft.)
Off-Street Parking	42	65
Off-Street Pick Up and Drop Off Spaces	20 or an alternative number recommended by a Transportation Study provided by a professional engineer with experience in traffic engineering <sup>1</sup>	4 + TDM package

	Permitted / Required Under P-1 Zoning	Proposed
Bicycle Parking		
Long-term	6	10
Short-term	77	84

<sup>1</sup> Transportation Study requirements detailed in Section 160.6 of the Zoning Bylaw

**Vehicle Access and Parking**

The existing surface parking lot would be expanded to include a total of 65 staff parking stalls, two loading spaces, and four pick-up and drop-off (PUDO) stalls, accessed from Salter Street. To improve vehicle circulation, the second existing Salter Street access would be removed and a new egress provided onto Howes Street. The Zoning Bylaw requires 20 off-street PUDO spaces or an alternative number as proposed and justified by a Transportation Study. The alternative number of spaces (4) is considered supportable in light of proposed pedestrian infrastructure improvements, additional carpool and bicycle parking, commitment to scattered start and end times, and the availability of PUDO spaces in the Roma Hall parking lot (11), currently leased by the School District.

**DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

The applicant’s design rationale, architectural, and landscape drawings are included in Attachment 2. The site is not included in a Development Permit Area, but staff have provided the project team design guidelines, which are included in Attachment 1. Staff would appreciate comments from the NWDP on the proposed development. Some items identified by staff for consideration by the Panel are detailed below.

**Building Siting, Massing and Design**

The project proposes three storeys of educational space, compliant with the QE1 Flood Hazard DPA. Per the DPA, all classroom space must be located at or above 3.53 m. GSC, which would result in a total building height of 16.8 m. (55.1 ft.). Massing has been positioned at the rear of the site and steps down to one storey at the north, with a separation of approximately 35 m. (114.8 ft.) proposed between the addition and adjacent single-detached properties. The building would be articulated through variations in massing, changes in materiality, and fenestration patterns to reduce the perception of mass. Given the provision of additional educational space and building articulation, the proposed building height variance is considered reasonable.

The design guidelines encourage creativity in design to help the school act as a landmark, wayfinding device and source of community identity. Use of high quality materials and architectural approach, harmonious with the riverfront community context, is emphasized.

*Staff seeks input from the NWDP with regard to:*

- *The overall scale, massing, and proposed materials of the addition and how the development fits into the surrounding neighbourhood context;*
- *The proposed material and colour palette, and how this contributes to creation of a strong school identity/community landmark;*
- *The visual prominence of the main entrance to the building addition;*
- *Integration of the proposed addition with the existing Queen Elizabeth Elementary School; and,*
- *Creation of a sensitive transition to Ryall Park, the Queensborough Community Centre, and adjacent single-detached properties.*

### **Pedestrian and Cyclist Circulation and Comfort**

The design guidelines support creation of a high quality, comfortable and pleasant experience for pedestrians and cyclists around and through the site during school and extracurricular hours. Improvements to the existing on-site pedestrian circulation scheme are encouraged.

*Staff seeks input from the NWDP with respect to the legibility of the site design. To what extent does the design allow for intuitive wayfinding and support the prominence of the school's main entries?*

### **Outdoor Spaces**

The design guidelines encourage thoughtfully designed, versatile, and flexible outdoor spaces that can meet the diverse programmatic needs of students, staff and visitors.

*Staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to the design and function of:*

- *The entrance courtyard, through which primary and secondary access to the addition is provided; and,*
- *The outdoor space program as a whole.*

### **Landscaping**

The design guidelines provide direction with respect to the use of abundant landscaping to soften the urban landscape, enhance access to nature, and support stormwater infiltration.

*Staff seeks input from the NWDP with respect to the design of hard and soft landscaped areas, including suggested approaches that would ensure each outdoor space functions as intended and feels distinct from other spaces.*

### **Questions for the Design Panel's Consideration**

In addition to general NWDP comments with respect to the overall design of the proposed development, staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to:

1. The overall scale, massing, and proposed materials of the building addition, and how the development fits into the surrounding neighbourhood context;
2. The proposed material and colour palette, and how this contributes to creation of a strong school identity/community landmark;
3. The visual prominence of the main entrance to the building addition;
4. Integration of the proposed addition with the existing Queen Elizabeth Elementary School;
5. Creation of a sensitive transition to Ryall Park, the Queensborough Community Centre, and adjacent single-detached properties;
6. The legibility of the site design, with consideration given to intuitive wayfinding;
7. Design and function of the outdoor space program, including the entrance courtyard; and,
8. The design of hard and soft landscaped areas.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Design Guidelines

Attachment 2: Applicant's Architectural and Landscape Submission Package

## **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:

Wendee Lang, Development Planner

This report was approved by:

Mike Watson, Acting Manager of Development Planning