

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** November 15, 2021

From: Emilie Adin, Director, Climate Action,
Planning and Development **File:** 01.0195.10

Item #: 2021-535

Subject: New Westminster School District's 2021-2022 Eligible School Sites
Proposal Report: City Response

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council accept the proposals included in School District 40's 2021-2022 Eligible School Sites Proposal (ESSP).

THAT Council identify to School District 40 that both the Eligible School Sites Proposal and Capital Plan should also include site requirements and land acquisition costs for development of a new elementary school in the Fraser River zone.

THAT Council direct staff to continue to work closely with School District staff on identifying, developing, and seeking funding from the Province for new school projects that meet the needs of New Westminster students and the community as a whole.

PURPOSE

To recommend that Council 1) accept the "Eligible School Sites Proposal" report referred to the City by the School Board, and 2) direct staff to continue to work closely with the School District on new school projects.

BACKGROUND

2021-22 Eligible School Sites Proposal

As required by the Local Government Act (LGA) the School Board must 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 summarizing these items, forward a copy of the proposal to the City, and request City consideration.

The 2021-2022 Eligible School Sites Proposal (ESSP) was presented to the Board at their public meeting on September 28, 2021. The Board approved a resolution to adopt the proposal and forward it to the City of New Westminster 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 eligible school sites proposal.
2. Do not accept the eligible school sites proposal, which will result in a facilitator being appointed by the Ministry.
3. Decline to provide written response, which will result in the City being deemed to have accepted the eligible school sites proposal.

2022-23 Major Capital Plan Submission Amendment

At the same Board meeting, School District (SD) staff presented a report outlining a 2022-23 Major Capital Plan Submission Amendment. The Board approve the revised Capital Plan for submission to the Ministry, which included new funding requests for land acquisition and school construction.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Proposed City Response

The City is committed to working in partnership with the SD to creatively solve the challenges of building new schools in a fully built-out urban environment, and to advocate to the Province for the funding to provide those schools to meet the needs of our community.

Staff reviewed the 2021-2022 Eligible School Site Proposal alongside the 2022-2023 Major Capital Plan Submission Amendment. The new schools and school expansions proposed are detailed in Attachment 2.

Staff has identified a misalignment between the (ESSP) and the Capital Plan regarding a new elementary school in the Fraser River zone. The ESSP works in conjunction with the SD Capital Plan to identify and plan for future school needs, and fund land acquisition and construction of new school projects, the former by informing the setting of appropriate school site acquisition charges and the latter including seeking funding from the Ministry of Education. However, the ESSP does not include site requirements

for the elementary school proposed for the Fraser River zone, while the Capital Plan only includes a request for the construction costs of a new school in that zone, but not for land acquisition.

Overall, staff are supportive of the ESSP and recommend acceptance of the proposals currently included therein. Staff recommends that the City's acceptance of the ESSP also identify to the SD that they should ensure that both that document and the Capital Plan include site requirements and land acquisition funding to construct the elementary school the SD has identified for the Fraser River zone. Staff therefore recommend:

That Council accept the proposals included in School District 40's 2021-2022 Eligible School Sites Proposal.

That Council identify to School District 40 that both the Eligible School Sites Proposal and Capital Plan should also include site requirements and land acquisition costs for development of a new elementary school in the Fraser River zone.

City staff would continue to work collaboratively with SD staff on identifying, developing, and seeking funding from senior government for new school projects that meet the needs of New Westminster students and the community as a whole.

Additional City Response

In addition to the recommendation noted above staff also emphasizes the following:

- The City will continue to work collaboratively with the SD to support the delivery of new schools in New Westminster that achieve the best outcomes for students and the community as a whole.
- The SD can help deliver other amenities, including before and after school care, infant/toddler and preschooler child care, and outdoor play space. The City hopes to work with the SD to deliver these amenities as part of new school projects.
- 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 SD will need to plan for recreational/open space needs within a portion of the school sites in some zones. Insufficient access to sports fields and other places to be active can contribute to lower levels of physical activity and lower health outcomes for the community's children.
- Due to high demand for park space, and the City's principle of no net loss of park space, where joint use of city parks is considered, the City is willing to support a joint use agreement for non-exclusive use of city park space. This approach would allow other community members to have access to the entire park during school hours.

- Delivery of new schools, including the identification of new sites, will require the SD to retain appropriate professionals to assist with the process (e.g. geotech, architect, civil engineers).
- Budgeting for a project 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).

Projections for Eligible Development and Student Yield

The LGA requires that the SD and City make reasonable efforts to agree to a projection of the number of new residential units to be approved or built, and a projection of the number of children of school age. The materials submitted with the ESSP include the School District's Projections for Eligible Development and Student Yield (Schedule A of Attachment 2). A review by City staff indicates:

1. The number of units proposed appears to account for both in-stream development and the growth anticipated in the Official Community Plan.
2. The distribution of unit types anticipates more rowhousing than anticipated by City staff. If adjusted, the result would mean the overall projected number of students would decline.
3. The City's family friendly housing requirements could result in more children living in multifamily developments than in the past, meaning yields from low and high rise dwellings may increase.

Staff considers the SD's projections as proposed to be reasonable as they appear to align with the OCP, and as points two and three above may cancel each other out. This feedback would be included as part of the City's response to the SD.

NEXT STEPS

Should Council approve the proposed City response, staff would forward a copy of the resolutions and other feedback in a letter to the School Board, with a copy to School District Staff.

OPTIONS

There are four options for Council's consideration; they are:

1. That Council accept the proposals included in School District 40's 2021-2022 Eligible School Sites Proposal (ESSP).
2. That Council identify to School District 40 that both the Eligible School Sites Proposal and Capital Plan should also include site requirements and land acquisition costs for development of a new elementary school in the Fraser River zone.

3. That Council direct staff to continue to work closely with School District staff on identifying, developing, and seeking funding from the Province for new school projects that meet the needs of New Westminster students and the community as a whole.
4. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Options 1, 2 and 3.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Eligible School Sites Proposal

Attachment 2 – Summary of New Schools and School Expansions Proposed

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Lynn Roxburgh, Acting Supervisor of Land Use Planning and Climate Action

Jackie Teed, Senior Manager, Climate Action, Planning and Development

This report was reviewed by:

Meredith Seeton, Planner

This report was approved by:

Emilie K Adin, Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer