

# **REPORT**

## ***Planning and Development***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** June 24, 2024

**From:** Jackie Teed, Director  
Planning and Development  
**File:** #2496388

**Item #:** 2024-388

**Subject:** **New Westminster School District's 2024-2025 Eligible School Sites Proposal**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Council accept the School District 40's 2024-2025 Eligible School Sites Proposal; and

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

- a. includes the resolution regarding the Eligible School Sites Proposal;
  - b. shares that the City will update its Official Community Plan projections consistent with the new provincial legislation; and
  - c. expresses interest in continued collaboration and joint advocacy on school planning.
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### **PURPOSE**

To seek Council's acceptance of the School District's Eligible School Sites Proposal for 2024-2025.

### **SUMMARY**

The School District 40's 2024-2025 Eligible School Sites Proposal (ESSP) has been referred to the City for consideration. The ESSP outlines the anticipated number students and their needs over ten years. It also outlines the related land acquisition needs.

City staff suggest the ESSP projections are a best estimate at this time. The numbers are consistent with last year’s projections. Last year’s projections were higher than the City’s, but reflected the School District’s approach to proactive planning for growth. The City will be updating our projections, consistent with the recent changes to Provincial legislation including new guidelines for housing need projections and a provincial Housing Target Order.

The ESSP informs the establishment of School Site Acquisition Charges (SSACs), which the City collects for the School District through development applications. In New Westminster, the rates for this charge are already at the maximum allowable under Provincial regulation.

Staff recommend accepting the 2024-2025 ESSP, and sending a letter to the School District sharing that the City will be updating projections consistent with the new Provincial housing legislation, and that the City remains interested in collaborating and jointly advocating for the community facilities needed for New Westminster residents.

**BACKGROUND**

**Regulations for School Planning**

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 School Board must prepare a written Eligible School Sites Proposal (ESSP) summarizing these items, which is annually forwarded to the City for consideration.

**2024-2025 Eligible School Sites Proposal**

The 2024-2025 ESSP was presented to the School Board at their public meeting on May 28, 2024. The Board approved a resolution to adopt the ESSP and forward it to the City for consideration. The City has 60 days to review and respond to the ESSP, following the referral from the Board. 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.

**School Site Acquisition Charges**

The ESSP informs 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. SSAC rates in New Westminster are already at the maximum allowable under Provincial regulation. As such, even though this year’s ESSP reflects an increase in the cost of land acquisition, SSACs will stay the same.

**DISCUSSION**

**Student Projections**

The 2024-2025 ESSP is based on ten year projections for different forms of housing. The School District is projecting 16,300 new dwelling units in the next ten years, which they translate as 1,956 new school age children. These are the same as the numbers put forward last year. School District staff noted that they have based the dwelling unit projection, which City staff consider to be high, on the applications for dwelling units that are currently under consideration in the city. City staff considers the ESSP projections are a best estimate at this time, pending implementation of new provincial legislation related to growth projections.

**Comparison to City Projections**

The growth projected by the School District represents more growth than is anticipated in the City’s Official Community Plan (OCP). The OCP projects an increase of approximately 6,000 dwelling units over the next ten years, and 11,500 more dwelling units by 2041.

The new Provincial legislation includes new guidelines for housing need projections and a provincial Housing Target Order. City staff will be updating the City’s projections consistent with the provincial legislation. This work will be incorporated into the 2025 OCP update that is required by the new housing legislation.

**New School Sites and Site Expansions**

The 2024-2025 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 continues to work towards site confirmation 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 elementary school being planned to be added to the Fraser River Middle School site. This additional school could potentially be part of a larger mixed-use development.

The above expansions and acquisitions are consistent with last ESSP and reflect the recommendations in the School District’s Long Range Facilities Plan (updated in 2023).

**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 interdepartmental 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 2024-2025 ESSP, staff would provide Council’s 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 in order to achieve the best outcomes for students and the community as a whole.

Once completed, the City’s updated dwelling and population projections will be shared with the School District to inform continued discussions on anticipated growth and school planning.

**OPTIONS**

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

1. That Council accept the proposals included in School District 40’s 2024-2025 Eligible School Sites Proposal;
2. Council direct staff to send a letter to the School District which:
  - a. includes the resolution regarding the Eligible School Sites Proposal;
  - b. shares that the City will update its Official Community Plan projections consistent with the new provincial legislation; and

- c. expresses interest in continued collaboration and joint advocacy on school planning; or
3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Options 1 and 2.

### **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1: School District 2024-2025 Eligible School Sites Proposal Referral

Attachment 2: School District Zones Map

### **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:  
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