

Sale of surplus land parcel at Braemar Elementary

Backgrounder - Q & A

Background

In the fall of 2006, the NVSD hosted a series of public open houses to introduce the possibility of selling parcels of surplus land on school sites to assist in funding capital projects to renew its aging facilities.

The Braemar surplus land parcel extending from the 3500 block of Calder Avenue is acknowledged as unused, untended land that could be made available for sale. The neighborhood was notified, community feedback was solicited and the Braemar PAC was also consulted. While some respondents supported the concept, others raised concerns about possible changes to the neighborhood that would result from the future development of the site.

The NVSD incorporated several considerations from the community feedback into its 2007 Preliminary Planning Application (PPA) to the District of North Vancouver (DNV). The PPA received general support from the DNV with permission to proceed subject to the District's next phase of requirements. In May of 2007, the North Vancouver Board of Education (the Board) authorized the marketing of the property through a public process. Numerous submissions were received and from these, the NVSD selected a developer, Wedgewood Ventures, as the most qualified bidder. Among those qualifications is Wedgewood's commitment to working with the community through the development process.

Over the past eight years, Wedgewood Ventures has worked with the DNV to prepare an amenable development proposal that will achieve the necessary rezoning. The first proposal for six or seven 4,000 square foot homes was put on hold in 2008 by Wedgewood. A subsequent proposal in 2014 provided a significantly reduced environmental footprint over the original plan with a proposed plan of seven homes, ranging in size from 2,200—2,800 square feet, a density reduction of close to 50 percent. The proposal of 2014 did not receive support of DNV Council based on concerns identified by Council and raised in the public consultation process.

Responding to concerns related to the siting location of the homes, traffic, parking, and the environment, the current 2015 proposal further reduces the building area, providing for four single-family homes, while preserving a portion of the site for green space. An environmental assessment and arborist report have been completed. Details of the proposed development are available at:

<http://www.wedgewoodventures.com/drawing-board>

Q & A

What are the School District's plans for the \$2.4 million from the sale of the Braemar land parcel?

Proceeds from the sale of the Braemar parcel are to contribute to the financing of a full replacement of Argyle Secondary as a safe, efficient and welcoming school facility for our students' and community benefit.

What does this mean for the proposed rebuilding of Argyle Secondary?

Delays in the generation of revenue through proposed developments of the Braemar land parcel and the former Ridgeway Annex site have delayed the Board's repayment of its capital debt for the rebuilding of Sutherland and Westview. The Ministry has been clear in communicating its expectation to the Board, that the capital debt needs to be paid back prior to an agreement to enable the replacement of Argyle, as the School District has requested.

Did the Ministry of Education approve this land sale?

Yes. This sale was approved by Ministerial Order. The use of proceeds to reinvest in capital needs aligns with the Provincial Government Release of Assets for Economic Generation (RAEG) program.

Is the School District selling this land to fund operating costs?

No. The School District carefully and successfully manages a balanced operating budget every year regardless of constraints. Proceeds from a land sale are deposited in a capital reserve account and cannot be used to fund operations. Capital reserves are typically directed towards capital projects, and proceeds from the Braemar parcel would be directed towards the full replacement costs of a new Argyle Secondary.

With the completion of sales of the former Keith Lynn and Monteray school sites, doesn't the School District have sufficient funds for the preferred Argyle replacement project?

The preferred option for the replacement of Argyle incorporates additional enhancements for students and the community benefits that will require additional estimated funding of \$13.7 million. The combined proceeds from the sale of Keith Lynn and Monteray have generated \$11.38 million towards this amount. Proceeds from the Braemar parcel will contribute to financing of the preferred full replacement of Argyle.

Should funds remain available beyond the requirements for the Argyle replacement project, such funds will be available to address other capital demands, including the potential replacement of Handsworth.

What happens to the expansion potential of the school if this land parcel were ever to be sold?

The land parcel is situated in an area that would not be used for future expansion due to its location and sloped topography in relation to the majority of the school site. Any future capacity needs can be accommodated, on a temporary or long-term basis, through the use of portable or multi-classroom modular buildings. Long-term additions, or full replacement of the school would make use of the existing site, without this land parcel.

Is Braemar Elementary operating beyond its capacity?

Since 2000, enrolment at Braemar has varied in a narrow range between 103% capacity (506 students in 2003) and 95% capacity today (466 students), without the need for any additional classrooms. Enrolment is managed directly to operate schools as close to capacity as possible. This provides for efficient and responsible management of school district resources, while enabling vibrant, diverse, and strong school communities. Enrolment levels at Braemar are projected to remain stable over the next 15 years.



Is the Braemar land parcel used for the outdoor and environmental education?

The designated natural areas bordering the gravel field are used for outdoor learning opportunities and are not part of the proposed development area. The proposed development area, behind and above the school building, is not used by the school, and is considered “out of bounds” for school purposes.

Is the Braemar land parcel part of the “greenbelt” of North Vancouver?

No. The surplus land is not designated as park or protected space and is not connected to the greenbelts and natural corridors of North Vancouver. The property is designated “institutional” in the District Official Community Plan, and zoned PA for public assembly use.

Development must meet stringent District of North Vancouver (DNV) environmental guidelines. As such, Wedgewood has developed their proposal with input from independent experts who have conducted environmental assessments on the land, its habitat and vegetation.

Wouldn't development in this area reduce property values?

Typically, new homes with quality structure and landscaping design—from both an aesthetic and environmental aspect—result in higher values than existing housing stock in the same neighbourhood. The introduction of higher valued homes to a neighbourhood has been found to increase the value of the existing homes. Wedgewood's development plan is for high quality homes, with extensive landscaping, and ample parking.

Are there benefits for the local community with the sale of this land?

Yes. The proposed development provides a number of benefits including, but not limited to:

- Proposed traffic and parking improvements in the area, such as traffic calming bulges
- Enhanced child safety measures, including new sidewalks and a raised crosswalk
- Sufficient on-site parking for each of the four homes
- Extensive landscaping, including the removal of predominantly invasive species and the incorporation of existing viable mature trees
- A large buffer of landscaping providing privacy between the new homes and the school, and between the new homes and adjacent neighbours
- A \$100,000 community amenity contribution to be used as defined by the DNV and community

In its 2014 deliberations, Council noted that a number of local residents' properties are encroaching upon the Braemar site. Is the School District planning any steps to address this encroachment?

The School District shares the concerns of Council in this regard, and we will examine how to address the issue of land encroachment on our property in the future.

Who is Wedgewood Ventures?

Wedgewood Ventures is a North Shore-based boutique development company. Since 1994, Wedgewood has built residential properties, primarily on the North Shore, with several garnering design and heritage awards. The company has been recognized for its commitment to environmental and community sustainability, and employs many green building practices, emphasizing the use of renewable and recycled materials and reduced waste building techniques. Wedgewood's principal, James Fox, is a resident of North Vancouver and was born and raised in the district.



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