



Surplus Land Retention and Disposition Strategy

Surplus School District Land Retention and Disposition Strategy

Executive Summary

As a result of demographic changes such as the aging population and smaller families that have resulted in declining enrolment and the school district's direction towards fewer newer schools, the school district has found it necessary to close schools to reduce surplus capacity. By June, 2012 the school district will find itself in the position of having 12 surplus properties. It is highly unlikely that these properties will be required again for school use as future enrollment growth can be accommodated through additions to existing operating schools.

The Board of Education has an important stewardship role respecting these valuable community assets as well a desire to maximize their revenue potential to support enriched educational opportunities for students within the North Vancouver School District. Accordingly, the Board requested development of a strategy that demonstrates how the varied interests are balanced while moving forward in a positive direction.

Overview

The community of North Vancouver is distinguished by high expectations for its public services, particularly public education. The desire for high-quality, diverse, personalized and enriched educational opportunities for students is widespread and challenges the School District to ensure that all its assets are managed to realize their full potential as resources, and possible revenue opportunities.

At the same time, the primary funding of school district operations is centralized provincially, and not supported by local taxation. This scenario places limitations on our ability to increase our funding to support local educational initiatives. Within this environment, however, there exist a number of revenue opportunities for school districts to improve their financial resiliency in order to best serve student needs.

When carefully managed, the real estate assets of the North Vancouver School District can strengthen its position as a provider of world-class educational programs and services. In balance, facilities rentals, short and long-term leases, and surplus land sales all offer potential for the School District to optimize its assets, increase revenues and better its financial ability to offer the rich diversity of programs and services expected by our community.

The disposition of School District land is a particularly controversial issue. It is important to ensure that the logic behind the consideration be sound and aligned with the value the community places upon a thriving public education system. As stewards of public funds, the School District must demonstrate that revenue from its asset management initiatives not only offers financial returns, but is in the best interests of students and the community over the long-term.



It should be noted that the benefits of repurposing land in the community goes beyond the school district. Releasing land for development creates new opportunities for community growth and revitalization. Urban space is a finite resource, and ensuring it is available to serve the highest and best use within the community is of value to all residents and taxpayers.

Time Frame

Implementation of this plan is targeted to be 5 years.

Guidelines

In planning for the future retention and disposition of surplus land, the North Vancouver School District will consider the following guiding principles:

1. Retain sufficient land to provide for long-term School District needs, including sufficient space to accommodate potential future enrolment growth that may arise from increased density.
2. Obtain maximum financial returns while pursuing creative, holistic solutions for broad-based community objectives of affordable housing, recreation, green space, childcare and other emerging community needs. We will do this with consideration of the Official Community Plans of the respective municipality.
3. Recognize that all School District properties are valued community assets, and we will consult with the community as part of our process to realize the maximum social, financial and environmental value of these assets.
4. Promote community and School District sustainability by actively encouraging environmentally friendly projects on school sites selected for redevelopment.
5. Give preference to proposals that support the Board of Education's Guiding Principles, where all other criteria have been met, for the lease/sale of properties.
6. Manage proceeds from land sales and leases to further enhance the student learning experience. We will do this, in part, by directing proceeds to support a significant endowment fund for the School District.
7. Direct proceeds and endowment funds, where necessary, to adequately fund capital projects that are not eligible for government funding.
8. Balance current and future needs by aligning our decision-making with our strategic plan and implementing options ranging from short, medium and long-term retention through to outright sale.



SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- High value assets in great demand
- Successful development at Lonsdale (i.e. track record in the community)
- 30 operating school sites plus 2 long term holds retains substantial land base for future education delivery and population growth
- Proactive stewardship of school district's most valuable tangible assets

Opportunities:

- Proceeds can be reinvested into infrastructure and local education initiatives
- Create endowment fund to provide continuing financial support to the school district (spend only investment income to ensure legacy)
- Use land to support community aspirations (rental housing, sports amenities)
- Option for long term (99 year) leases to retain land and minimize market discount

Threats:

- Public opposition to land disposition
- Fears that insufficient land remains for future growth
- NIMBY – neighbors may prefer to leave land as green space

Weaknesses:

- Achieving broad based support for disposition while maximizing revenue opportunities
- Deteriorating facilities without tenants become targets for vandalism and create cost and liability issues
- Lost opportunities for students if broad based support not achieved

Implementation

As of June 2012, the School District will have 12 surplus properties which have been reviewed through the context of need for and desirability as a future school site, whether sufficient information is available to make a decision and allows some flexibility for changing circumstances. Accordingly all sites are classified as short term, medium term or long term retention.

Long-Term Retention

Based upon current demographic information and trends, the school district believes it can accommodate potential future enrolment growth within existing operational schools or through additions to those schools. It should be recognized that the education delivery model of today that was built largely in the fifties and sixties requiring significant tracts of land will look different in the future. While that model is evolving, the Board has identified the need to retain several properties to address the inherent uncertainty of forecasting trends and to ensure some flexibility for new areas of growth as identified in municipal official community plans.



Lynn Valley and Lower Lynn are identified as Town Centers and Maplewood is identified as a Village Center in the District of North Vancouver's draft official community plan which supports the need to retain both Maplewood and Westover Schools for the long term. The Board has approved 10 year leases for Maplewood and Westover Schools.

Medium-Term Retention

Three schools; Balmoral, Fromme and Plymouth have been identified as having medium potential for retention as the facilities have a short term benefit for the school district or because further information is required. Balmoral is a secondary school that remains in use until June 2012 when the new campus at Carson Graham School is ready for occupancy.

Plymouth and Fromme Schools were closed in June 2010 and their facilities are in a reasonable condition making them good candidates for short term (5 – 10 year) leases. EFIV will be assuming occupancy of Fromme in March 2011 for 10 years. However, the Board has been unsuccessful in attracting a suitable tenant for Plymouth. The school district will continue to seek out options for reuse of this facility.

The schools identified in this category will need to be monitored as circumstances change and a shift in direction may be required.

Short Term Retention

Sites considered low priority for retention are those that have not been used as operational neighborhood schools for 20 or more years, have poor or deficient facilities that are small and operationally inefficient (less than 250 capacity), have poor utility as a school site and have a low probability of need for an enrolling school at the location for 75 years.

Lonsdale Creek Annex and Keith Lynn (Alternate) school meet all 5 of these criteria while Monteray, Ridgeway Annex and Cloverley meet 4 of the 5 criteria. Blueridge meets only 1 of the criteria at this time and its actual closure date is unknown as it is linked to the replacement of Seymour Heights Elementary School. The Lucas Centre/LMCC meets 3 of the 5 disposition criteria but will remain in operational use for the next 3 to 5 years until the Board has had an opportunity to address the permanent home for the alternative programs, Windsor House and a new location for the maintenance yards.

Lonsdale Creek Annex has been utilized as a daycare for over 35 years. The City of North Vancouver has expressed a strong desire for the Lonsdale Creek Daycare to continue operating on the site. Keith Lynn Alternate School will close in June 2012. The facility is in very poor condition making reuse or short term lease tenancy impracticable. Furthermore, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways has identified the need to acquire a portion of the property should the proposed Trans Canada Highway flyover be approved in future. This property may have potential for reuse as a shared works yard with the District of North Vancouver.



Monteray and Ridgeway Annex have poor utility as school sites as well as deficient facilities and because of their size (4 classrooms each) are operationally inefficient. According to the Ministry of Education area standards and confirmed by the Ministry Planning Officer these sites are not suitable for a school rebuild because the minimum site size is 1.5 hectares. Monteray is 1.17 hectares while Ridgeway Annex is only .6 hectares in size.

Measurement

Measurement indicators will be determined as the plan progresses.