

## KING COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL

**AGENDA TITLE:** Public School Siting Policy - Implementation

**PRESENTED BY:** Interjurisdictional Staff Team (IJT)

### **Topic for Discussion:**

Student enrollments at school districts in King County are rapidly increasing causing a push to build more schools and expand existing ones. The districts that have both urban and rural territory are focusing their efforts on building within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) consistent with King County Countywide Planning Policies. But, building in the UGA comes with significant challenges. Land sufficient for schools is scarce and the regulatory structure can pose barriers to building quality urban schools. What measures can the GMPC consider to facilitate the continued construction of schools within the UGA? This report is being presented in accordance with Countywide Planning Policy PF-19A (see below.)

### **Background**

Policies regarding school siting included in the 2012 Countywide Planning Policies direct schools to the UGA and set up an accountability system that requires school districts and local jurisdictions to meet and report on their findings. In adopting these policies, the GMPC recognized that siting schools in the UGA was a shared responsibility between the school district and the local jurisdiction. As noted in policy PF-19A, strategies to address include *“regulatory changes such as allowing schools to locate in additional zones or revised development standards.”*

**PF-18** Locate schools, institutions, and other community facilities and services that primarily serve urban populations within the Urban Growth Area, where they are accessible to the communities they serve, except as provided in Appendix 5 (March 31, 2012 School Siting Task Force Report). Locate these facilities in places that are well served by transit and pedestrian and bicycle networks.

**PF-19** Locate new schools and institutions primarily serving rural residents in neighboring cities and rural towns, except as provided in Appendix 5 (March 31, 2012 School Siting Task Force Report) and locate new community facilities and services that

primarily serve rural residents in neighboring cities and rural towns, with the limited exceptions when their use is dependent upon a rural location and their size and scale supports rural character.

Public school facilities to meet the needs of growing communities are an essential part of the public infrastructure. Coordination between each jurisdiction's land use plan and regulations and their respective school district[s] facility needs are essential for public school capacity needs to be met. The following policy applies countywide and requires engagement between each school district and each city that is served by the school district. The policy also applies to King County as a jurisdiction for areas of unincorporated King County that are within a school district's service boundary. The policy initiates a periodic procedure to identify if there are individual school district siting issues and if so, a process for the school district and jurisdiction to cooperatively prepare strategies for resolving the issue.

**PF-19A** Plan, through a cooperative process between jurisdictions and school districts, that public school facilities are available, to meet the needs of existing and projected residential development consistent with adopted comprehensive plan policies and growth forecasts. Cooperatively work with each school district located within the jurisdiction's boundaries to evaluate the school district's ability to site school facilities necessary to meet the school district's identified student capacity needs. Use school district capacity and enrollment data and the growth forecasts and development data of each jurisdiction located within the school district's service boundaries. By January 2016 and every two years thereafter, determine if there is development capacity and the supporting infrastructure to site the needed school facilities. If not, cooperatively prepare a strategy to address the capacity shortfall. Potential strategies may include:

- Shared public facilities such as play fields, parking areas and access drives
- School acquisition or lease of appropriate public lands
- Regulatory changes such as allowing schools to locate in additional zones or revised development standards
- School design standards that reduce land requirements (such as multi-story structures or reduced footprint) while still meeting programmatic needs

In 2017, and every two years thereafter, King County shall report to the GMPC on whether the goals of this policy are being met. The GMPC shall identify corrective actions as necessary to implement this policy.

### **Enrollment Growth and Bond Funding by the Numbers**

The rapid rise in enrollment combined with the recent passage of school district bond issues has magnified the need for more capacity now. This information comes directly from the districts' 2017 Capital Facilities Plans (CFP) (with some additional reference sources). Data is drawn from those school districts that include portions of unincorporated King County (as well as other jurisdictions) and prepare CFPs for adoption by King County (Auburn, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Fife, Highline, Issaquah,

Kent, Lake Washington, Northshore, Renton, Riverview, Snoqualmie Valley, and Tahoma).

**Enrollment Growth (using data from all 12 school districts identified above, (excluding Fife):**

- Average percentage of actual enrollment growth since 2011-12 school year: 6.91%
- Average percentage of projected enrollment growth over next six year period (through 2022-23 school year): 11.95%
- Notable stories:
  - Lake Washington SD has grown by 4,093 students (or 16.4%) in the last six years and expects an additional 4,307 students (or 14.8%) by 2022-23.
  - Northshore SD has grown by 1,945 students (or 10%) in the last six years and expects an additional 2,500 students (or 11.1%) by 2022-23.
  - Issaquah SD has grown by 2,434 students (or 14.2%) in last six years and expects to grow by an additional 1,986 students (10.1%) by 2022-23.
  - Snoqualmie Valley SD has grown by 634 students (or 10.6%) in last six years and expects to grow by an additional 1,004 students (15%) by 2022-23
  - Tahoma SD has grown by 785 students (or 10.7%) in last six years and expects to grow by an additional 1,202 students (or 14.9%) by 2022-23.

**Bond Funding:**

For those twelve school districts including portions of unincorporated King County:

**\$2.7B in funded bond projects since 2012**

- Does not include *proposed* November 2017 bonds (Federal Way School District: \$450M bond)
- Does not include funds from state school construction funding, capital levies, or impact fees --- all of which, in some way, are also funding portions of the bond projects.
- Does not include additional \$1.6B in funded bond projects in Bellevue, Mercer Island, Seattle (capital levy), Shoreline, Tukwila, and Vashon Island for the same time period.
- Comparison to previous years would likely be unhelpful due to inflation, increases in construction costs, changes in levels of state funding, impact fee funding, etc.

**Success Stories**

**Lake Washington School District - Middle School at Redmond Ridge**

Lake Washington School District planned to build a new middle school needed to serve students in the eastern part of the district on property land banked and located in the Rural Area. The School Siting Task Force asked the district to find an alternative site. The district scoured properties in the cities but couldn't locate an appropriate site. Then, working cooperatively with King County, the district identified a site in the business park of Redmond Ridge. King County facilitated an amendment to the Urban Planned Development development agreement to allow

construction of a middle school in the business park. The planned three-level school is currently in the early site work stage and is scheduled to be complete in 2019.

### **Tahoma School District – Tahoma High School in the City of Maple Valley**

The Tahoma School District planned the siting of its new comprehensive high school on district-owned property located adjacent to the Tahoma Jr. High School in the Rural Area along the Summit Landsburg Road approximately 0.5 mile east of Maple Valley city limits. The School Siting Task Force asked the school district to find an alternative site for the high school within the Urban Growth Area. The City of Maple Valley and King County worked with Tahoma School District to locate the school on 35 acres of surplus property owned by King County and within the city limits. The State Legislature appropriated \$4 million to assist the District with the purchase of the property from King County. The District required additional property for adequate parking and access to serve the new high school. The City of Maple Valley owned adjacent property held in reserve for future City park uses. The City, in exchange for compensation and certain parking easements benefiting the remaining City property, conveyed an eight acre portion of that adjacent land to the District. The City of Maple Valley approved Comprehensive Plan map amendments and zoning code amendments to permit construction of the high school on the site. The new high school is a multi-story building with fields and parking shared with the city.

### **Issaquah School District – Issaquah zoning code amendments**

The Issaquah School District needs to build four new schools under its currently funded bond program. The school district identified two potential properties within the City of Issaquah but the zoning regulations limited the district's ability to build the type of school necessary to meet its needs and allow construction on smaller properties. In addition, one of the sites is located in a recently annexed area (on property purchased recently by the City of Issaquah from King County) and required pre-annexation zoning to permit the siting of a school. Issaquah adopted pre-annexation zoning and zoning code amendments that will enable the district to utilize the properties for two of its needed schools. This is accomplished in part by the District repurposing its current administration center property for one of the two needed schools (a new middle school) and relocating an expanded administrative facility to a third site. The repurposing and relocation activities are possible only because of the zoning code amendments. The District still needs to reach agreement with the City of Issaquah for the purchase of the City-owned land but the parties are working together toward this end.

### **Challenges to Building Schools in the UGA**

Districts that have both urban and rural students as well as those districts that serve only urban students have similar challenges when building new schools or expanding existing schools within the UGA. These challenges include:

1. Lack of available developable land
2. Restrictive zoning code requirements for building new schools and expanding existing schools such as lot coverage and height limits

3. Need for waivers that must be approved case-by-case rather than being specified in zoning codes –because these must be done on a case-by-case basis, there is much greater uncertainty for school construction, especially when the waivers must be reviewed through a public hearing process.
4. Examples of challenges facing the districts:
  - a. Redmond – North Redmond Elementary School
  - b. Kirkland – height limits
  - c. Issaquah & Kirkland – locating available and developable school sites
  - d. Bellevue – locating a site for an elementary school downtown

### **Discussion:**

- What do school districts need from local government to be successful?
- How are school districts adjusting to the increasing cost of construction?
- Do the state guidelines on school construction affect how and where districts build their schools?
- The GMPC is not a regulatory body – what can the GMPC do to help advance the construction of schools in the UGA?
  - menu of strategies (PF-19A coordinated planning, school design, joint use/collocated schools, code amendments, facility sharing, other); cities and school districts using consistent growth projections; identification of changes needed at the state level.

### **Next Steps:**

- Provide guidance to staff to develop a GMPC resolution outlining best practices for review and permitting urban schools based on information presented today and forthcoming meetings between the school districts and the local jurisdictions.
- Instruct staff to continue with meetings with school districts and the cities in early 2018 in accordance with PF 19A.
- Express renewed commitment to cooperate with school districts to build urban schools – emphasize shared responsibility.