

Countywide Planning Policies

Best Practices for School Siting in the Urban Growth Area

Motion 18-1 GMPC Ordinance 18991 King County Council

This is the list of the ten ‘best practices’ recommended to be added to the Countywide Planning Policies. Bellevue staff have annotated them regarding how the city and school districts already do much of what is called for in the proposed recommendations.

1. Identify surplus public properties that could work as new school sites

The Bellevue School District has been working with a Growth and Planning Committee for the past 18 months. This committee was composed of teachers, administrators, parents and City staff from DSD. The purpose of this committee was to identify BSD needs along with prioritization based upon the following:

- General Education
- Special Needs
- Advanced Learning
- Operation and Administration
- Early Needs

With this evaluation, the BSD identified surplus properties that could be redeveloped and/or repurposed to support the noted programs above. All of this work has culminated in a committee recommendation to the Bellevue School Board on October 15, 2019, of a fourth bond measure in the amount of \$675 million as noted below:

2020 Bond Package Proposal - \$675 Million

- Interlake High School – Remodel and 60,000 sq. ft. addition to include classrooms, kitchen upgrade, parking, and activities space and storage.
- Newport High School – Remodel and 148,000 sq. ft. addition to include classrooms, commons area, athletic facilities, music facilities, and activities space and storage
- International School – Complete re-build 175,000 SF building
- Big Picture School – Complete re-build 135,000 SF building
- Jing Mei (Mandarin Dual) – Complete re-build 85,000 SF building
- Safety & Security – Building upgrades inside and out
- Operations and Administration – Consolidation of facilities and rebuild 135,000 SF creating space for other programs.
- Property acquisition

2. Assist with identifying private properties that could be available for new school sites.

The city has previously provided input to BSD on properties that could be suitable for schools.

3. Look for opportunities for shared use of buildings, fields, parking and other facilities between the city or county and the school district.

The Bellevue School District has a longstanding policy of allowing their buildings and fields to be used for other community events.

4. Consider options and zoning for mixed-use development that could accommodate a school.

School uses are permitted with either an Administrative Conditional Use or Conditional Use review process in all zoning districts in the City of Bellevue.

5. Investigate how regulations and processes can be modified to make challenging sites work for new, expanded, and renovated school facilities (such as: providing flexible application of development regulations for height restrictions, maximum lot coverage, and parking standards) and consider the feasibility of allowing playfields in the Rural Area adjacent to schools located in the UGA and with direct access from the UGA.

The Land Use Code provides for flexibility around height, allowing an additional 10' above the maximum allowed height of underlying zoning with an Administrative Conditional Use and with a Conditional Use application a school may be constructed up to 75 feet for programmatic elements such as gyms, libraries, STEM classrooms, and Performing Arts Centers (PACS). Sammamish High School is an example of this requirement as it was developed with a full fly loft for its PAC in support of the theatre program that is a district wide draw for students with this interest.

In regard to the environmental regulations of LUC 20.25H, the BSD is considered an essential public facility (EPF) based upon the state RCW. As an EPF, the BSD may modify associated buffers in order to locate a school. Historically, the BSD has reduced/minimized encroachments into these areas as they use the critical areas as learning experiences for their students.

Parking and off-site impacts are reviewed via a Transportation Impact Analysis that includes parking. Parking is reviewed through a parking study and analyses that is completed with the school district's participation.

6. Broaden the number of zone classifications within which schools are permitted to locate.

Allowed in all locations.

7. Coordinate the permit review process to improve certainty for school districts and to shorten the permitting process time (using priority permitting as appropriate).

Bellevue has worked to create a specific permitting path for school projects that include a consistent review team with specific timeframes and expectations from both the school district and the city. Submittal requirements are established for the 35% and 65% project stages to coordinate with permit requirements. We use a consistent "school team" of reviewers to facilitate the process. The permitting process time is generally faster than similar projects, but most importantly provides more predictability to the school district.

8. Implement a phased review of school development so the school site may be modified as needed over time and so portable facilities may be sited and/or replaced in an efficient manner.

Portables are permitted on school sites in Bellevue with a minor application.

9. Work with school districts, to establish site-specific Transportation Demand Management (TDM) protocols to encourage more walking, biking, and transit ridership to reduce the need for parking.

Our neighborhood services unit works closely with BSD to manage traffic at schools and encourage walking. Some programs include:

- School Pool carpool matching program
- “Walking school bus” event for elementary schools
- Participation in BSD’s Safe Walk Routes committee to establish and improve routes
- Partnering with BSD on improvement projects such as installing sidewalks and raised crosswalks

We have also required Transportation Management Plans for redeveloped and new school sites.

10. Partner with school districts in the planning and financing needed to improve, if appropriate based on topography and surrounding neighborhood characteristics, walking and biking routes to the school.

The City has used school location as a key criterion for non-motorized improvements in the past, provided there is still considerable work to do in a number of areas to build out the pedestrian and bicycle network. This work is intentional through the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan and through Vision Zero implementation.