



City Neighborhood Council

700 Fifth Ave, Suite 1700, PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

July 1, 2015

Mayor Ed Murray and Seattle City Council

City of Seattle

600 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104

VIA EMAIL

RE: Planning for Seattle's Growing Neighborhood Schools

Dear Mayor Murray and Seattle City Councilmembers:

The Seattle City Neighborhood Council (CNC), comprised of volunteer representatives from the 13 Neighborhood District Councils, is concerned about the future of our schools in Seattle. Over the past few years, the CNC has been engaged in discussions on how to align Seattle's Urban Planning process with the Facility Planning process of Seattle Public Schools. We realize this is not a new conversation and that similar dialogues have occurred throughout the city.

As you know, healthy neighborhood schools are the centerpiece of healthy neighborhoods. Therefore it seems reasonable the plan for school facilities, buildings and infrastructure would be better aligned with Seattle's urban planning. Seattle is growing in leaps in bounds and with that growth our schools in many neighborhoods are overcrowded and over-portabalized. Many of us and our neighbors are concerned about the future of our schools and the learning environments for our children when 6,000 students are currently in portable classrooms, playgrounds are shrinking, and classrooms are filled with as many as 34 children in some schools.

The City has grown by 7% in recent years, and many neighborhoods have steeply increased housing supply. While we know that much of the housing has been apartments and condos, there is "trickle down" development where young families who need schools are purchasing townhomes, single and multi-family homes in our neighborhoods. We are aware the State has mandated that classroom size be reduced for K-3 by 2017, and that 350 new classrooms (~20 buildings) will be needed. The steep growth in enrollment over the past 10 years in our schools and our growing neighborhood densities means that school building infrastructure needs are substantial.

This is a neighborhood urban planning challenge. We would like to support the process to invest in our neighborhoods and children and mitigate and the impacts of growth, development and neighborhood planning in the City on our public schools infrastructure. As the City's comprehensive planning process moves forward, we would like to more closely align the City's urban planning process with the facility planning process of the Seattle Public Schools. The CNC has identified several opportunities of potential partnership within existing processes and offer our engagement:

Engagement in Implementation of Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) Motion 15-1

The King County GMPC passed this motion in April, which "requires engagement between each school district and each city... [to] 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..." The CNC is very much interested in learning about the specifics of how this will be implemented in the coming months, and the specific touch points of engagement with the CNC and the wider community.

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School Facilities Funding

The CNC is aware of the School District's request for the consideration of growth management impact fees for school buildings. We are also aware of the current study of Developer Impact fees which has dedicated City funds specifically for School Facility Impact fees and would appreciate being kept apprised of the research of this study.

NEXT STEPS

As a starting point, we suggest a joint information gathering work session / meeting between the City, the District and the CNC and other entities you feel should be at the table. This meeting would help us all assess what processes and policies currently exist and discuss processes and resources that need to be employed to improve our partnerships and our planning for school facilities. We are also writing to Superintendent Nyland and the School Board with this request for a joint information gathering work session / meeting. We feel certain there are potentially many other areas where we can work together for the health of our public schools, and look forward to further conversations and partnership.

Attached is a copy of the presentation developed by the CNC Youth, Schools & Education Committee and presented at the CNC April 27 general meeting regarding this issue.

Thank you for your consideration of the points raised in this letter and we hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Laine Ross, Co-Chair
City Neighborhood Council



Catherine Weatbrook, Co-Chair
City Neighborhood Council

CC: Dr. Nyland, Superintendent Seattle Public Schools
Seattle Public Schools' Board of Directors
Holly Miller, Interim Director of Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning
Nathan Torgelson, Department of Planning & Development
Kathy Nyland, Acting Director, Department of Neighborhoods