

May 5, 2021

ITEM 4.1

TO: Facilities Planning Committee

FROM: J. David Green, Secretary-Treasurer
John Dawson, Director of Educational Planning
James de Hoop, Senior Manager of Planning

RE: Southern Portion of Sir Sandford Fleming school site – Surplus Declaration Consultation

Reference to Strategic Plan:

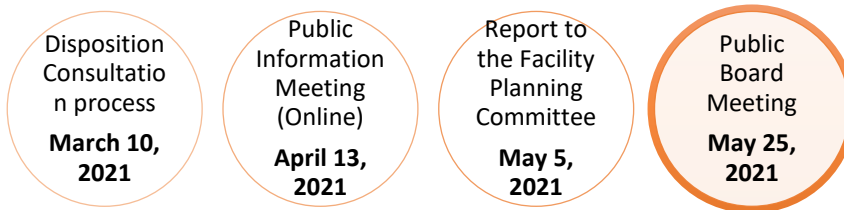
Goal 4: Provide effective leadership, governance and stewardship
Objectives: Effectively utilize school district resources and facilities
Support effective communication, engagement and community partnerships

INTRODUCTION:

This report provides information on the consultation engagement process and planning considerations prior to considering a declaration by the Board of Education that a portion of the Sir Sandford Fleming school site is surplus to future educational needs of the District, as per the following Public Board motion passed on February 22, 2021:

The Board of Education approve proceeding with the initial consultation process, as described in Policy 20: Disposal of Land and Improvements, to consider the potential declaration of the southern portion of the Fleming school site as surplus to the educational needs of the school district.

The timeline for declaration of the site as surplus to the District’s needs is detailed in the chart below:



The declaration of the site as surplus in the first phase is detailed in [Policy 20](#). The second phase of the policy, the actual disposal proposal, will only take place if the Board declares the site surplus. In

accordance with the timeline above that would require the Facilities Planning Committee making that recommendation to the Board and the Board passing a resolution at the May 25, 2021, public meeting.

Pursuant to the policy, staff conducted a community consultation process. The consultation process sought input from representatives of the Indigenous community, the education community, local government, community organizations as well as the public. The process included consideration of future enrolment growth, consideration of alternative community use, fair consideration of community input, and adequate opportunity for the community to respond to the potential disposition of the southern portion of the site should it be declared surplus by the Board of Education.

The report contains a recommendation.

BACKGROUND:

The original Sir Sanford Fleming Elementary School, built in 1912, was replaced with a building constructed to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold standard, providing a safe and healthy environment for students, staff and community members while significantly reducing annual operating and maintenance expenses. The replacement project was funded through a \$19.6 million investment in the Seismic Mitigation Program. The replacement school also includes a 69-space childcare center funded through a partnership of three entities. The VSB provided a grant in the form of the disposal of an airspace parcel to the City of Vancouver at a nominal lease rate. The City provided \$6.3 million, and the Province contributed \$500,000 through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The new Fleming school required the reconfiguration of the entire school site during the design and construction process. This has created an opportunity for the southern portion of the site to become available for re-purposing subject to Board and Ministerial approval.

RATIONALE FOR THE BOARD MOTION:

As part of the ongoing determination of best use of the District's facility assets and land, an option for the re-purposing or disposition of the southern portion of the Fleming school site is under evaluation. Preliminary research supports that the site has good potential to achieve community benefit while generating needed capital revenue to address Board of Education commitments, particularly safe buildings for students and staff. Internal research has confirmed the District's ownership of the entire Fleming site. A subdivision enquiry to the City has affirmed there are no barriers (utility infrastructure, transportation access, etc.) to the creation of a separate parcel of land through a subdivision.

Figure 1 – Proposed Fleming Site Sub-division and disposition



The land parcel identified for proposed subdivision is identified with a white dashed line in the overhead view and with a green boundary on the plan view diagram on the right.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – IMPLEMENTING POLICY 20

In accordance with Policy 20: Disposal of Land or Improvements, before consideration by the Board regarding the potential disposal of the property, an initial consultation to consider whether the property is surplus to the future educational needs of the school district must be concluded and the Board declares the property surplus to its needs.

An integral component of the consultation process as contemplated in the Board motion and in Policy 20 is to receive input from stakeholders and members of the community. The engagement process undertaken had three phases:

1. Online information sessions
2. Feedback survey
3. Report to Facilities Planning Committee

Online Information Sessions – April 13, 2021

On April 13, 2021, two online information sessions were livestreamed. The sessions were promoted through VSB social media channels, and on the District and Fleming school websites as well as directly by the Fleming school Administration to the school community. Calendar placeholder invitations were sent to Facilities Planning Committee stakeholders. Invitations were sent to representatives of the Indigenous

community, local government, community organizations, and organizations in the non-profit housing sector. Both sessions could be accessed by any member of the public using the link posted at [South Portion of the Fleming Site](#) project page. The first session was targeted to Facilities Planning Committee stakeholders; and the second session was targeted to members of the school community, the public and other local representatives noted above. During the online sessions, closed captioning services were available in several languages to provide access to all. A [list of invitees](#) is linked to this report.

The information sessions started with a staff presentation of information summarizing key elements of the potential disposition as well as considerations of future enrolment growth and alternate use of the site. The [PowerPoint](#) presented at the online information sessions is linked to this report. A representative of Urban Systems provided detailed information on potential disposition options should the Board declare the site surplus to its needs. Questions submitted by participants were reviewed by a moderator and published as they were responded to by staff.

Figure 2 – Information Session Details

Information Session	Number of Attendees	Number of Questions Submitted
Session 1 – 5:00 - 6:30 pm	29	56
Session 2 – 7:00 - 8:30 pm	22	11
Total	51	67

The [extract of questions submitted](#) is linked for review. A total of 67 questions and comments were submitted. During the online information sessions staff and the representative from Urban Systems responded to about 40 questions that were representative of the full spectrum of inquiry themes.

Figure 3 – Information Session Inquiry Themes

Question Theme	Number of Questions
Disposition Options – Lease vs Sale	15
Enrolment Forecasts	11
Expansion of Fleming School Facility	10
Disposition Process	10
Rationale for Disposition	10
Seismic Mitigation Program	6
Field Space	5
Disposition Case Studies/Examples	3
Alternative Funding Sources	3
Cannabis Retail Locations Nearby	1
Meeting organization	1
Alternative Options	1
Workforce housing	1
Request more funding from Ministry	1
How will revenue be spent?	1
Total	79

Many of the 67 questions submitted contained more than one theme. Question themes are disaggregated in Figure 3 above.

Feedback Survey

An online survey was open from April 13 to April 28, 2021, to provide an opportunity for further feedback from participants in the online information sessions, and anyone who could not attend the online sessions. The survey was promoted through the [District News](#) on the VSB website and social media channels. The online survey is integrated with Google Translate services.

Feedback Survey Results

The feedback survey had a total of 8 questions including two open ended questions. The [survey results](#) and [open ended question results analysis](#) are linked to this report.

Survey Respondents

A total of 205 survey responses were submitted and analyzed. Respondents identified which category they belonged to by selecting from a list of descriptors. The following three categories accounted for over 80% of all responses:

- Residents without children attending school (41%)
- Parents of children attending Fleming (21%)
- Students or parents of students attending another school (20%)

Just under one quarter of respondents attended a public information session. Of those who attended a public information session, 59% agreed or somewhat agreed that the information provided was helpful.

Future Educational Needs and Disposition Options

Seventy two percent of respondents disagreed with the statement 'The South Portion of the Fleming site is not required for the future educational needs of the District.' When asked about disposition options, 50% of survey respondents do not support a long-term lease or fee simple sale of the southern portion of the Fleming site. Respondents provided their thoughts about other disposition options including using the site as green space, park space or space for a community garden, short term leasing or rental for events, building affordable housing, building a building that generates revenue for the VSB, or building a daycare.

Of the 36% of respondents who do support either a long-term lease or fee simple sale, close to three out of 4 support the long-term lease option.

Fifty-six percent of respondents disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement 'I support using any proceeds from the disposition (long term lease or sale) of the South Portion of the Fleming site to fund VSB capital projects.....'

Open Ended Questions Response Themes

In the first open-ended question, survey respondents were invited to provide their response to the question – ‘What are your suggestions for the potential re-purposing of this portion of land at the south of the Sir Sandford Fleming school site?’ There were 173 responses to this question. Six themes emerged from the responses provided.

Figure 4 – Suggestions for the re-purposing of the southern portion of the Fleming site

Theme Rank	Thematic Description of Suggestions	*Percent of Responses
1	Retain green space for outdoor play and outdoor learning	39%
2	Build housing and/or mixed-use buildings on the site. Generate revenue, consider renting the space	20%
3	Add more programmed outdoor space for students (fields, basketball courts, tennis courts)	13%
4	Create a space that is designed to be used by the broader community eg. Land for community space, daycare, or pre-school	10%
5	Expand Fleming school or be ready to expand the school at some time in the future	10%
6	Leave space as is, do not declare this space surplus to the educational needs of the District	8%

*Rounded to nearest %

In the second open-ended question, survey respondents were invited to provide their response to the question – ‘Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about the proposed disposition of the Fleming site?’ There were 129 responses to this question. Ten themes emerged from the responses provided.

Figure 5 – Additional comments on proposal

Rank	Thematic Description	*Percent of Responses
1	Disposition options: do not sell public land, preference for lease, long-term thinking	34%
2	Process feedback: site selection (why Fleming?), how would disposition work, site is not surplus	17%
3	Funding: why does VSB need more funds, SMP funding, more funding from the MoE	14%
4	Fleming should be bigger: capacity should be added to Fleming	9%
5	Support proposed plan to declare surplus	6%
6	Concern about what would/could be developed	6%
7	Use of revenue: should go to Fleming school, should be used in area, use for SMP	4%
8	Support for adding a buffer at 49 th and Knight	3%
9	Alternative options: affordable housing, more condominiums, community centre	3%
10	Concern about equity	3%

*Rounded to nearest %

STAFF ANALYSIS

The feedback from the survey, particularly for the open-ended questions, provides various perspectives. Some of those perspectives expressed an opposing view regarding the possible disposal of the site. Others expressed support for declaring the southern portion of the Fleming site surplus to the future needs of the District. There were several suggestions on how the site could be repurposed and many of those would require the disposition to take place. Before any disposition could occur, the Board would have to declare the site surplus to its needs. There was support for action that would benefit the Fleming community and the District, although with respect to the Fleming community only 21% of the survey respondents identified themselves as members of the school community.

In isolation, the survey does not overall create a convincing case for the Board to consider declaring the site surplus to its needs to undertake a future disposition. Having said that, staff does believe there are still compelling reasons for the southern portion of the Fleming site to be declared surplus to the educational needs of the District as a potential disposition would provide a long-term benefit to the Fleming school community and the broader VSB community. The rationale for that view is presented below.

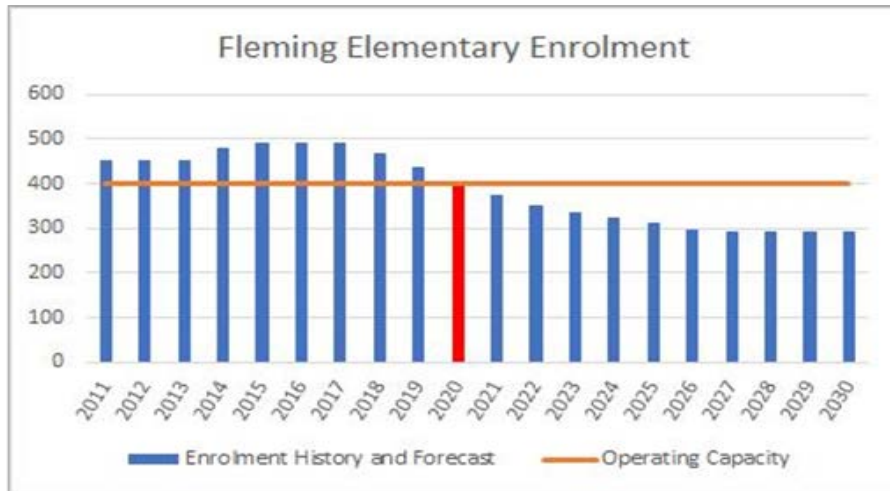
Rationale for Declaring Southern Portion of the Fleming Site as Surplus

Enrolment and Capacity

The new replacement school provides a modern, safe, and welcoming environment for the entire school community. The current and future educational programming needs of District are met by the availability of this new facility. Enrolment decline at Fleming and in schools in the David Thompson family of schools is forecast. The new replacement school will be the only permanent building on the Fleming site. Therefore, declaration of the southern portion of the Fleming site as surplus to the educational needs of the District will have no impact on the ability of the District to accommodate future enrolment needs.

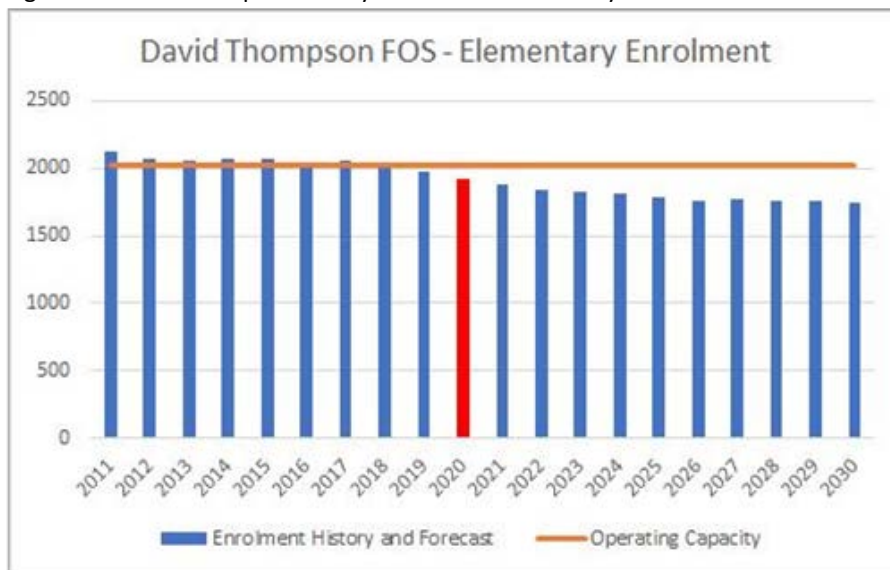
Enrolment at Fleming has been declining since 2017 with 91 fewer students in 2020 than in 2017. Enrolment at Fleming is forecast to continue declining in coming years which is consistent with other leading demographic indicators for the catchment.

Figure 6 - Fleming Elementary Enrolment History and Forecast



Fleming Elementary School is part of the David Thompson family of schools which also includes Douglas, Douglas Annex, Oppenheimer, Tecumseh, and Tecumseh Annex. The total operating capacity for the David Thompson Family of Schools is 2021 students. There is sufficient capacity at Fleming and within the David Thompson Family of Schools to accommodate forecast catchment enrolment demand. There is sufficient surplus capacity to accommodate enrolment demand that exceeds current projections.

Figure 7 - David Thompson Family of Schools Elementary Enrolment



Outdoor Space

Consideration of the availability and quality of outdoor play space is not referenced in policy 20 however, it is an important consideration for this process. Without the southern portion of the site, the Fleming site will be 1.65 hectares, which is larger than 36 other VSB elementary schools. The location of the parking lot entry and parking lot will isolate the southern portion of the Fleming site from the remainder of the play space creating a potential safety hazard and making this area challenging to supervise.

Capital Revenue Generation

The availability of the capital revenue generated through the disposition of the southern portion of the site could further enhance the site landscaping, noise mitigation, and improve the quality of the play space. The presence of a building or buildings on the southern end of the Fleming site would provide a sound barrier that could also improve the quality and safety of the remaining outdoor play space.

Policy 20 provides for the disposition of a portion of a school site by either a fee simple sale or a long-term lease. At the online information sessions questions about the disposition options were a dominant theme. The feedback survey provided an opportunity for further input and analysis of public sentiment with respect to the two disposition options. Where support exists for disposition, the long-term leasing option is heavily favored over fee simple sale. Concern about an unanticipated future requirement for the southern portion of the Fleming site is an overarching theme that has emerged. A long-term leasing option is consistent with the land management strategy used by the City of Vancouver and would facilitate the potential to generate capital revenue at fair market value for the Board.

Long-term Community Benefits

The surplus declaration of the Southern portion of the Fleming site followed by its disposition exemplifies the long-term commitment by the VSB to enhance the District and the City of Vancouver through the provision of modern, safe, and healthy public amenities in the form of schools. The availability of capital revenue will enable the Board to leverage funding available from the Ministry to enhance current projects in the seismic mitigation program and future projects in the Boards Five-Year Capital Plan which will serve current and many future generations of VSB students. Specifically, capital funds could be used to close the funding gap between Ministry funding of the 'least cost option,' which is the mandate of the seismic mitigation program, and the funding required to achieve an outcome preferred by the school community and the Board. Preferred outcomes could include:

- Building new replacement schools where the 'least cost option' is a seismic upgrade or partial replacement.
- Retaining existing capacity in new replacement schools.
- Coordinating the timing of funding available through the seismic mitigation program with the availability of additional funding for expansion.
- Reducing deferred maintenance by building new replacement schools with lower life cycle costs, or using the opportunity provided during a seismic upgrade to replace legacy infrastructure systems and make other building or site upgrades.

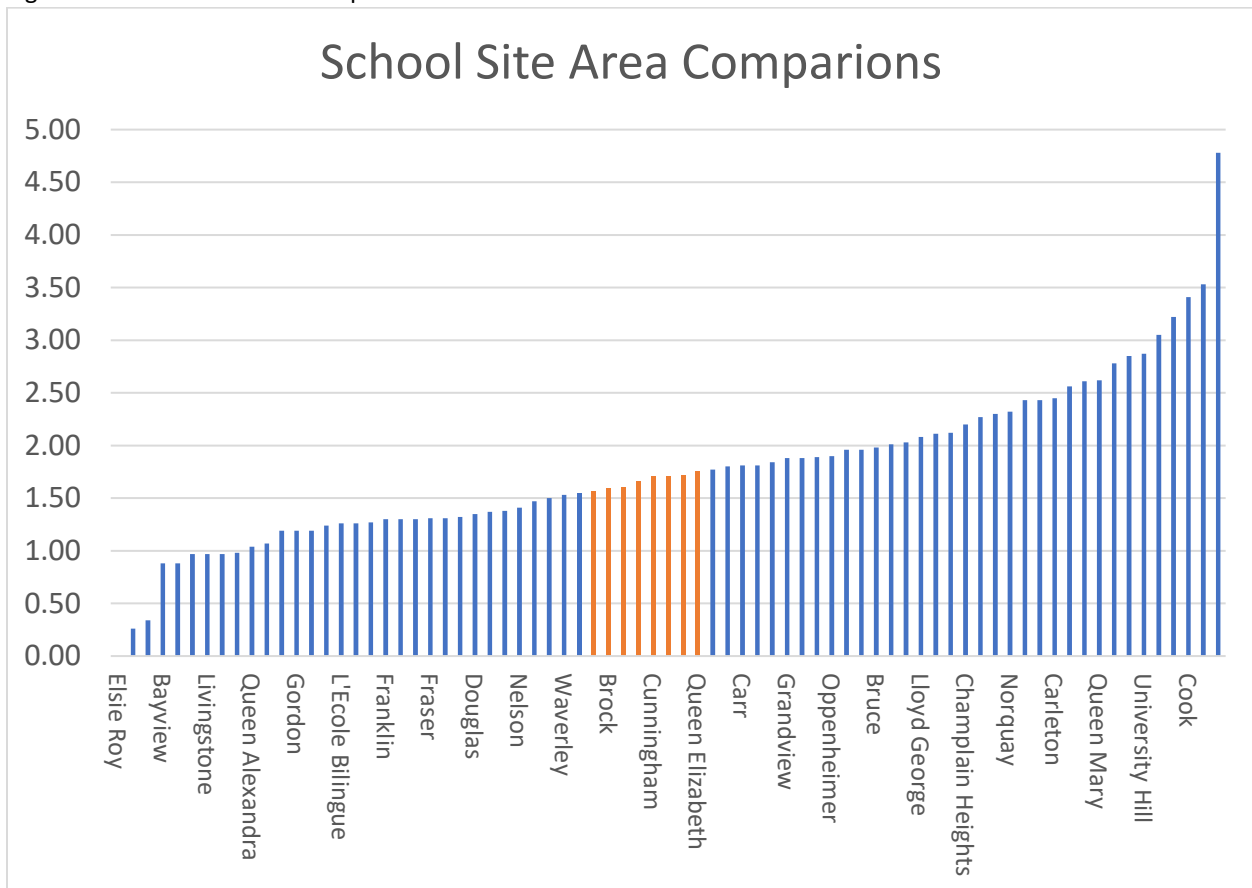
FLEMING SITE CONSIDERATIONS

This section of the report is meant to provide additional information about the Fleming site and hopefully addresses questions that Trustees many have.

Site Area

Elementary school site size varies widely in the District. Crosstown is the smallest school site at 0.26 hectares, while Norma Rose Point is the largest at 4.78 hectares. The District-wide average is 1.80 hectares. The Fleming school site has a total area of 1.89 hectares. The southern portion, which has been identified for consideration as being surplus to the educational needs of the District and possible disposition, encompasses 0.24 hectares. Without the southern portion of the site, the remaining Fleming site is 1.65 hectares.

Figure 8 – School Site Area Comparisons



Schools indicated in orange have site areas between 1.55 and 1.75 hectares. Without its southern portion, the Fleming site would be larger than 36 other VSB elementary sites. At 1.89 hectares the Fleming site is currently larger than 48 other VSB elementary sites.

Figure 9 - Other schools with similar sized sites

School Name	Site Area	2020-21 Enrolment
Henderson	1.56	460
Brock	1.59	242
McKechnie	1.60	266
Mount Pleasant	1.66	251
Cunningham	1.71	335
Maple Grove	1.71	502
Selkirk	1.72	633
Queen Elizabeth	1.75	289

The Ministry of Education Area Standards provides guidance on school playfield area and school site area for schools that are to be newly constructed or enlarged. The playfield area indicated for elementary schools with a capacity of 175 to 600 students is 1.0 hectares. The total site area indicated for an elementary school of 400 is 2.3 hectares.

Research on Outdoor Play Space

Staff conducted a review of research on outdoor play space. The attributes of high quality and effective play space for children are described in the following research-based summary statements:

- **Function:** playgrounds should encourage physical activity, social interaction, creativity, and problem solving as well as contact and interaction with nature.
- **Form:** play spaces design should support functions and features that; include natural elements (e.g., sand, water); encourage interaction and socialization; are accessible regardless of demographics and backgrounds; have pleasing aesthetics; include space for active place; provide risk and challenge; are safe and free of hazards.

Another inquiry topic of research is the question of whether more play space makes better play space.

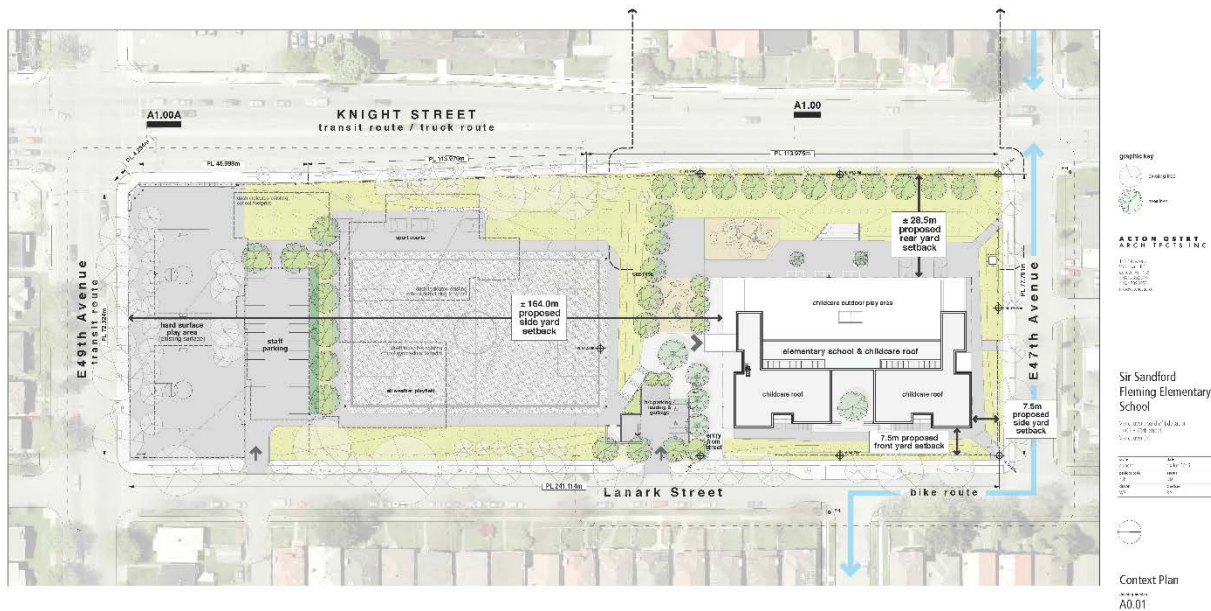
- According to some researchers, the biggest challenge in increasing children’s inactivity might not be about sizes of play spaces, but more about certain practices and policies; decreasing(ed) allocated recess and lunchtime, inaccessible playgrounds, overly man-made playground facilities, intervention of adults, lack of diversity in playground-based programs, or lack of adventurous facilities.
- Better design and availability of unconventional equipment are more important than larger size play spaces.
- “We do not expect a young child to read a difficult novel, but we expect children to play in an adult-sized soccer or basketball field. By playing on a smaller surface, all children are more engaged in actual play with increased interactions and can have much more fun; to an 8-year-old, 50 yards feels like a 100. When children play in an adult-sized space, they are playing on a surface that is at least twice as big as what they can handle. For example, smaller kids are not dominated by larger ones and all children will have more chances to practice passing or dribbling.” – Active for Life - Canadian non-profit advocacy organization

Noise Pollution and Sound Mitigation

The Fleming site is located on the Northeast corner of Knight Street and 49th Avenue, oriented lengthwise along Knight Street. Both streets are busy arterial roads, and transit corridors. Knight Street is also a truck route leading into and out of Vancouver. The mitigation of noise pollution has been an important design consideration for the Fleming replacement project and addressed in the following ways:

- The new school is in the Northeast corner of the site, as far as is distant from the intersection of 49th Avenue and Knight Street.
- The grade for the new school was lowered as a noise mitigation measure.
- The classrooms in the new school are located on the east side of the school, opposite and distant from Knight Street.
- A berm with trees planted at its crest is situated along the Knight Street side of the site.
- A sound barrier along the east side of the site which was part of the original noise mitigation strategy has not been installed due to cost constraints for the project.
- Landscaping at the southern end of the all-weather play field.

Figure 10 – Post Demolition Site Plan



Traffic Safety Concerns

There is a perennial concern in the Fleming school community about the physical safety of children playing in the site proximate to the intersection of 49th Avenue and Knight Street in the event of a traffic incident spilling into the school yard. Concrete barricades have been installed at the edge of the sidewalk at the intersection as a mitigation measure.

Staff Parking

The entry to the staff parking lot is located opposite to the laneway entering Lanark Street to the East of the school. This location for the entry way was required by the City of Vancouver to enhance traffic safety and traffic flow management along Lanark Street. The future location of the staff parking lot and the presence of the gravel field will isolate the southern end of the Fleming site, physically and visually from the rest of the site.

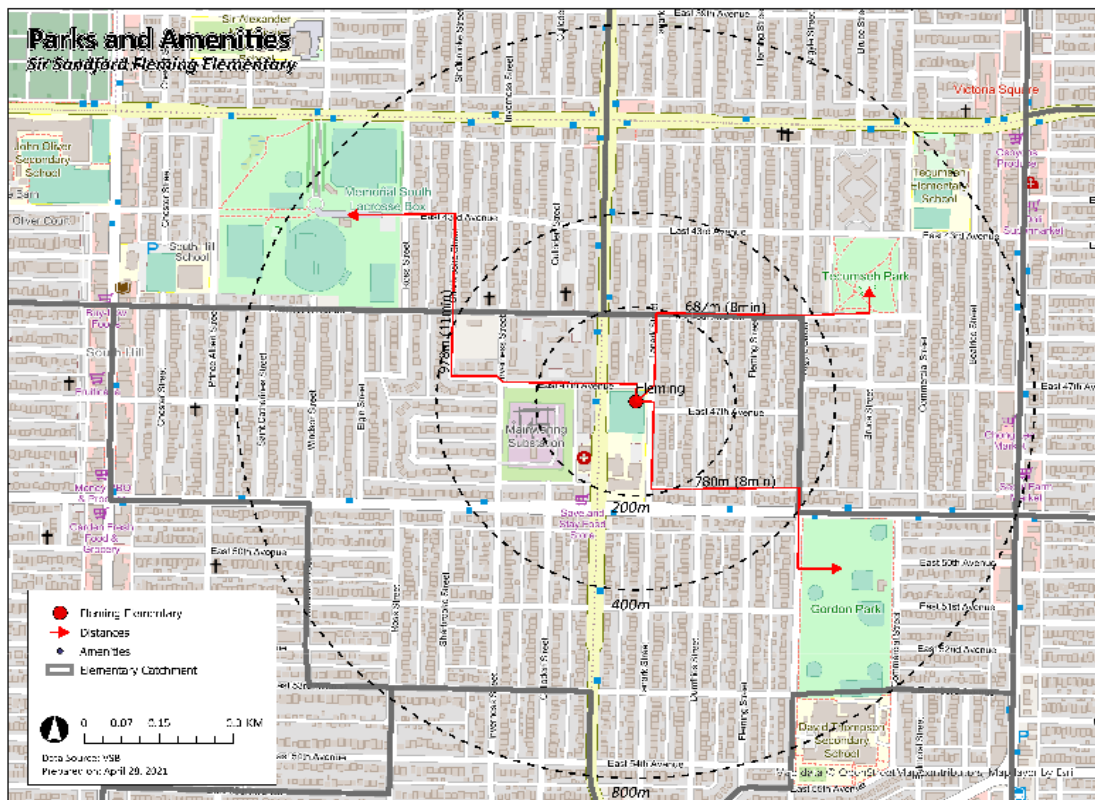
Nearby Parks

Some VSB school sites are located adjacent to city parks. Fleming has three nearby parks within walking distance of the school.

Figure 11 - City Parks near Fleming

Park Name	Walking Distance	Walk Time (Approx.)
Tecumseh Park	687 m	8 Minutes
Gordon Park	780 m	8 Minutes
Memorial Park	978 m	11 Minutes

Figure 12 – Map showing location of parks near Fleming



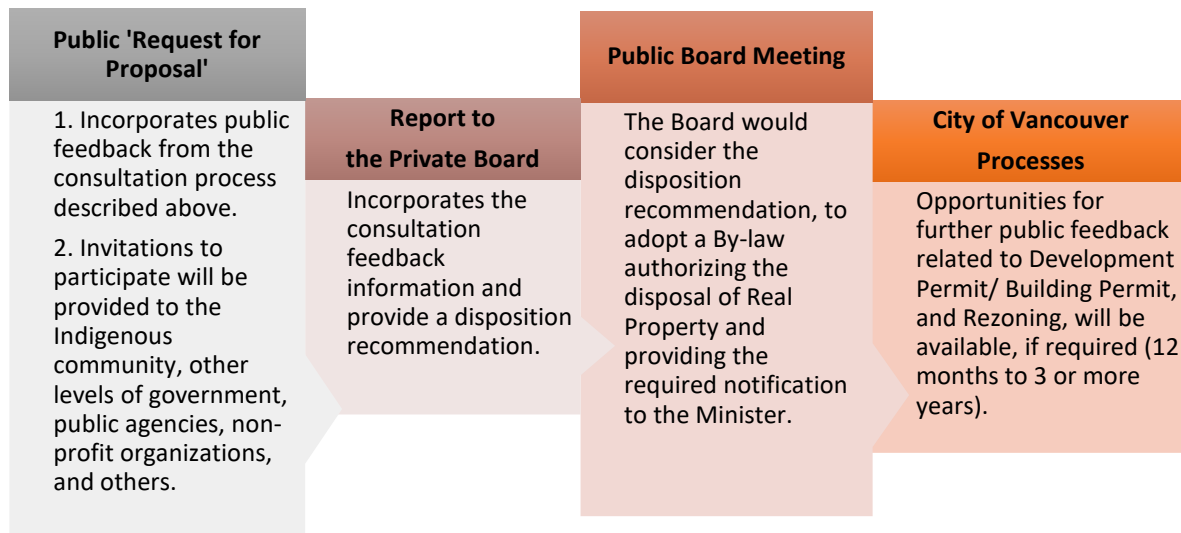
DISPOSITION PROCESS – IMPLEMENTING POLICY 20 PHASE 2

As mentioned above, the implementation of Board Policy 20 has two phases:

Phase 1- Consideration of declaration of the southern portion of the Fleming site as surplus to the future educational needs of the School District. If the Board passes a resolution declaring the southern portion of the Fleming Site surplus to the needs of the school district and authorizes staff to proceed with the disposition process, then phase two of the process would begin.

Phase 2 – Site Disposition Process

The estimated timeframe for the site disposition process set out below is 3 to 6 months.



SUMMARY

This report details the first phase of the implementation of Policy 20 – Disposition of Land and Improvements following the March 10 staff report to the Facilities Planning Committee. The two online information sessions offered on April 13, 2020 were attended by a total of 51 participants. Between April 13 and April 28, the District gathered feedback using an online survey, 205 completed surveys were submitted. Public response indicates some opposition to the declaration of the Southern portion of the Fleming site as surplus to the educational programming needs of the District. Survey respondents indicated some support for the using of capital revenue generated through disposition to enhance funding to VSB capital priorities.

Staff analysis and research supports the declaration of the site as surplus to the educational needs of the District and proceeding with the disposition process. The Southern portion of the Fleming site is physically and visually isolated from the remaining play space and is located at the intersection of two busy arterial routes. Both factors present safety concerns that would be mitigated by the disposition of the site. Disposition through a long-term lease would retain the site for future long-term needs while generating

capital revenue that would be used to support the Board’s commitment to building modern, safe, and healthy schools for staff and students. The availability of the site would provide land that could be used for the development of rental housing to serve the needs of the broader community and local workforce. Some of the proceeds of disposition could be used to enhance the quality of the outdoor play space by installing sound barriers along Knight Street and providing capital to fund other ideas emerging from the school community.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

That the Board of Education declare the Southern Portion of the Fleming school site surplus to the educational needs of the District and authorizes staff to proceed with the disposition process as per Board Policy 20.

Attachments:

1. [List of invitees to information sessions](#)
2. [PowerPoint presentation for information sessions](#)
3. [Extract of questions submitted during information sessions](#)
4. [Survey Results](#)
5. [Thematic analysis of open-survey question responses](#)