

**DATE:** September 7, 2021

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Update on *Joint Use Agreement (JUA)* Negotiations with the City of Edmonton

**ORIGINATOR:** Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent, Operations and Learning Services

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Roland Labbe, Christopher Wright

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## ISSUE

The Edmonton Public School Board has expressed an interest in having a clear articulation of acceptable uses for surplus school sites in the upcoming review of the JUA: Land Agreement.

## BACKGROUND

The ability to build strong schools and strong communities is of shared interest to both the City of Edmonton and the three education signatories of the Joint Use Agreement (JUA) (Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord). Recently, both City councilors and school trustees have highlighted a need for clear articulation as to appropriate purposes for public land.

The conversation can be traced back to 2008 when the City of Edmonton initiated a discussion about the future use of vacant school sites (reserve lands) declared as surplus to publicly funded school authority needs. Through an engagement effort with the province, the City of Calgary, the City of Edmonton and the Metro school jurisdictions, an understanding related to acceptable uses was reached. Community Services Reserve (CSR) was created within a *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) amendment to give municipalities options relating to the suitable use of vacant school sites (reserve lands) declared as surplus to publicly funded school authority needs.

A Community Service Reserve (CSR) designated site may be used for any of the following:

- a public library
- a police station, fire station or an ambulance services facility
- a non-profit day care facility
- a non-profit senior citizen facility
- a non-profit special needs facility
- a municipal facility providing direct service to the public
- affordable housing

## CURRENT SITUATION

Discussions regarding potential revisions to the current JUA: Land Agreement, executed in July 2009, are expected to commence in the near future.

Our Board and school boards across Alberta have taken strong positions that public funds must be provided to publicly funded schools. Similarly, public lands that were set aside for schools, close to green

spaces, parks and amenities, should be preserved for uses that strengthen the public interest and the objectives within the City Plan, rather than weaken them. We see great alignment with the vision of the City Plan. Surplus school sites could contribute to revitalizing existing publicly funded schools by welcoming more families within affordable housing developments in established neighbourhoods, and adding recreation amenities: trees, green spaces or dozens of other purposes that could help all of us build strong schools and strong communities.

In the recent past, a site formerly reserved for a future school was sold by the City to a private school. Based on Board input, Administration will make the Board's position on appropriate uses for surplus school sites clear during upcoming discussions related to potential revisions to the JUA: Land Agreement. Should the JUA: Land Agreement prove not to be the most appropriate tool to facilitate the conversation, Administration will seek a commitment from the City regarding a manner through which a concise articulation of appropriate uses for surplus school sites can be captured.

We could, as Mayor Iveson suggested at the Executive Committee on January 18<sup>th</sup>, look at public land through a shared vision of affordable housing, parks, green space and public assets, consistent with the CSR designation established within the MGA. Even a non-developmental purpose such as an urban forest or green space to assist with cleaning our air and meeting climate objectives is preferred to having the land sold to a private entity that precludes its use by the public.

#### KEY POINTS

1. The Division is committed to the spirit of the Joint Use Agreement.
2. Discussions regarding potential revisions to the current JUA: Land Agreement, executed in July 2009, are expected to commence in the near future.
3. A clearly articulated plan is desired to limit the use of surplus school sites to those desired uses outlined by the Board of Trustees.

CW:km