

SCHOOL SITING POLICY

It is the policy of Mead School District No. 354 (the “District”) that school siting determinations will support the overall needs of students, their families, and the broader community. “School siting determinations” include decisions about selecting new school locations; maintaining, renovating, or expanding existing schools; and closing or consolidating existing schools.

The District acknowledges the importance of school locations for children and the entire community. Schools can serve as centers of the community, as neighborhood anchors, and even as emergency centers. Locating schools near residential neighborhoods and in central locations has important benefits for students’ health, allowing students to use school grounds for play and physical activity when school is not in session, enabling students to walk or bicycle to school, and making it possible for families to be more easily involved in school activities. Finally, school location can assist in advancing student health and academic achievement by providing diverse schools that avoid concentrating poverty in any one school.

Therefore, the District adopts the following Goals and Policies to influence and inform its school siting decisions. There is no hierarchy among the Goals and Policies, which are intended to be weighed accordingly to achieve the District’s objectives in arriving at a balanced final school siting determination. The Goals are intended to assist the District with general planning and forecasting decisions leading it to desired long term intended outcomes. Whereas, the Policies are specific enough to help determine whether a proposed school siting decision would advance the values expressed in the goals.

1. **Goals.** The District should work towards the furtherance of the following goals:
 - A. **Collaborative and Participatory Planning.** Work toward meaningful coordinated planning with Spokane County and/or the City of Spokane and regional agencies, with the goal of sharing data, addressing joint needs regarding school locations, ensuring due consideration of environment impact and other siting factors, avoiding hazardous locations, and encouraging residential and mixed-income residential development near school sites. Provide a substantial role for public input into short-term and long-term school facilities planning in order to ensure community buy-in and achieve better results.
 - B. **Long-Term Data-Driven Planning.** Engage in long-term planning, based on data including current and projected future student enrollment, demographics, residential density of children in new and existing developments, anticipated developments, student transportation costs and trends, demographic data, hazardous facility location, and quantification of costs and benefits.
 - C. **Full-Cost Accounting.** Consider all costs and benefits of different options, not only the cost of construction and land acquisition, but also the cost of required

street and utility infrastructure, transportation to the site, disposal of closed facilities, remediation of site hazards, and so on. For each option, assess both quantifiable and unquantifiable costs and benefits, including health effects, and assess costs and benefits not only for the school district, but also for students, families, staff, local jurisdictions, and the community as a whole. Balance costs and benefits with other siting goals.

- D. **Co-Location and Shared Use.** Consider making it feasible for students and the larger community to share resources (e.g., libraries, gymnasiums, parks, fields) by locating facilities near to each other, and, where desired, through more formal intergovernmental contracts or joint use agreements spelling out how use and responsibility will be shared.
- E. **Prioritization of Renovation.** Where feasible, consider renovating existing school facilities before building new facilities.
- F. **Diverse, Walkable Schools through School Siting and Assignment Policies.** Work toward developing schools that allow students, families, and staff to walk, bicycle, and take public transportation; provide the community with easy access to school facilities; and provide students with the long-term academic and social benefits of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity by:
 - (i) Providing schools in locations that balance walkability and diversity; and
 - (ii) Designing school attendance zones and school assignment policies to support walkability and diversity.
- G. **Equity in School Facilities.** In weighing determinations about school construction, closures, and rehabilitation, consider equity of school facilities to avoid providing some students with a learning environment that is inferior to that provided to others.
 - (i) Take steps to ensure that inferior facilities do not disproportionately house students of color or lower-income students.
 - (ii) Evaluate impact of school siting determinations on students and communities from an equity standpoint, including assessing whether some groups of students bear a greater burden of lengthy trips to and from school.
 - (iii) Consider facility and transportation equity for students and families with disabilities.
- H. **Consideration of Health Impacts.** Consider all health impacts of proposed sites (either through a health impact assessment or another methodical analysis of health impacts), including the location's supportiveness and safety for physical activity; air pollution and asthma levels; past or present toxic contamination of site or nearby areas; and nearby sources of pollution or toxic contaminants, such as highways, industrial facilities, or pesticide applications.
- I. **Safe Infrastructure for Walking, Bicycling, and Public Transportation in School Vicinity.** Improve the safety and convenience of travel by foot, bike,

and public transportation near schools and on school property by providing safe infrastructure:

- (i) Work with Spokane County and/or the City of Spokane to ensure that the areas surrounding schools allow students to safely travel to school through different modes of transportation.
- (ii) Ensure that site design safely accommodates students arriving and departing by all modes of transportation, including walking, bicycling, public transportation, school bus, and private vehicles: prioritize safe access for children who are bicycling or walking (including those walking after drop-offs from cars or buses).

2. **Policies.** In light of the above-referenced Goals, specific school siting determinations shall analyze:

- A. The following priority order of available sites:
 - (1) Sites inside the urban growth area; then
 - (2) Sites inside an existing rural activity center; then
 - (3) Site adjacent to an urban growth area; then
 - (4) Sites adjacent to a rural activity center; then
 - (5) Sites elsewhere in the rural areas.
- B. Any challenges and/or opportunities of acquiring adequate school sites within the urban growth boundary.
- C. Any issues with siting schools in rural areas (e.g. extension of utilities pursuant to RCW 36.70A.213, bussing implications etc.).
- D. Present and potential capacity and service area needs in areas with urban and rural student populations.
- E. Whether the property upon which the school facility is or will be located is free of all encumbrances that would detrimentally interfere with the construction, operation, and useful life of the facility.
- F. Whether the site is of sufficient size to meet the needs of the facility, including any necessary recreational amenities. The District should ensure that: (a) the health and safety of the students will not be in jeopardy; (b) the internal spaces within the proposed facility will be adequate for the proposed educational program; (c) the neighborhood in which the school facility is or will be situated will not be detrimentally impacted by lack of parking for students, employees, and the public; and (d) the physical education and recreational program requirements will be met.
- G. A site review or predesign conference should be conducted with all appropriate local code agencies in order to determine design constraints.
- H. A geotechnical engineer should conduct a limited subsurface investigation to gather basic information regarding potential foundation and subgrade performance.

- I. If public transit is available in the attendance area of a new high school, consider locating new high schools within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of an existing transit route, and design the site to facilitate transit use.

Adopted: June 10, 2019