

## BDR3 Questions & Answers

Budget Deficit Reduction (BDR3) is a school restructuring plan passed by the Board of Education that reduces operational and facility costs as a short-term solution for financial reform. The City is collaborating with the School Board to ensure that the plans are safe, appropriate, and in compliance with City ordinances. To address community concerns, the City has put together the following list of common questions and answers:

### **What charges are being proposed by BDR3?**

Under BDR3, the District is planning to close Ravinia, Green Bay, Elm Place, and Lincoln Schools at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school years. The number of students that would attend Edgewood Middle School would increase to 800 students.

### **What is the City's general assessment of the plan?**

The City strongly recommends that the District update its independent traffic study, issue comprehensive communications, host neighborhood meetings to share proposed plans and invite feedback, as well as prepare a landscape plan to mitigate the impact of any proposed roadway modifications on the property from the neighbors. All of these processes should be conducted in advance of proceeding through the City's formal planning process.

### **What are the City's recommendations for plans at Edgewood Middle School?**

A school is a permitted land use in the R5 district within which Edgewood Middle School is located; however, the proposed changes trigger a Design Review consideration before the City's Plan & Design Commission. The District may also want to consider applying for a subdivision to consolidate all parcels into one lot which could ease future development.

A security vestibule does not currently exist within the school. The City recommends that one be built and that improvements to the District's security plan and any enhancements to security be reviewed with the Highland Park Police and Fire Departments.

The District should provide a current property survey that identifies setbacks related to the school and the proposed new ring road from adjacent property lines. The R5 District has a 40-foot required front yard. It's unclear whether the school building currently meets this requirement.

It appears that the existing school property has off-street parking within the required front yard. This is prohibited by current code. If this, or any other, non-conforming aspect is

being expanded, then relief may be required. We will be able to make a final determination after reviewing a complete Design Review application.

It is understood that no exterior building modifications are proposed.

### **What are the City's recommendations regarding traffic impacts?**

The District's 2015 Traffic Study should be updated to reflect the proposed two-lane, one-way ring/loop road around the school with access off Edgewood Road. The Traffic Study should identify if this is the optimal ingress/egress option to mitigate traffic and safety issues and impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. It is understood that the 2015 Study was prepared with recommendations to accommodate up to 1000 students.

It is recommended that the District review and consider improvements to the intersection at Green Bay and Edgewood. The City is scheduled to improve the subject intersection in 2019/2020 and could coordinate with the District at that time to provide economies of scale of both projects.

A review of the traffic signals timing at Green Bay and Edgewood, and review the signals north and south for enhanced traffic flow is recommended. The traffic report should identify the level of service, existing and proposed, at this intersection for both morning and afternoon peak hours (school release time).

Traffic aides should be used to help manage traffic flow to and from the school during peak periods. The Police Department can assist and provide training to the traffic aides, although the City cannot employ these individuals.

The bus queue lane should be reconstructed to accommodate additional buses.

It is understood that staggered start times would be problematic to implement due to the number of buses that are necessary to transport students. Therefore, it is recommended that the District explore incentives to increase bus ridership to the national average thereby improving traffic congestion.

The City recommends improving pedestrian connectivity north of the school.

### **What is recommended for emergency access preparedness?**

The school is currently accessible by one roadway; a secondary access point is recommended. An emergency access drive could be considered with a breakaway bar to reinforce the access for public safety vehicles only. The drive could be constructed of grasscrete or similar structure to further reinforce use of the road for emergency purposes.

The Fire Lane should be reviewed and should be capable of withstanding a 75,000 pound load. Stacking drive lanes cannot impede the fire lane. This should be considered as part of an updated traffic study.

The District's Architect should furnish all appropriate maximum occupancy loads for the building.

### **What is recommended for landscaping improvements?**

The District should prepare a tree inventory plan, in accordance with City's Tree Preservation Ordinance, that identifies the amount and type of landscaping that would be removed from the property to accommodate the looped roadway.

The draft landscape plan should provide for equal to or greater landscape buffer from the school to the residential neighborhood to the north and east of the school. The internal circulation road is considered a drive aisle within the property and thus a "Vehicular Use Area." As such, it needs to have a landscape buffer of at least five feet in depth from abutting residential property lines and a screening fence.

The District should consider the lights from vehicles impacting the abutting homes if the landscaping around the perimeter is not sufficiently addressed.

### **What are the considerations for engineering plans?**

The City requires that storm water management plans will need to be submitted for review. Any on-site storm water management facilities may require additional buffering and screening.

The District's engineer should review if the sanitary sewer (8" main) and water main (12" main) can accommodate the increased student population. A report needs to be submitted to ensure existing public infrastructure can handle the increased demand.

A net impervious surface area of 16,000 sq ft would require detention. With approximately 39,000 sq ft of roadway construction and with no existing storm water management systems on site, the engineering plan should account for detention.

### **How far along is the City's review process?**

It is understood that the District is striving to have the roadway bid by March and contracted before the end of the school year. The City staff's preliminary review is that the plan cannot be accomplished, as the significant work effort detailed herein is needed prior to proceeding through the City's approval process. Following the revised traffic study, neighborhood meetings, and application submission, the City staff, City Plan & Design Commission, City Transportation Commission and City Council would need to review and

approve any planned construction. This process, at a minimum, would take approximately six months prior to the bid and contracting process.

The Plan & Design Commission has final decision-making authority for design review applications. Depending on a final determination regarding zoning compliance, City Council approval may not be needed for the design review elements of this proposal. A subdivision does require City Council approval.

Please note that a final determination cannot be made about the zoning relief required until an accurate and complete application is submitted.

### **What are the City's communication recommendations?**

Public outreach is a critical part of the process. Design Review applications require notification to abutting property owners; however, we recommend the District also provide notice to a broader area of the neighborhood. We recommend notifying all property owners within 400' of Edgewood Middle School, although applicants have chosen to provide community information to property owners within 800' of the subject site for broader outreach. You may also want to consider reaching the abutting neighborhood, which includes residents on Green Bay, Thackeray, Chaucer, Dryden, Carlisle and Saxony. From our experience, casting a wide net results in an improved process and a more widely accepted project. If desired, the City can provide a map identifying properties within 800' of the school and provide you with the associated address information.

Of great importance, it is recommended that the District organize neighborhood meetings early in the process to explain the project and the efforts the District is making to minimize the impact on the neighborhood. The neighborhood meetings are recommended in advance of the City's commission formal review process. This will provide an opportunity to share preliminary plans with the public and consider their feedback prior to submitting the formal application.

### **Who should I contact at the City?**

If you have any questions following review of this preliminary feedback, please feel free to contact City Manager Ghida Neukirch at 847-926-1000 or [gneukirch@cityhpil.com](mailto:gneukirch@cityhpil.com).