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Mr. Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner  
Waterloo Region District School Board  
51 Ardel Ave.  
Kitchener, ON N2C 2R5

Dear Nathan:

**RE: Grand River North Accommodation Review**

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the above noted review. Please accept the following comments prepared on behalf of the City of Kitchener, Planning Division.

This accommodation review has been undertaken to address the fact that a number of existing schools in the Grand River North Community are currently under capacity and enrollment is expected to further decline in the future in light of new growth to occur elsewhere in the community. Planning staff understand that the WRDSB has taken into account the City's and Region's growth projections as well as demographic information when estimating future school numbers. It's also our understanding that WRDSB is moving towards a program delivery model that offers JK to Grade 8 instead of the current Junior/Senior model.

As a result, two scenario's have been developed for consideration: Scenario 1 proposes to maintain all the schools in the subject area and an addition to Mackenzie King Public School is proposed, Stanley Park Public School will be the senior (Grade 7/8) school for the area with all other schools remaining as JK to Grade 6 and boundary changes are proposed; Scenario 2 proposes closing Stanley Park Public School, rebuilding Mackenzie King Public School and additions made to other schools also necessitating boundary changes.

Planning recognizes that schools are an important part of building a complete community. It is important for children to be able to live and learn in the same community. Often schools serve as a location for community based programs, and provide outdoor play and green space for children and families. From a social planning point of view, it is important that such facilities are maintained within a community. Consequently, as a basic planning principle, Planning staff generally prefers an option which would allow schools to remain open. While it is recognized that there is a shift in the demographics of the area prompting the notion of a closure due to declining enrolment, staff feel that it is important to maintain schools in such areas both to serve and retain existing families, as well as to help attract new families to the area. Moreover, by removing the school, it may be increasingly difficult to attract new families and residential redevelopment.

Walkability is also an important consideration. From a health point of view, it is important for children to be able to walk to school, which helps to build activity into daily life. It is also a more environmentally sound approach over bussing students or parents driving children to school. With respect to walkability, staff generally supports an approach that would allow the most children to walk to their school as possible.

Stanley Park Public School is located in an area which is in close proximity to the Mixed Use Node at Ottawa Street/River Road intersection which has significant potential for redevelopment and intensification in the future. Staff expects that a large portion of the City's growth will be directed to such intensification areas. While the future development of these lands will largely be developer driven and are longer term, they represent significant intensification opportunities that may benefit from maintaining the school rather than closing it.

While Stanley Park Public School and Mackenzie King Public School are currently not designated under the Ontario Heritage Act or Listed on the Municipal Heritage Register, Heritage Planning staff will evaluate both properties to determine whether there is any heritage interest with the potential closure/major alteration to either school. Heritage Planning staff will provide comments to you under separate cover by the end of January.

Based on the foregoing, Planning is more supportive of Scenario 1 as a preferred option primarily based on the fact of the importance schools have in completing communities. However, staff do recognize that there are many other factors that the WRDSB has to consider and staff would respect the decision of the Trustees.

Trusting this is satisfactory.

*Brian Bateman*

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- c. Alain Pinard and Della Ross, Planning
- L. Bensason, Heritage Planning