



Report to Committee of the Whole

April 8, 2019

Subject: Boundary Changes and Recommendations; West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 2

Recommendation

That the Waterloo Region District School Board (Board) approves the boundary changes and recommendations resulting from the West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 2 described as Scenario 5 in Appendix A of the report presented to the Board of Trustees at its meeting on April 8, 2019.

Status

The West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 2 Working Group has completed the Boundary Study process and is recommending implementation of Scenario 5 (see Appendix A).

Scenario 5 recommends a revised Grade 7-8 elementary school boundary for Vista Hills Public School and Laurelwood Public School, effective September 2019 for Grade 7 and September 2020 for Grade 7-8. The Abraham Erb Public School area is redirected from Vista Hills Public School to Laurelwood Public School for Grade 7-8.

To address additional enrolment pressure and overcrowding at Vista Hills Public School (JK-8), two new Development Areas* (DAs) have been established and will be assigned to a school(s) outside of the study area. These DAs are removed from the Vista Hills Public School JK-8 boundary, effective March 25, 2019.

**A Development Area is a geographically defined area, usually a new residential area that is designated by the Board and thereby removed from all permanent school attendance areas by Board motion. By definition, Development Areas do not have a home school and are temporarily assigned to Holding Schools, pending their assignment to a home school (once constructed).*

Background

A boundary study is a public consultation process undertaken to change attendance areas, grades, and/or programs at a school or group of schools. Implementing boundary study recommendations may result in the need for construction and/or renovations. [Administrative Procedure 4991 - Boundary Studies](#) provides the guidelines and expectations for reviewing school attendance areas.

On November 23, 2015 the Board of Trustees approved the final recommendations of the West Waterloo Elementary Schools Boundary Study. This boundary study established a boundary for the new Vista Hills Public School (opened September 2016), and included modifications to the boundaries of Abraham Erb, Edna Staebler, and Laurelwood Public Schools.

The West Waterloo Elementary Schools Boundary Study (2015) recommended a second phase be implemented between December 2018 and 2020 through the completion of a new boundary study. This phase would consider redirecting Abraham Erb Public School area Grade 7 and 8 students to Laurelwood Public School, and reduce enrolment pressures at Vista Hills Public School. It was recommended that a boundary study take place after there was greater certainty around funding to construct permanent accommodation at Laurelwood Public School and/or Vista Hills Public School could no longer accommodate the enrolment from the Abraham Erb Public School area (in permanent or temporary accommodation).

Prior to the opening of Vista Hills Public School, Abraham Erb Public School students attended Laurelwood Public School for Grade 7 and 8.

On May 14, 2018, Trustees were presented with the Annual Accommodation Planning Report 2018-2019 which outlined the West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 2 for consideration in the 2018-2019 school year.

At the November 12, 2018 Committee of the Whole meeting, Trustees approved the following motion:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the commencement of the West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 2, involving Vista Hills Public School, Laurelwood Public School, and Abraham Erb Public School.

The purpose of this study was to implement Phase 2 of the West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study, and determine if other measures were required to relieve enrolment pressure at Vista Hills Public School.

Financial implications

The redirection of students from Vista Hills Public School to Laurelwood Public School will require 2 bus runs to Laurelwood Public School. One bus can be accommodated within the present routing network and one new bus run would be required at a cost of approximately \$42,000 per year.

New Development Areas within the study area require holding school assignments. Additional transportation costs may be incurred should the DAs be assigned to holding schools beyond the student transportation distance threshold.

Communications

Once approved, boundary changes will be communicated to parents and guardians of affected students by way of letters distributed through the student's current school. The letters will clearly communicate how the proposed changes will affect their student and outline any approved grandparenting options.

The Board's website will provide information about the boundary change decision for broader system and public consumption.

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in consultation with Coordinating Council

Recommendations from the West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 1

Recommendations

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approves the implementation of Scenario 5, including:

- *The Grade 7 to Grade 8 boundary for Vista Hills Public School, as shown on Fig. 2, effective September 2019 for Grade 7 and September 2020 for Grade 8;*
- *The Grade 7 to Grade 8 boundary for Laurelwood Public School, as shown on Fig. 2, effective September 2019 for Grade 7 and September 2020 for Grade 8;*

Study Area

Three elementary schools in West Waterloo were included in the boundary study – Vista Hills Public School (JK-8), Laurelwood Public School (JK-8), and Abraham Erb Public School (JK-6). All three study area schools offer a French Immersion program. These schools were identified for further review in Phase 1 of the Boundary Study. Specifically to consider the reassignment of Abraham Erb Public School students from Vista Hills Public School to Laurelwood Public School should Vista Hills Public School experience enrolment pressure.

Vista Hills Public School opened in September 2016. Its current boundary includes the new Vista Hills residential development surrounding and to the north of the school, the Columbia Forest neighbourhood to the northeast, and the Clair Hills neighbourhood to the east. Ongoing residential development within the existing Vista Hills Public School boundary is driving enrolment growth at the school.

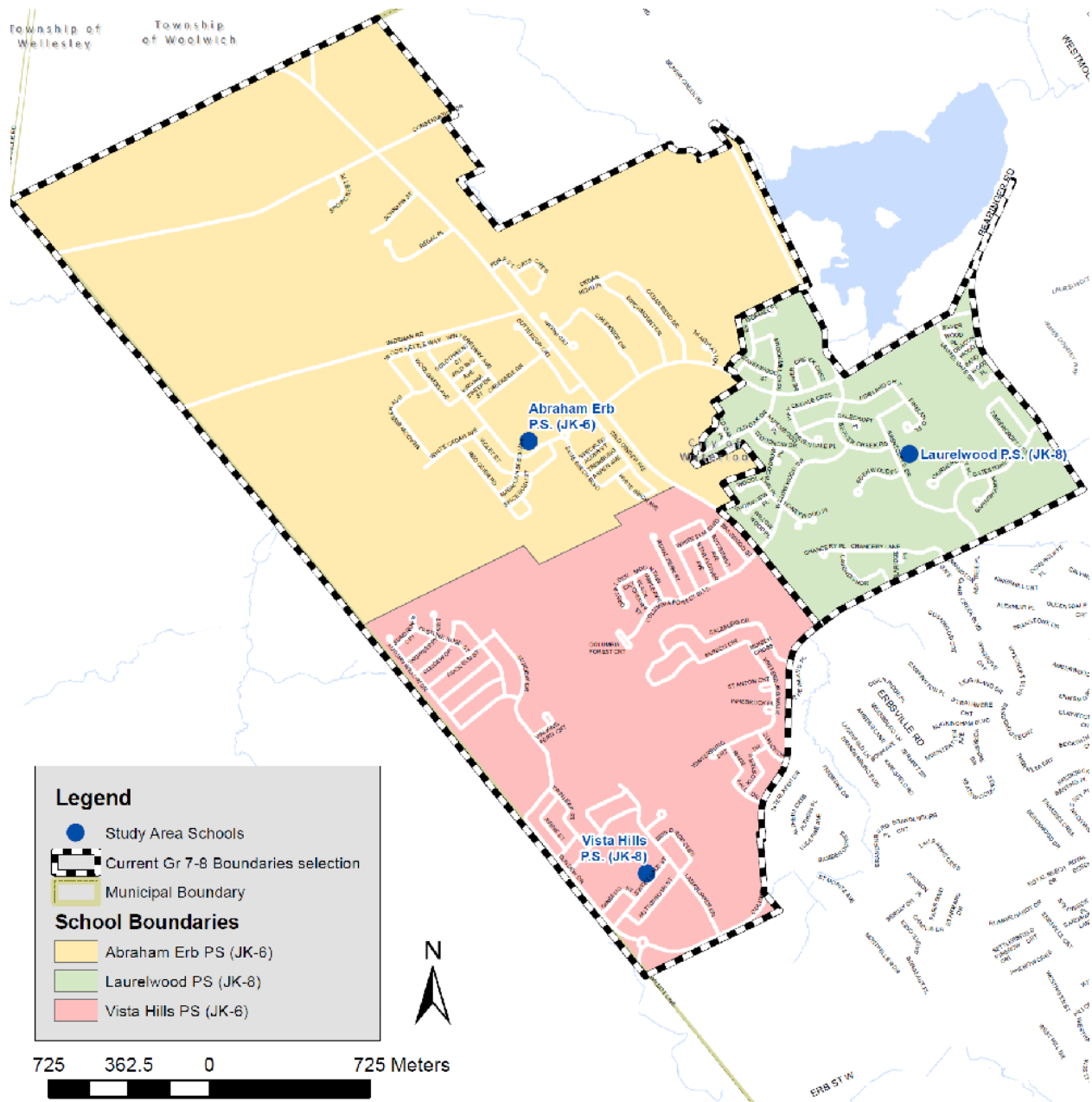
Laurelwood Public School opened in September 1998. Its boundary includes the area east of Erbsville Road and north of Columbia Street West.

Abraham Erb Public School opened in September 2005. Its boundary is north of Vista Hills Public School and includes the area west of Erbsville Road.

Current Situation

The Vista Hills area has been developing at a significant pace since the school opened in September 2016. Vista Hills Public School has an on the ground capacity of 643 pupil places and currently has five portables on site. The enrolment of the school as at October 2018 was 758 students. The school has grown by an additional 34 students since the October student count. Additional portables will be placed on site to accommodate the projected 2019/20 enrolment growth. A maximum of 12 portables are permitted on the school site.

Enrolment at Laurelwood Public School is projected to decline by approximately 100 students over the ten year projection period. It has a capacity of 503 pupil places, including a 6-room portapak that is attached to the school. Laurelwood Public School has six portables on site and can accommodate up to ten.



Abraham Erb Public School has a capacity of 487 pupil places. Its enrolment as at October 2018 was 473 pupil places. It currently has one portable on site. Enrolment at Abraham Erb Public School is projected to decline slightly over the projected period.

Table 1 below includes the status quo enrolment projections for the three study area schools.

Table 1: West Waterloo Study Area Status Quo Enrolment Projections

School	Grades	2018 Capacity		Enrolment						
		Capacity	Portables	2018	2019	2020	2022	2024	2026	2028
Abraham Erb Public School	JK-6	487	1	473	452	459	443	406	404	399
Laurelwood Public School	JK-8	504*	6	562	522	514	474	456	465	466
Vista Hills Public School	JK-8	643	5	758	905	987	1144	1142	1105	1107

*The capacity of Laurelwood Public School includes a semi-permanent 6 room portapak

Study Objectives

As a first step, the Boundary Study Working Group (Working Group) examined status quo enrolment projections, and discussed the issues facing the study area schools.

After reviewing the Status Quo scenario, the Working Group established the following objectives for the boundary study:

- Reduce enrolment pressure at Vista Hills Public School
- Accommodate study area enrolment with regard for school capacities and site constraints
- Maximize walkability and efficiency of transportation
- Minimize impacts/reduce transitions where changes are proposed
- Ensure no junior to intermediate split feeds
- Longer term solution

The primary objective of the boundary study was to reduce enrolment pressure at Vista Hills Public School. The Working Group also acknowledged the opportunity to better balance enrolment between the study area schools, but were mindful of not shifting enrolment pressure to another school. As such, the objective of accommodating enrolment with regard for school capacities and site constraints was developed. As with most boundary studies, the objective of maximizing walkability and efficiency of transportation is important.

Of particular importance to both the Working Group and the broader public through this Study was the idea of minimizing impacts and reducing the number of transitions for students where changes are proposed. The 2015 boundary study which set the boundary for Vista Hills Public School impacted many existing students. It was

determined that additional transitions for students who already experienced a move should be minimized. Similarly, the Working Group agreed that no new split feeds should be created. For example, all Abraham Erb Public School Grade 6 students should proceed to the same intermediate school rather than consider any option where a split would be created.

The Working Group discussed the impact of multiple boundary studies within a short period of time and agreed that any scenario recommended by the Group should attempt to be a long term solution so that another boundary study was not necessary within a short timeframe.

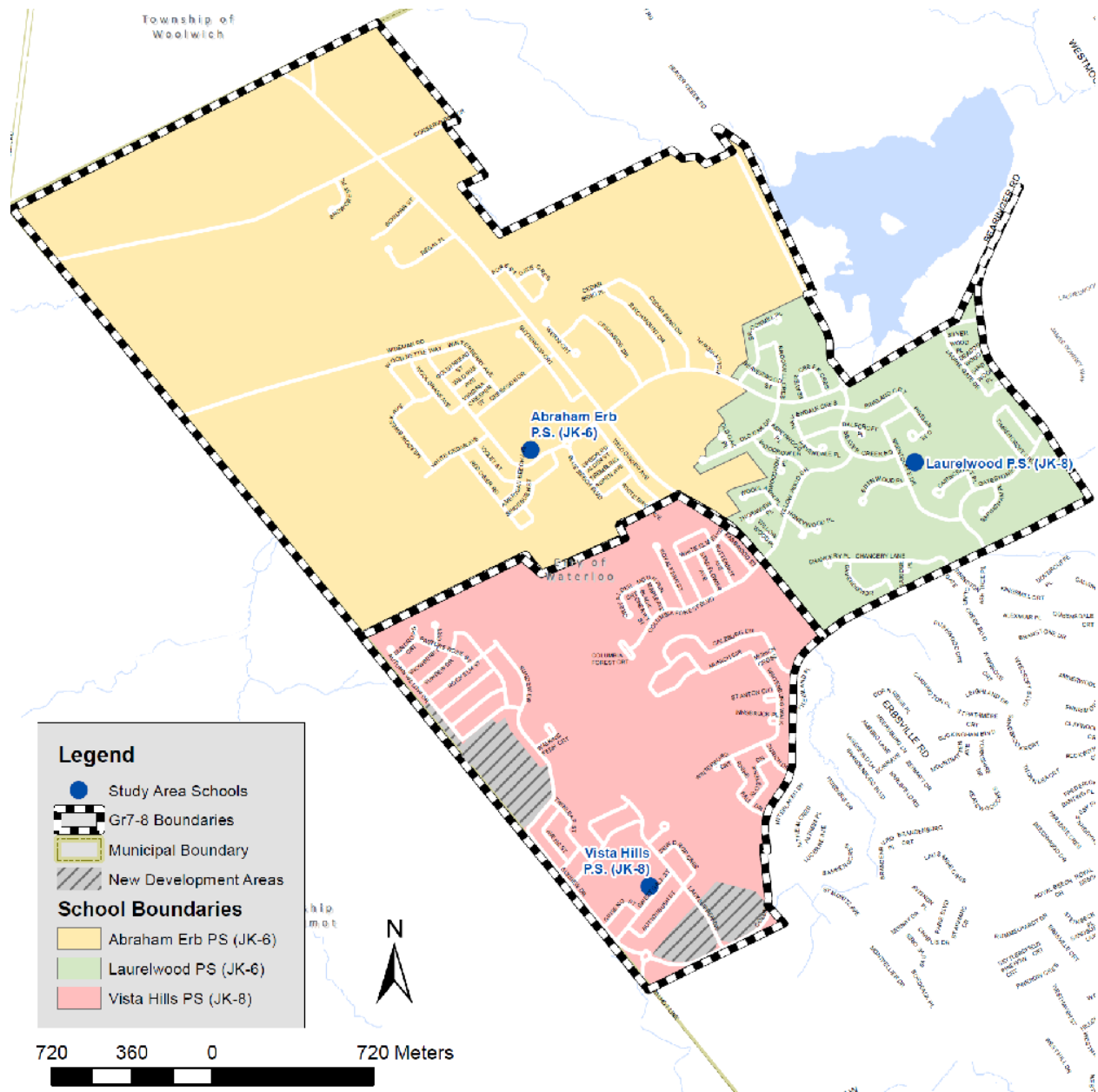
Scenario 5 - Recommended

The Boundary Study Working Group reviewed a total of five boundary scenarios. After reviewing the scenarios against the boundary study objectives, the Working Group unanimously selected Scenario 5 as their preferred scenario. Maps and enrolment projections for Scenarios 1-4 are detailed in Appendix B.

The Working Group felt that Scenario 5 did the most to relieve enrolment pressure at Vista Hills Public School, while minimizing transitions for existing students. It also provides the most balanced enrolment for the study area schools, with regard for school capacities and site constraints. It is important to note that Scenario 5 was the preferred scenario of the majority of those who attended the public consultation meeting and those who submitted comments via boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca.

Scenario 5 includes the reassignment of Abraham Erb Public School students from Vista Hills Public School to Laurelwood Public School for Grades 7-8. For the 2019/20 school year, Grade 7 students from the Abraham Erb Public School area (current Grade 6 students) will attend Laurelwood Public School, while Grade 8 students will be grandparented at Vista Hills Public School for one year.

Figure 2 illustrates the Scenario 5 boundaries. The hatched Grade 7-8 boundary for Laurelwood Public School now includes the Abraham Erb area (yellow). The grey hatched areas are the new Development Areas which are removed from the Vista Hills Public School boundary.



In reviewing Scenario 1 (redirecting Abraham Erb Public School students to Laurelwood Public School as was outlined in Phase 1 of the study), the Working Group felt that not enough was being done to relieve enrolment pressure at Vista Hills Public School.

Four other scenarios were developed which included the creation of Development Areas and the redirection of Columbia Forest to another study area school, in addition to the redirection of the Abraham Erb Public School Grade 7-8 students.

Scenario 5 includes two new Development Areas which are removed from the Vista Hills Public School boundary and enrolment projections. The establishment of the new Development Areas was approved by the Trustees at the Board Meeting on March 25, 2019.

The new Development Areas were chosen because they are the largest pockets of development remaining within the Vista Hills Public School boundary. There are no units currently under construction and no students currently attending the school. Development Areas also provide some flexibility to the Board. Should more space become available at Vista Hills Public School, the Development Area(s) may be reassigned to Vista Hills Public School.

Enrolment projections for Scenario 5 are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - Scenario 5 (Recommended) Enrolment Projections

School	Grades	2018 Capacity		Enrolment						
		Capacity	Portables	2018	2019	2020	2022	2024	2026	2028
Abraham Erb Public School	JK-6	487	1	473	452	459	443	406	404	399
Laurelwood Public School	JK-8	504*	6	562	604	648	600	595	564	568
Vista Hills Public School	JK-8	643	5	758	822	781	845	811	814	810

In this Scenario, enrolment does not change at Abraham Erb Public School as the scenario only redirects Grade 7 students. Enrolment at Laurelwood Public School increases to a peak of 648 students in 2020 as a result of the incoming Abraham Erb Grade 7-8 students. The utilization of the school is improved with this redirection. Additional portables may be required on site to accommodate the increase in intermediate students. Enrolment at Vista Hills Public School will generally remain over 800 students. This enrolment is expected to be accommodated within the 12 portables permitted on site.

Scenario Implications

Transportation

Two busses are required to transport Abraham Erb Public School students to Laurelwood Public School. One bus run can be worked into the existing routing network, however one new bus run to Laurelwood Public School will be required. The estimated cost of this new run is approximately \$42,000 per year.

The new Development Areas have yet to be assigned to a holding school. Depending on where these areas are assigned, additional busses may be required to transport Development Area students at a cost of \$42,000 per year each.

Transitions

Scenario 5 best achieves the objective of minimizing transitions where new changes are proposed.

Scenarios 3 and 4 (see Appendix B) contemplated the reassignment of the Columbia Forest neighbourhood to Laurelwood Public School or Abraham Erb Public school, respectively. Students from this area were redirected from Edna Staebler Public School to Vista Hills Public School when the new school opened in 2016. As such, the Working Group felt strongly that the impact on existing students from the Columbia Forest neighbourhood should be minimized. It was felt that another boundary change would constitute too many transitions for this neighbourhood. Further to this, the majority of feedback received both at the public meeting and through boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca was from Columbia Forest residents objecting to an additional move within such a short time frame (3 years).

Scenario 5 does not impact any existing Vista Hills students. Grade 8 students from the Abraham Erb Public School area are grandparented at Vista Hills Public School for one year and the Development Areas do not have any students at this time. Furthermore, no new split feeds are created as a result of this scenario; Abraham Erb Public School students all move to Laurelwood together.

Public Consultation

The West Waterloo Elementary Boundary Study Phase 2 was communicated in the following ways:

- Web page updates (www.wrdsb.ca/planning/westwaterloophase2/)
- Posts to boundary study schools webpages
- Email notification to those signed up to Planning News
- School Day notifications by Administrators
- School Council updates by Administrators/Working Group members
- boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca email address
- Public Consultation Meeting – February 13, 2019

Upon Board approval to initiate the boundary study, notification was posted to the Planning News web page and the three study area school web pages. Notice of the study was also sent out via School Day alerts for the three study area schools.

A dedicated [West Waterloo Phase 2 Boundary Study web page](#) was set up to share all pertinent information related the review. Parents were encouraged to sign up on the page to receive email alerts when new content was posted. When new content such as meeting minutes or presentations were available, a notice was posted to the Planning News web page, as well as each of the schools web pages.

A Public Meeting was held on February 13, 2019 from 7:00-9:00 pm at Vista Hills Public School. Inclement weather forced the cancellation of the originally scheduled meeting on February 12, 2019. Despite the abrupt meeting date change, approximately 70 people attended the Public Meeting. The meeting included a brief presentation, followed by a town hall style question and answer session.

Public Feedback

Working group members were encouraged to share the boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca email address with community members so that they could submit written feedback on the review. A total of 42 emails were received between January 4 and March 25. The breakdown of feedback received on the boundary study is listed in Table 3.

Table 3 - Feedback Summary (boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca)

Abraham Erb PS	Laurelwood PS	Vista Hills PS	General Comments
3	1	35	3

The majority of comments received through boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.ca were from the Vista Hills community, namely the Columbia Forest neighbourhood. Columbia Forest residents expressed concern regarding a potential reassignment of their neighbourhood to another school.

Similarly, at the Public Consultation Meeting the majority of questions and comments were from the Columbia Forest community. All were in favour of Scenario 5, allowing the Columbia Forest neighbourhood to remain at Vista Hills Public School. Multiple student transitions was the top issue raised in all of the public feedback received.

Scenario 1 - Abraham Erb PS Redirected to Laurelwood PS for Grade 7-8

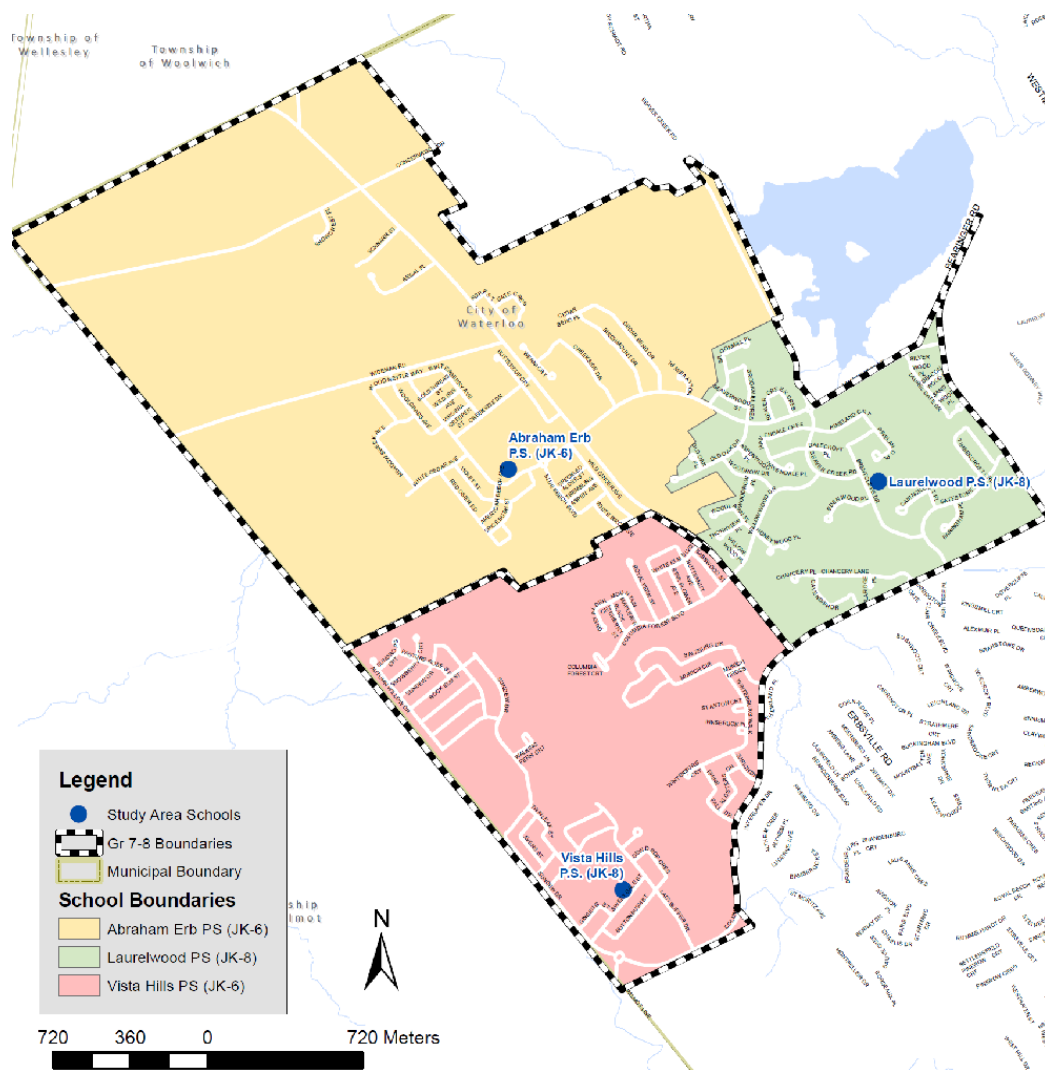


Figure 3 - Scenario 1 Map

Table 4 - Scenario 1 Enrolment Projections

School	Grades	2018 Capacity		Enrolment						
		Capacity	Portables	2018	2019	2020	2022	2024	2026	2028
Abraham Erb Public School	JK-6	487	1	473	452	459	443	406	404	399
Laurelwood Public School	JK-8	504*	6	562	604	648	600	595	564	568
Vista Hills Public School	JK-8	643	5	758	822	853	1018	1003	1006	1005

Scenario 2 – Abraham Erb PS Redirected to Laurelwood PS for Grade 7-8; One New Development Area Established

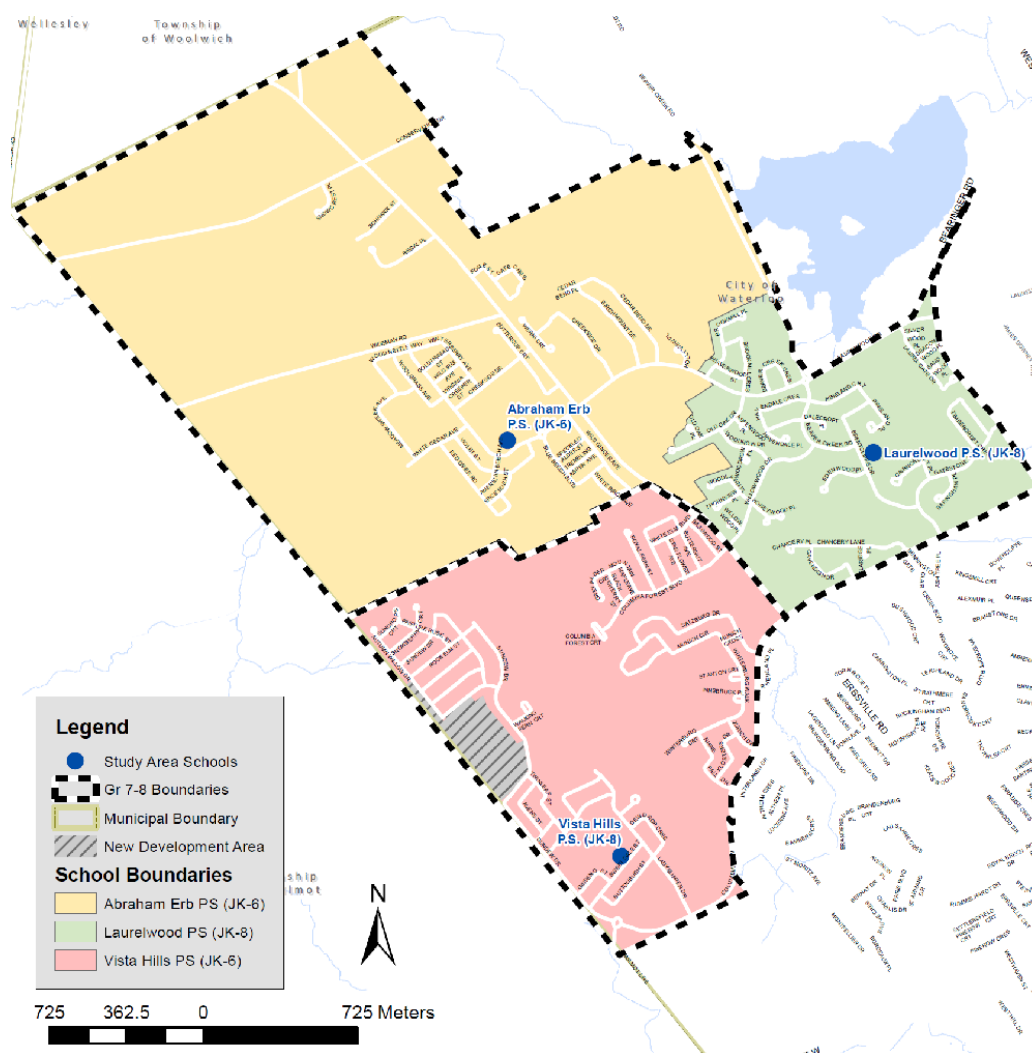


Figure 4 - Scenario 2 Map

Table 5 - Scenario 2 Enrolment Projections

School	Grades	2018 Capacity		Enrolment						
		Capacity	Portables	2018	2019	2020	2022	2024	2026	2028
Abraham Erb Public School	JK-6	487	1	473	452	459	443	406	404	399
Laurelwood Public School	JK-8	504*	6	562	604	648	600	595	564	568
Vista Hills Public School	JK-8	643	5	758	822	793	898	883	889	889

Scenario 3 – Abraham Erb PS Redirected to Laurelwood PS for Grade 7-8; Columbia Forest Reassigned to Laurelwood PS for JK-8

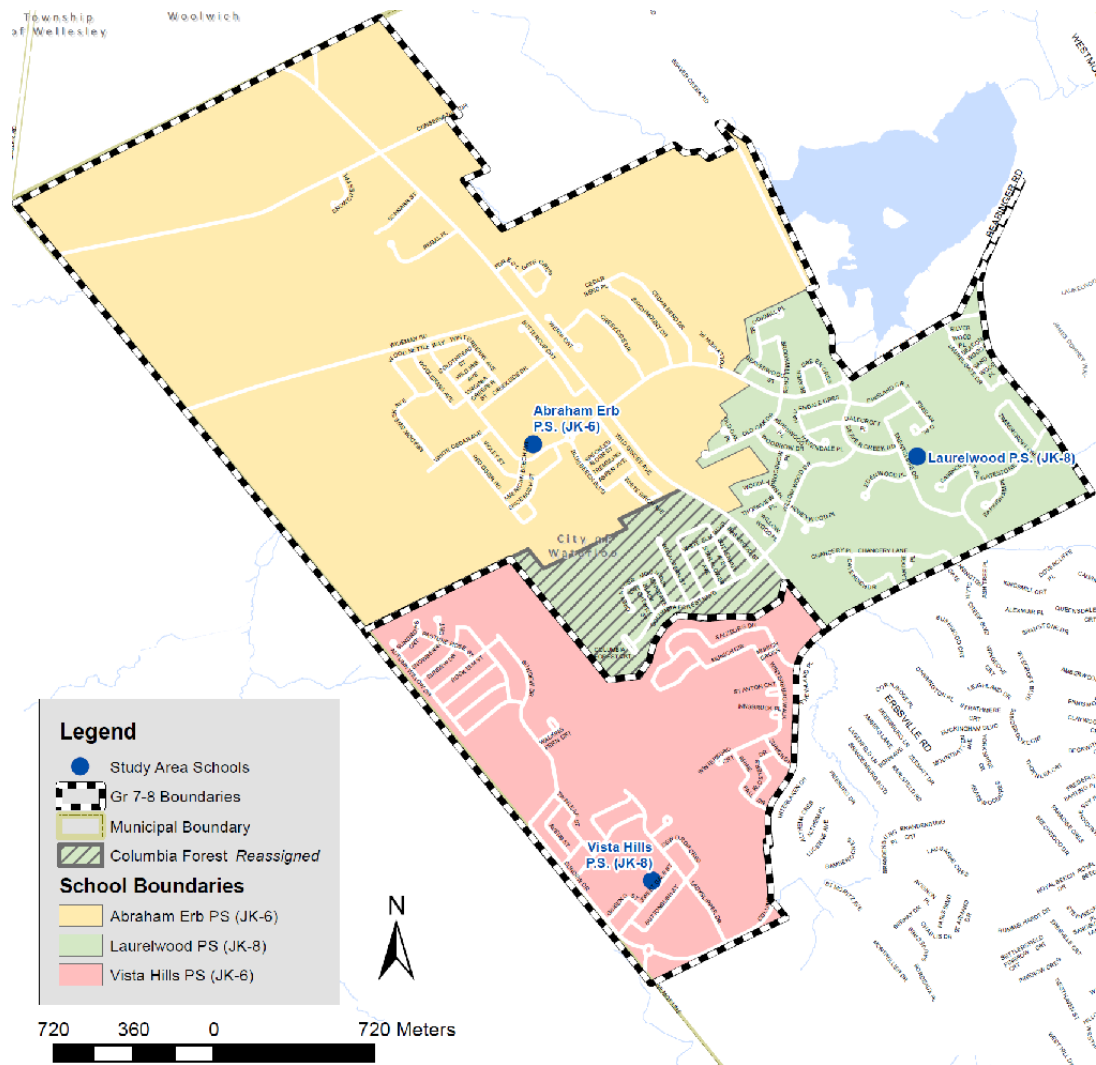


Figure 5 - Scenario 3 Map

Table 6 - Scenario 3 Enrolment Projections

School	Grades	2018 Capacity		Enrolment						
		Capacity	Portables	2018	2019	2020	2022	2024	2026	2028
Abraham Erb Public School	JK-6	487	1	473	452	459	443	406	404	399
Laurelwood Public School	JK-8	504*	6	562	769	810	763	738	701	705
Vista Hills Public School	JK-8	643	5	758	658	691	885	860	869	869

Scenario 4 – Abraham Erb PS Redirected to Laurelwood PS for Grade 7-8; Columbia Forest Reassigned to Abraham Erb PS for JK-6

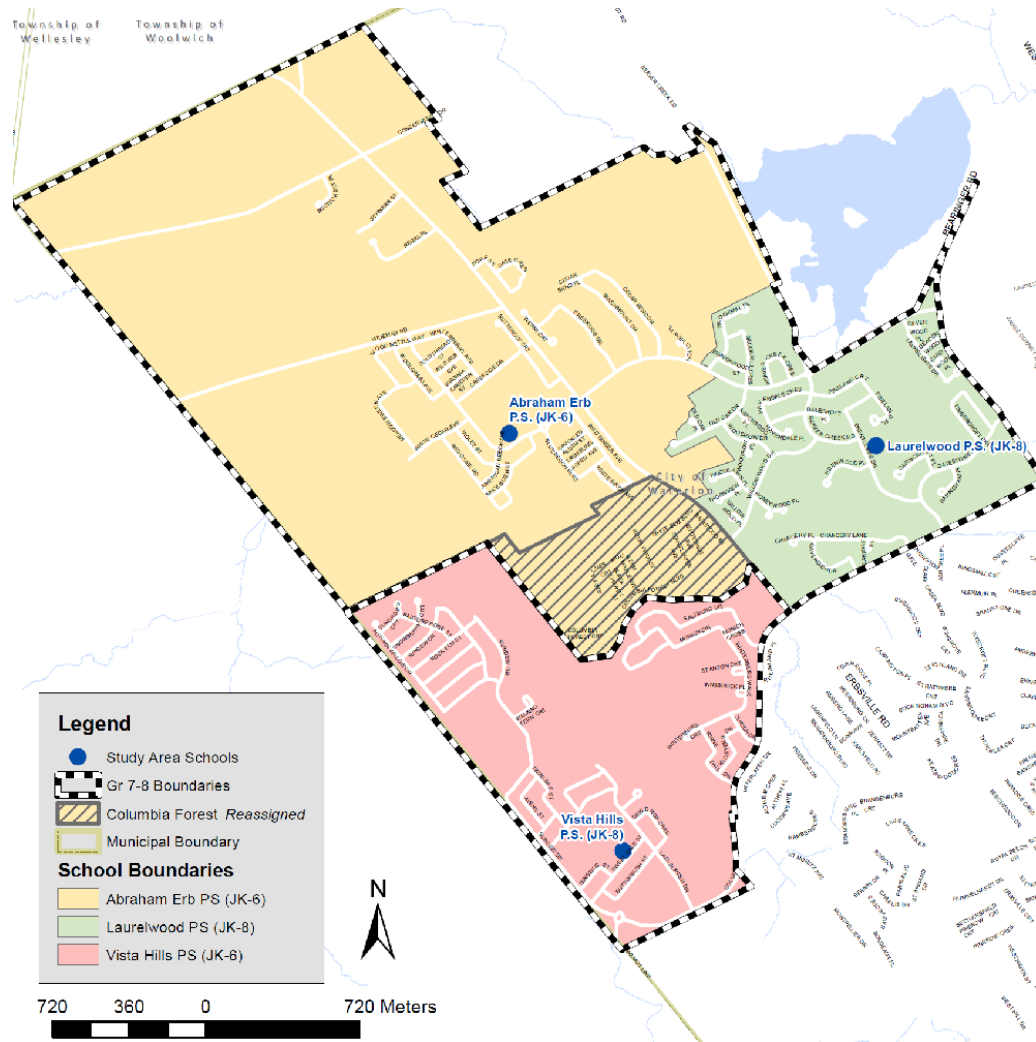


Figure 6 - Scenario 4 Map

Table 7 - Scenario 4 Enrolment Projections

School	Grades	2018 Capacity		Enrolment						
		Capacity	Portables	2018	2019	2020	2022	2024	2026	2028
Abraham Erb Public School	JK-6	487	1	473	600	590	561	521	515	511
Laurelwood Public School	JK-8	504*	6	562	621	678	645	623	589	593
Vista Hills Public School	JK-8	643	5	758	658	691	855	860	869	869