

CONVERSATION STARTER: EDUCATION



BACKGROUND

Formal education through elementary and high school is critical for individuals to succeed in modern society, while higher education both empowers individuals and increases the value of workers to the local and BC economy.

The majority of the schools provided by School District No. 73 (Kamloops/Thompson) are within the City of Kamloops' boundaries. The District's total student population was 14,675 in September of 2013.

The School District and the City's Planning and Development Division work together to ensure planning for schools is integrated into city planning. Official Community Plans must identify the approximate location and type of present and proposed public facilities including schools to ensure such needs are considered in the planning process.

KAMPLAN 2004 recognizes Thompson Rivers University as a major economic driver. Recent master plans for the campus have focused on rapid expansion to meet demand. The newly updated master plan will tie campus development to a new academic plan, research plan, enrollment growth, campus life, densification of the academic core and potential development opportunities.



Thompson Rivers University (Photo: Tyler Meade)

WHAT DOES KAMPLAN 2004 SAY?

- A new elementary school may be necessary in Juniper and should be developed in accordance with the joint elementary school/neighbourhood park concept
- No new secondary schools are anticipated within the term of this plan.
- Approach the School District regarding the potential use of vacant school sites for alternative forms of development (housing, parks/public use, community use)
- Support the Community Schools concept

WHAT DOES THE SUSTAINABLE KAMLOOPS PLAN SAY?

- The City has a limited role in providing educational services but can help create an environment where educational institutions provide residents with multiple opportunities
- The City's Parks, Recreation and Culture Department also provides opportunities to enhance education through community programming

CURRENT TRENDS

- Gradual increase in elementary grades over the last few years
- Growing popularity in French Immersion programs
- Greatest increase in enrollment within the Southwest Sector
- Increasing number of post-secondary international students
- Thompson Rivers University identified as the largest post-secondary institution in BC (north of Vancouver) offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees
- Changing demographics attributing to a general decline in student enrollment throughout BC: older population, smaller household size, increase in regional housing choice, lack of affordable housing and housing for young families, and increased competition for independent schools

CURRENT CHALLENGES

- Uneven distribution of elementary student growth (most in Dallas, Pineview Valley/Dufferin and parts of Westsyde)
- Space available in schools overall but may not be distributed ideally city-wide
- Promoting walking to school
- Unforeseen changes in the economy, attracting or discouraging employees with families, impact school enrollment numbers.
- Declining enrollment in local secondary schools or preference of one school over another (South Kamloops Secondary School) impacts the variety of courses offered
- Pending Stuart Wood Elementary School closure in downtown. Is there a need to retain a school and other key amenities in the City Centre?
- Costs of modernizing Stuart Wood School to meet the needs of diverse student population (i.e. people with disabilities) while maintaining heritage
- Impact of potential resource sector growth in the Southwest Sector
- Topography of Thompson Rivers University campus makes expansion challenging
- Pedestrian-unfriendly environment within the McGill Corridor/Columbia Street region
- Family preference for suburbs affects pressure for new schools

OPPORTUNITIES

- Adjust attendance data/policies to respond to population shifts
- Revitalize abandoned schools for other community uses
- Potential consolidation of Beattie School of the Arts at John Peterson Campus on 9th
- Upgrade pedestrian and cyclist system to encourage walking and biking to school
- Enforce school catchment boundaries and attendance
- Ensure the University Master Plan works in conjunction with the McGill Corridor Plan
- Incorporate community gardens in school yards
- Expand youth engagement in municipal planning
- Use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to develop Safe Routes to school and in school development/revitalization
- Examine walk limits used in school and land use planning
- Continue to support the Safer Schools Program partnership
- University expansion (academic programs and housing)
- Encourage families with children to locate in existing neighbourhoods/infill areas
- Enhance the pedestrian experience along the McGill Corridor/Columbia Street area to encourage increased walking trips by university students

Did you know?

Thompson Rivers University supported over 24,000 students (either online or on campus) and over 2,100 staff and faculty between 2012 and 2013.

KAMPLAN (2004) SUCCESS STORIES

- Encouraging higher densities in areas of greatest accessibility, (i.e., along transit routes or adjacent to major services and amenities such as, but not limited to schools)
- Successful rezoning of properties close to schools for higher density future development