



Ron Thiele, Superintendent

Members, City Council
City of Issaquah
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**Re: Issaquah School District - New School District Properties
Proposed Redesignation and Rezone**

Dear Members of the City Council:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Issaquah School District, please accept these comments regarding the proposed amendment to the City of Issaquah Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map for newly acquired public properties (the "CF Redesignations and Rezones"). The District recently acquired the future school sites included within the proposal for school facilities approved by our voters in the 2016 Bond. These sites include one approximately 40 acre site for future high school and elementary school facilities (the "Plateau Campus School Site") and one approximately nine acre site for a future middle school (the "Talus School Site"). We need the City Council's approval of the CF Redesignations and Rezones for these public school properties so that we can move forward with project planning for the schools approved overwhelmingly by more than 70% of our shared constituents and needed to serve students already in our schools.

While there are several reasons that we believe the City Council should rezone the properties Community Facilities-Facilities so that each of our proposed schools can be built, we want to share our top three. First, we have very overcrowded comprehensive high schools in Issaquah and Sammamish that were built for about 1,800 students each and have 2,400 students at Issaquah High School and 2,200 students at Skyline High School. Second, we have finite financial resources with our 2016 voter-approved bond and delay in this rezoning request for the 2019 Comprehensive Plan would cost our taxpayers an additional \$8 million per year, and could make it impossible for our district to build our schools at the budgets we have promised our voters. Finally, we have exhausted our search for buildable property within the Urban Growth Boundary for our 4th comprehensive high school. It is not an overstatement for us to say that we have no other option for a high school site. There is simply not any other developable site available for this academic program even with utilization of the City's compact school regulations. We've worked tirelessly for years to locate this school site and, due to delays related to litigation in the eminent domain process, are at a critical juncture in terms of student planning needs and project cost escalation.

As elected officials, we appreciate our partnership with the City Council as we work together to address school siting needs. As a school district, we have worked hard to keep up with the City's growth and know that you desire for us to provide the schools needed to serve our citizens. Our District has relied on the City's Comprehensive Plan policies and code provisions for guidance as we've searched over the last several years for land for new schools. It has been a difficult search given the existing regulatory constraints on school siting, the

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scarcity of urban land, and development limitations of many parcels. However, we feel fortunate to have secured future school sites in areas where schools are most needed. In particular, the Plateau Campus School Site, located squarely between Issaquah High School and Skyline High School, will allow us to plan a new high school to relieve critical capacity constraints at Issaquah and Skyline.

We also want to urge your timely consideration of the CF Redesignations and Rezones. We need to plan now for schools at both the Plateau Campus School Site and the Talus School Site. Our students deserve quality schools with adequate space and program capacity. Ongoing delays also result in unnecessary costs to our taxpayers as construction costs escalate each month.

On a related matter, we are absolutely opposed to the City Planning Policy Commission's recommendation, not discussed with or acceptable to the District as the property owner, to downzone one of the Plateau Campus School Site parcels and make it entirely unusable for most purposes, including school siting. This unilateral action would be a mismanagement of taxpayer dollars and should in no case be considered by the City Council. If the City Council were to consider adopting that recommendation for that parcel (or any District owned parcel), the Board requests that the City Council refrain from taking any action on the subject parcel. We, like you, have a fiduciary obligation to our shared taxpayers that must be prioritized.

We know and appreciate that neighbors of any future school site will have concerns about a new school project. We want to work with any neighborhood to address their concerns through a project planning process and to build a facility that enhances the neighborhood. Our three existing comprehensive high schools and our choice high school all have residential neighbors. In planning for any of our school projects, we are thoughtful to consider how our schools integrate into the surrounding neighborhoods. We look forward to and commit to doing the same with the schools anticipated for both the Plateau Campus School Site and the Talus School Site. In fact, our District Administration has already and continues to reach out to the Providence Point community to schedule meetings to discuss potential future development.

Again, our Board values the District's partnership with the City and appreciates the opportunity to partner with you to provide the quality schools needed to serve our shared constituents. We look forward to further conversations with you on this matter. Please reach out to myself or other Board members to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Dr. Harlan Gallinger
Board President

cc: Honorable Mary Lou Pauley, Mayor, City of Issaquah
Wally Bobkiewicz, City Administrator, City of Issaquah
Members, Issaquah School District Board of Directors
Ron Thiele, Superintendent, Issaquah School District
Sammamish City Council
Rick Rudometkin, City Manager, City of Sammamish

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