

## **Policies related to schools**

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## Commentary

In June 1979, the City of Portland adopted the *City School Policy* which provided a definition of the City's relationship with School District #1 (Portland Public Schools), which at the time was the city's one school district. Stating that "the provision of high quality public education is of critical importance to the health of the City and its neighborhoods," this comprehensive policy acknowledged the interplay between the vitality of the city's public schools and the community's civic and social infrastructure. The narrative, policies, and programs included in this document still have a great deal of relevance and resonance with Portlanders today.

The 1980 Comprehensive Plan adopted the 1979 *City School Policy* by reference. Since 1980, Portland has expanded its city limits through a series of annexations. Today, there are six school districts with schools located within the city's borders: Centennial, David Douglas, Parkrose, Reynolds, Riverdale, and Portland Public.

The following goal and set of policies draws from the 1979 *City School Policy* and further draws from guiding policies and actions in *the Portland Plan* Thriving and Educated Youth and Healthy Connected City strategies. By encouraging school facilities to be multi-functional neighborhood anchors, designed and programmed to serve community members of all generations and abilities, the proposed goal and policies also help implement the concept of Portland as an Age-Friendly City.

**Goal x** is adapted from Portland Plan guiding policy T-10.

**Policy 1** is adapted from Portland Plan guiding policies T-16, H-13, and H-14, and 1979 City School Policy 3.1, 3.7, 4.4, and 5.1-5.4.

**Policy 2** is adapted from Portland Plan guiding policies T-14 and T-16, and 1979 City School Policy 3.6.

**Policy 3** is adapted from Portland Plan guiding policy T-21 and 1979 City School Policy 4.1.

**Policy 4** is adapted from Portland Plan guiding policy T-22 and 1979 City School Policy 3.2.

**Policy 5** is adapted from 1979 City School Policy 3.4.

**Policy 6** is adapted from Portland Plan guiding policy T-12.

**GOAL x Public schools are honored places of learning as well as multifunctional neighborhood anchors serving Portlanders of all ages, abilities, and cultures.**

**POLICIES**

- Policy 1 Shared use. Encourage school districts, public and private institutions, Multnomah County, and the City of Portland to co-locate facilities and programs that optimize intergenerational and intercultural use.
- Policy 2 Shared use. Promote broad community use of school grounds as green spaces, community gardens, playgrounds, and other physical activity resources, particularly in neighborhoods with little or no other access to green spaces.
- Policy 3 Leveraging public investment. Prioritize City infrastructure investments that complement and leverage local school districts' major capital investments.

The following policies fall under different goals:

- Policy 4 Accessibility of public facilities. Maintain and enhance the accessibility of City-owned facilities for use by community members of all ages and abilities.
- Policy 5 Intergovernmental coordination. Coordinate the planning, siting, and reuse of public facilities among school districts, the City of Portland, and Multnomah County.
- Policy 6 School enrollment stability. Prioritize housing investments that help to stabilize school enrollment and reduce student mobility rates.
- Policy 7 Relationship between schools and other policies. Consider the interplay between housing policy, school enrollment, and the fiscal health of school districts when making legislative zoning decisions.

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## Commentary

**Policy 7** is new and reflects the input of school districts following a number of City policy decisions that have resulted in unintended consequences for the districts. The City's land use and affordable housing policies have played a role in increasing enrollment in some neighborhoods and districts, while contributing to decreased enrollment in others. Programs such as tax abatement and urban renewal, combined with dynamics of the private housing market, also have a measurable impact on school district revenue.

Policies proposed here may be implemented in a number of ways, including:

- Development of new or modified zoning tools that would flexibly accommodate multiple uses on school sites and reduce regulatory barriers to facilities upgrades, while continuing to be responsive and accountable to neighborhood concerns such as traffic.
- Intergovernmental agreements between Portland Parks and Recreation and each school district to enable joint-use of recreational fields and facilities.
- Private-public partnership agreements between school districts and private institutions to encourage and manage the joint use of facilities for educational and other community uses.
- Good neighbor agreements between schools, community organizations and neighbors to address potential nuisances associated with schools accommodating multiple uses/users.
- City budget prioritization for infrastructure improvements that support local school districts' major capital investments (examples include recreational field improvements, sidewalks and safe crossings).
- Universal design requirements to optimize accessibility of schools for students, staff and visitors with disabilities.