Design Advisory Teams get specific on new school requirements

Design Advisory Teams for the new elementary and the Firgrove and Northwood replacement schools began meeting with architect firms to identify site specific requirements for the new buildings.

Monthly meetings began last May and are expected to continue through December 2016.

Firgrove, Northwood, and the new elementary are the first projects resulting from the voter approved School Construction and Facility Improvements bond passed in November 2015. The new and replacement schools are intended to relieve overcrowding from continued enrollment growth in the district’s elementary schools.

The three advisory teams are made up of district and school staff, community members, and parents representing the individual school. The teams are guided by the architects assigned to each project. The teams have up to 25 members participating. The purpose is to identify site specific design concepts relating to the physical environment of the school while considering community, environment, and educational needs.

In order to ensure consistency and identify critical needs that reflect today’s environment the Districtwide Elementary Educational Specifications were updated and approved by the Puyallup School Board on February 22, 2016. The work of the design teams and the architects are in compliance with the districtwide specifications.

The updated specifications reflect changes in educational programs, school capacity, and approach to technology. They provide an outline for the physical environment that will support Puyallup School District’s vision for new and modernized elementary schools.

The work done by the Design Advisory Teams begins with the district specification requirements and then applies them to the specific needs of the individual school. They consider things like characteristics of the community and neighborhood, characteristics of the parcel of land, special consideration for size, and desired relationships of learning areas within the school.

The Site Specific Educational Specifications were approved by the school board on October 3, at its regularly scheduled meeting. A brief summary of considerations made by the Design Advisory Teams is shown below. A full copy of the Site Specific Educational Specifications can be found on the Foundations for Our Future web page.
Firgrove Design Advisory Team

The Site Specific Educational Specification for Firgrove was prepared by Mahlum, the architectural firm who will design the replacement school. They reported the Design Advisory Team considered:

- Welcoming, safe environment for families and students
- Inspirational place for learning and collaborating
- Community resource
- Student centered to recognize each student’s individual needs
- Adaptable and connected spaces, interior and exterior
- Site connections with nature and with Ballou Junior High

Northwood Design Advisory Team

The Site Specific Educational Specification for Northwood was prepared by Studio Meng Strazzara, the architectural firm who will design the replacement school. They reported the Design Advisory Team considered:

- Warm and welcoming environment
- Safety and security
- Well planned site circulation for the high volume of cars and buses and a larger school
- Collaboration/gathering spaces
- Central library
- Covered areas for outdoor play/waiting
- Natural light
- Flow through the building
- views

New Elementary Design Advisory Team

The Site Specific Educational Specification for the new elementary was prepared by NAC Architecture, the architectural firm who will design the new school. They reported the Design Advisory Team considered:

- Create a smaller sense of scale within the larger school building where younger children can feel comfortable and safe in a larger school.
- Develop learning neighborhoods for each grade level to allow for collaboration and instructional support, while keeping in mind the safety and security for all.
- Plan the parking and drive areas to accommodate the large volume of cars and buses that will come to the site.
- Allow for adequate play and outdoor activities for a large student population.
- Allow for a good flow of movement through the school to reduce congestion that can occur in a school with higher enrollment.

The Design Advisory Teams will continue to meet through December as they work with the architects to consider the schematic design.