

Natural Resources Building
1111 Washington St SE
Olympia WA 98501

PO Box 40917
Olympia WA 98504-0917



(360) 902-3000
TTY: (360) 902-1996
Fax: (360) 902-3026

E-mail: Info@rco.wa.gov
Web site: www.rco.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

March 2008

Item #7: **Conversion Request:**
Edmonds School District and the City of Lynnwood
Lynnwood Community Athletic Fields, RCO #80-014D

Prepared By: Dan Haws, Outdoor Grants Manager

Presented By: Dan Haws, Outdoor Grants Manager

**Approved by the
Director:**

Proposed Action: Briefing

Summary

The Edmonds School District is requesting Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (Board) approval for conversion of the Lynnwood Community Athletic Fields located on the campus of the existing Lynnwood High School. The school district plans to convert 12.4 acres, and has identified replacement property to remedy the conversion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) assisted site. The proposed conversion and replacement sites each are valued at \$7.5 million.

Staff Recommendation

The Edmonds School District has submitted all documents needed to satisfy the conversion. The City of Lynnwood, which is the project's co-sponsor, has asked the Board to delay consideration until its June 2008 Board meeting.

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff was prepared to recommend approval, but in consideration of the city's request, staff now recommends delaying action until the June 2008 Board meeting.

Background

In 1980, the Edmonds School District and the City of Lynnwood received a federal LWCF grant (as co-applicants) to develop approximately 12.4 acres into athletic fields



at the existing Lynnwood High School. The Edmonds School District owns the property and the City of Lynnwood entered into a long-term lease agreement with the district to maintain the fields. In exchange for maintenance, the city would have public access and use of the fields for community and regional athletics.

Lynnwood High School was built in 1969 to serve the area's growing suburban community. Since its construction, the area around the existing school site has changed, fueled by the opening of Alderwood Mall in 1979 and subsequent commercial and non-residential development in the surrounding area. The Edmonds School District believes that these non-residential uses, including large-scale retail businesses and offices, cause additional traffic and noise that diminish the quality of the educational environment. Existing school structures have deteriorated over time, while program standards for new school facilities have evolved.

To assess its facilities options, the school district commissioned a building assessment and feasibility study of the school, completed in June 2000. The facility assessment identified significant deficiencies, including a failing sewer and storm drainage system and flooding problems exacerbated by a high ground water table and artesian aquifers, that require the school district to rely on a system of pumps to keep water out of classrooms. Additionally, the study uncovered inadequate mechanical and electrical systems, poorly functioning traffic circulation and parking facilities, energy inefficiencies, outdated seismic infrastructure, and existing asbestos materials onsite. Finally, the study found that the existing building is not well organized to support curriculum models or encourage community use.

The facility assessment concluded that, in order to meet educational program needs, the entire school required major rehabilitation or replacement. Rehabilitation raised significant logistical and education issues because the school district would need to either educate students at the site during rehabilitation or temporarily relocate the high school campus. The school district has a new school site that offers the school district the opportunity to build a new facility rather than rehabilitate the existing structure. The new school site is more centrally located within the school district boundaries than the existing school.

In anticipation of the school's closure, the school district has worked for several years with its local recreational agreement counterparts and representatives of local recreational interest groups. Together, they sought a solution that would meet the school district's interest in redeveloping the existing school site and the community's interest in strong regional community athletic programs consistent with the school district's educational obligations. The result of these efforts is a plan to construct athletic fields at the new school site that would both replace the 12.4 acres of LWCF development and provide facilities to serve regional community athletics.

Analysis

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, administrative rule, statutory language, and RCFB policy restricts the use of grant assisted land and facilities to the purposes for which funding was granted. The policies outlined in Manual #7: *Funded Projects: Policies and the Project Agreement* states:

“A conversion of use occurs when one or more of the following takes place, whether affecting an entire site or any portion of a site funded by RCFB:

1. Property interests are conveyed for non-public outdoor recreation, habitat conservation, or salmon recovery uses.
2. Property interests are conveyed to a third party not otherwise eligible to receive grants in the program from which funding was derived.
3. Non-outdoor recreation, habitat conservation, or salmon recovery uses (public or private) are made in a manner that impairs the originally intended purposes of the project area.
4. Non-eligible indoor facilities are developed within the project area.
5. Public use of the property or a portion of the property acquired or developed/restored with RCFB assistance is terminated, unless public use was not allowed under the original grant.
6. If a habitat-project, the property or a portion of the property acquired, restored, or enhanced no longer provides the environmental functions for which RCFB funds were originally approved.”

Statute, administrative rule and federal law further clarify that the Board will approve a conversion only under conditions that ensure that the substituted property has (1) fair market value at the time of conversion that is at least equal to the funded project site, and (2) nearly equivalent usefulness and location. If a funded project site is converted to another use, the project sponsor is responsible for replacing the converted property, structures, or facilities with property of equivalent size, value, and utility.

When reviewing conversion requests, the Recreation and Conservation Office and the National Park Service (the federal agency that oversees administration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund) consider many factors, in addition to the scope of the original proposal and the proposed substitution:

- A. Alternatives to the conversion
- B. Justification that supports the replacement site as reasonably equivalent recreation utility and location
- C. Acres and market value
- D. Opportunities for public participation in the process

The goal is to assess whether the site to be converted and the proposed replacement site meet the eligibility criteria and other conditions required for substitution.

Assessment of the Lynnwood Community Athletic Fields

A. Alternatives to the conversion

- No conversion action (maintain recreational restriction on two multi-purpose fields at the existing school site and develop only high school athletic facilities at the new school site)
 - Under this alternative, the school district would build the new high school at the new site and use or redevelop a portion of the existing site for some other public use. Although surrounding school and additional athletic facilities would be redeveloped, the two multi-purpose fields subject to the Section 6(f) restriction under the 1980 agreement would remain recreational property. These facilities would have no value as high school athletic facilities, so the school district would not fund their maintenance or use. The downsized athletic complex might be purchased, maintained, and operated by other parties to the existing recreational interlocal agreements or others, but there would be fewer fields, and the types of events that could be staged at the remaining recreational facilities would be significantly smaller in scale. Also, the existing traffic, pedestrian, ADA, drainage and other problems would still exist, and the fields would either require rehabilitation or would likely deteriorate.
- Modernize or remodel the existing school
 - This alternative would result in the school district remodeling the current facility and leaving the fields under the existing federal protection open to the students and the public. Due to the current drainage problems and cost of demolition and reconstruction this alternative was rejected by the school district.
- Convert the fields under protected section 6(f) boundary and build replacement fields at the new high school site
 - This alternative would result in a new athletic complex at the new Lynnwood High School with replacement of the restricted 6(f) property with property of equal or greater fair market value and recreational utility. The fields would be removed at the existing site and new athletic fields and facilities built at the new school site. The new fields would have functional vehicular and pedestrian access, and sufficient parking. The site is more centrally located, and is in a residential area.

B. Recreation Utility and Location

The fields and other recreational facilities planned at the new Lynnwood High School

are intended to equal those at the existing Lynnwood High School, both in quality and usability. The new site is 1.5 miles east of the existing site and is in a more desirable location.

At the existing site there is one baseball field with lighting, two softball fields with lighting, one artificial turf/all weather football/soccer and track facility with lighting, five all weather tennis courts with lighting, and one dirt soccer field with no field lighting.

The new site will provide one baseball field, two large artificial turf softball/soccer combination fields, one artificial turf/all weather football/soccer and track facility and five all weather tennis courts. All facilities at the new site will have field lighting and the two multipurpose fields are considered an upgrade from the natural turf softball fields at the current site.

C. Acres and Market Value

Final considerations of acres and market value converted compared to the proposed replacement are summarized as follows:

Proposed Sites	Acres	Market Value
Conversion Property – existing high school	12.4	\$7,500,000
Replacement Property – new high school	16.8	\$7,500,000

As part of its request, the Edmonds School District will encumber enough property to meet program requirements.

D. Opportunity for Public Participation

Edmonds School District engaged in an extensive public outreach and comment process regarding this conversion as part of its long-range capital facilities planning process. The school district has a long list of capital improvements that it intends to fund through bond revenues, other public funding sources, and revenues from the sale or lease of existing school district properties. The school district held a series of public meetings to develop its plans, and another series to take comments on those plans as part of its bond financing. The school district's plans to build a new high school that would replace the athletic facilities at the existing Lynnwood High School with new facilities, featured prominently in those public outreach and comment efforts.

In addition, in advance of construction of the new Lynnwood High School, the school district also prepared an extensive set of documents assessing the environmental impacts of the proposed project, circulated those for public comment, and issued a mitigated determination of non-significance for construction of the new school and field complex, as mitigated. Snohomish County then held a two-day hearing regarding the conditional use permit required for that proposal. Notice of the hearing was published as required by Snohomish County ordinance and a number of people testified at the hearing.

E. National Park Service (NPS)

The National Park Service (NPS) has been involved with this proposal from the beginning. NPS staff attended the first meetings held by the Edmonds School District in determining the course of action for the existing Lynnwood High School. NPS has offered guidance throughout the process, and has provided information about federal conversion requirements and policies. NPS has finished a federal review appraisal of both the existing site and replacement property appraisals. Their findings are shown in the valuation table provided in this memo.

F. Opposition to Conversion

Despite the outreach by the Edmonds school district, opposition to this conversion remains. An information packet submitted by a group of opponents called "Save Our Fields – Citizens Action Committee" is included in the notebook. Their materials provide detailed information about the reasons for their opposition to the proposed conversion. Additionally, on March 13th the City of Lynnwood asked the Board to delay action on this conversion request to allow on-going discussions between the city and the school district about the use of the new site. A copy of this letter is in the notebook.

Next Steps

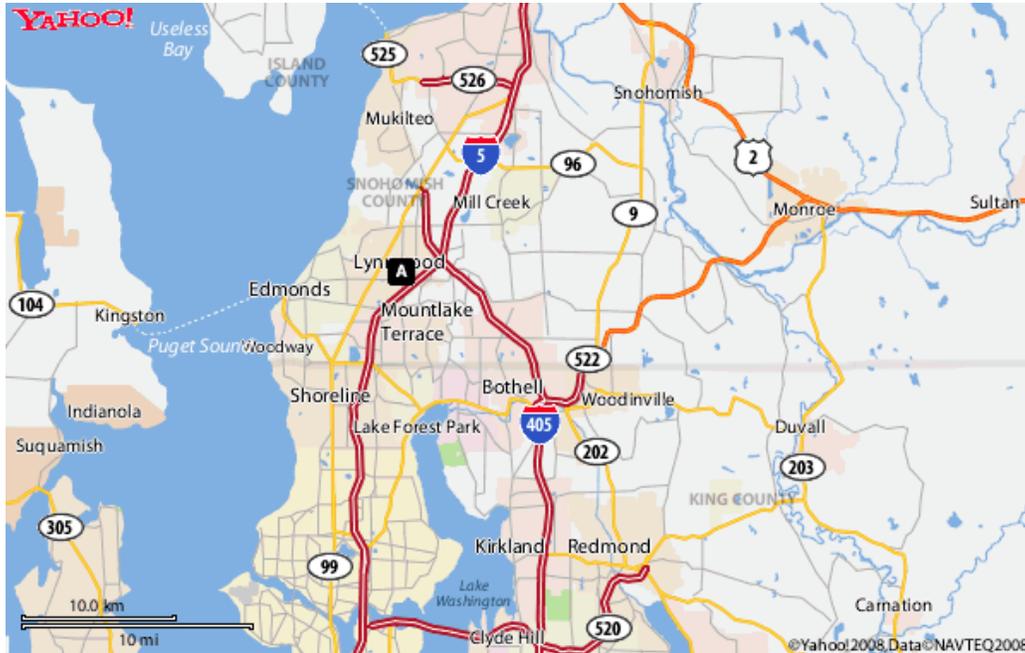
If the Board agrees to defer this decision until June, staff will monitor the on-going discussions between the city and the school district and, if parties agree, will include this item on the June agenda. If the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approves this request at its June meeting, RCO staff will pursue official National Park Service approval of the conversion and proposed replacement site, and execute the appropriate amendments to the existing project agreement. The Edmonds School District will secure the replacement site and develop the athletic fields.

Attachments

- A. Location Maps
- B. Property Boundary Maps

Attachment A, Location Maps

City of Lynnwood in Snohomish County



Site Location Map

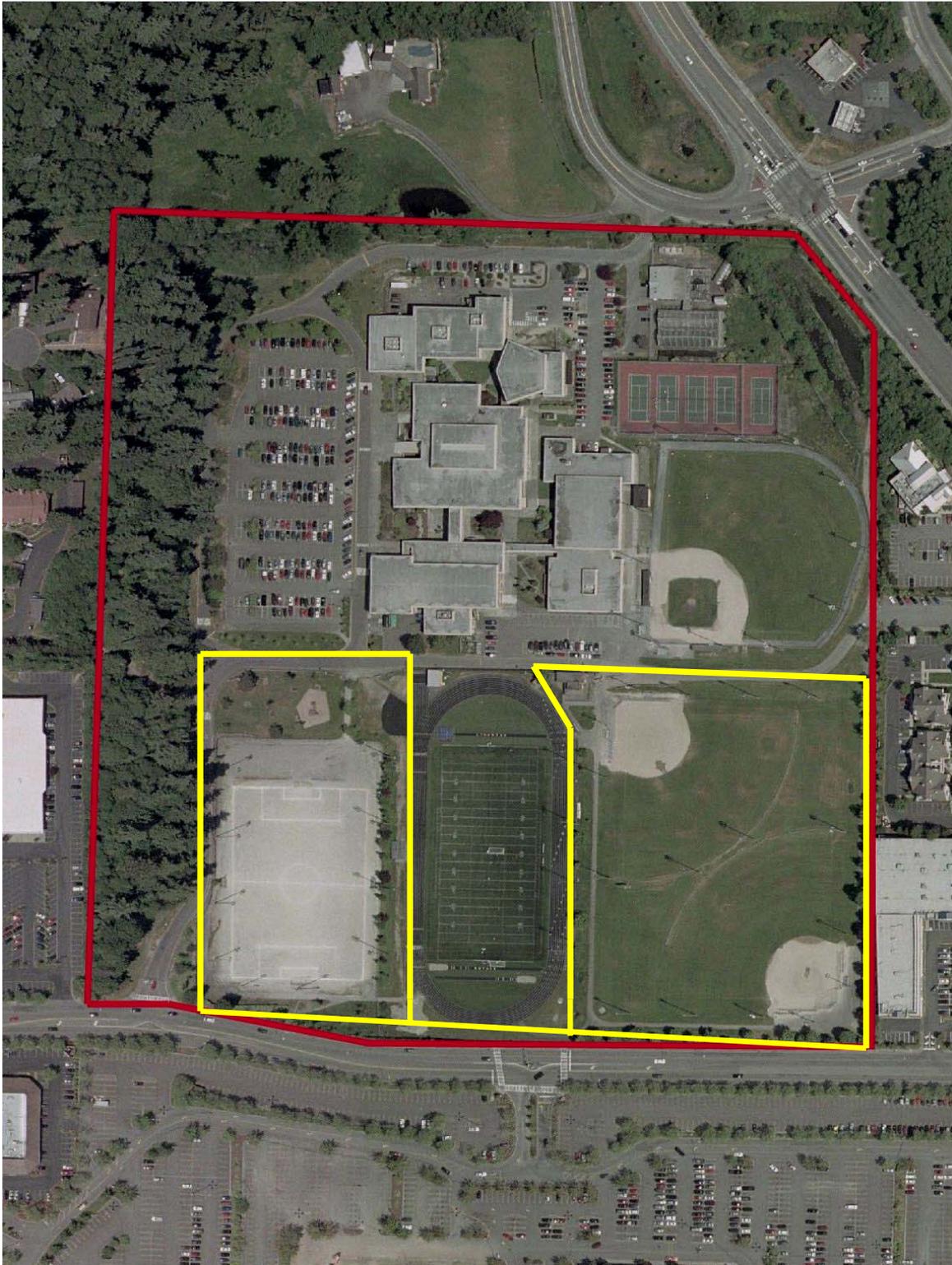
- (A) Existing Lynnwood High School
- (B) New Lynnwood High School



Attachment B: Property Boundary Maps

Site Proposed for Conversion

Existing Lynnwood High School – 12.4 acres LWCF 6(f) boundary.



Site Proposed for Replacement

New Lynnwood High School – 16.8 acres (shaded area) proposed for new LWCF 6(f) boundary.

