

## Developing a Conceptual Site Master Plan

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School communities often have ideas to update their school site. In some cases, it is prudent to first develop a comprehensive, conceptual master plan to figure out how everything will fit, especially if projects are carried out over several phases.

This outline is intended to use as a guideline and checklist to help you establish and carry out a process for developing a conceptual plan for a portion of, or the entire site, and to think about which physical components you will want to address.

To begin, please familiarize yourself with the [Self Help Program](#), and then submit a [Self Help Application for Project Approval](#) so we know what you have in mind and can advise you on your proposed process.

### DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR YOUR SCHOOL SITE:

**Steering team** - Who's initiating the effort, for example, the PTA, or an ad-hoc committee? This is the project sponsor. Which individuals should be included on a four- to seven-member steering team overseeing the project throughout planning, design and implementation? Your project will benefit by including representatives from school staff, families, and neighbors.

**Selecting a firm or individual to facilitate the project** – It is typical for the project sponsor to hire a landscape architectural team or similar design consultant(s) to facilitate the planning efforts. This design team usually leads community meetings and develops design alternatives in the form of drawings, phasing options, and construction cost estimates to aid in fund-raising for moving the plan to fruition. Some school's parent/family groups provide funding for planning, but many schools seek city of Seattle [Department of Neighborhood Small and Simple](#) matching funds to cover the costs of a planning effort. The application is a competitive process, and projects must meet primary objectives: the project must be a catalyst to strengthen community relationships, the community needs to be a part of carrying out the project, and the project must be a benefit to the community.

Be sure to follow an acceptable process to **select** a design firm or individual. Staff from the Self Help Projects office will provide **Guidelines for Selecting a Consultant**, including examples of a "Request for Qualifications" packet and Advertisement inviting qualified firms to submit proposals. The selected firm will need to provide a [certificate of insurance](#) to School District staff.

**Purpose of your conceptual plan** - The conceptual plan will be a guideline rather than an absolute plan. Establish why the plan is being developed by working together with the steering committee, and with endorsement by your school's administration. For example, are you determining a better layout for the playground, or looking at how several components such as playground, parking and pedestrian flow interrelate? It is a good idea to develop "guiding principles" or "goals" as a reminder throughout the process what you're aiming to achieve.

**Stakeholders** – Create a list of who has an interest in how the site is developed, to make sure they are included in your process. For example: students, teachers, and support staff at the school; the School District; local neighbors, community members, and businesses; city agencies, etc.

**Involvement** – Identify ways in which stakeholders could be involved in the planning process.

**Process / timeline** - What process will be used to develop a plan? How long will it take? What's the schedule? For example:

- Submit your Self Help Application for Project Approval. The Self Help Review Team meets every two weeks.
- Seek funding for hiring a design team. This might take a several months to obtain a grant, unless you already have funds in hand.
- A typical process and *estimated* schedule after your steering committee, Self Help Conditional Approval, and grant contract(s) are in place:

Week 1	Develop Request for Qualifications (RFQ) packet, and write and publicize advertisement for design consultant services in the Daily Journal of Commerce (DJC). Self Help Projects staff will assist with templates and required language.
Week 2	Advertise a second time in DJC.
Week 5	Qualification proposals received. Selection committee rates proposals and identifies top 2 to 3 firms to interview.
Week 6	Selection committee interviews firms, and then selects one firm.
Week 7-8	Enter into a contract with design consultant, which will include price, schedule and deliverables. Identify first community meeting date. Publicize first meeting.
Week 10	Hold first community meeting.
Week 13	Design consultant reviews alternates with Self Help Review Team.
Week 17-18	Hold second community meeting.
Week 22	Hold third community meeting.
Week 23-26	Review final plan with Self Help Review Team. Design consultant writes final report, including concept drawings, potential project phasing, and construction cost estimates. Sign-off by Self Help Review Team. Closeout of grant(s).
Next	This conceptual planning phase is often followed by additional fund raising, including applications for grants; development of construction drawings and bid documents; and then actual construction of phase 1.

#### **SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU ARE EMBARKING ON YOUR PLANNING EFFORT:**

**Uses/Users** - What are the current uses of the site? What uses are slated or possible in the future? Who are the users?

**Physical components of a site** - What are the many components of your site? Which ones will be part of your planning effort?

- Buildings (any anticipated construction or major improvement projects, portables?) Fire Lanes.
- Entry points - main, student, community
- Pedestrian patterns/ walkways - students, staff, parents, visitors, community
- Student drop off / pick up
- Bus loading
- Parking
- Bicycle racks
- Service areas (deliveries, dumpsters)
- Fencing – access points
- Signage
- Landscaping
- Art opportunities
- Play areas – all-weather surface, soft surfaces (grass, landscaping), play structures, play equipment, game lines, imaginative play, student gathering areas, quiet areas, seating
- Community use areas
- Outdoor classrooms (e.g., learning gardens, gathering)
- Emergency preparedness supplies storage
- Green infrastructure

**Standards** - What standards; guidelines; and/or Building and Land Use codes apply (for example, District, city, Americans with Disabilities, etc.)?

**Security** – This is very important to consider during planning. Landscaping should not screen windows (both for teachers/staff to see what’s going on outside around the school, as well as for neighbors/police to see intruders inside the building when school is not in session). Landscaping or site features should not screen doorways or any places around the building or playground in order to avoid places for people to hide. All points of playground should be visible to playground supervisors. Access points onto playground should be controllable – easily monitored to be able to see who’s coming on and off of the site. Think about appropriate lighting for evening events.

**Communication methods** - How will steering team communicate with each other? With stakeholders? With the School District?

**Review and approval of final plan** - Be sure Self Help Projects staff is involved during each stage of planning to ensure you’re going in a direction consistent with District standards and policies. The School District has final approval of your plan.

**Implementation, phasing** - How will the plan be implemented? Are portions of the plan delineated into individual projects that can be phased over time? What are potential funding opportunities or resources? What are the schedules for grant applications and awards?

**Revisions** - It’s a good idea to include a statement on how revisions will be considered in the future.

**IN SUMMARY:**

- The plan should be viewed as a conceptual plan with multiple phases. More likely than not, you will *not* be able to complete all physical improvements right away; people’s needs and ideas may change over the years.
- A **Self-Help Application for Project Approval** is required for each construction phase.
- The plan should address existing problem areas and solutions.
- The plan should look at program needs and desires and see how the “pieces” can fit together on a site, and how the relationships should happen. e.g., garden, soccer field – where should they be in relation to users, how does it fit with school, with community? Some of our sites are very small. Where do some of the bigger pieces fit?
- The plan should consider the maintenance implications of the proposed improvements. Will the School District be responsible for all maintenance? Or, will the community be expected and willing to help with some area of maintenance – for example, grounds work parties?

**APPROVAL:**

The plan will be reviewed by the School District Self Help Projects Review Team. Once approved, the following note shall be prominently displayed on the plan, and signed by Self Help Projects’ representative.

This is a conceptual plan for the potential redevelopment of this site. It is subject to revisions if needs change in the future. As the details of each separate element is further developed for actual construction, School District Self Help application, review and approval is required before construction may begin. Conceptual plan reviewed by Self Help Review Team: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions? Please contact Self Help Projects Staff**

[gdedecker@seattleschools.org](mailto:gdedecker@seattleschools.org)

[smmcmamus@seattleschools.org](mailto:smmcmamus@seattleschools.org)