

PEACE RIVER SCHOOLS VALUE SCOPING SESSION

Peace River, Alberta

October 2026



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

The Peace River School Division is facing a long-term facility planning challenge involving three aging schools that serve a relatively stable student population but the division increasingly struggles to support contemporary educational programming, technology requirements, accessibility and evolving operational needs.

In March 2026, The Workun Garrick Partnership Architecture and Interior Design Inc. was selected to conduct a Value Scoping exercise for the existing Peace River Schools (Peace River High School, T.A. Norris Middle School and Ecole Springfield Elementary School) in Peace River, Alberta. The Value Scoping Session was held on June 3 and 4, 2026 at the Peace River Central Operations Facility in Grimshaw and consisted of representatives from the Peace River School Division, Northern Sunrise County, Town of Peace River, Alberta Education, Alberta Infrastructure and The Workun Garrick Partnership.

The Peace River School Solution is a top capital priority for the Division's Capital Plan for 2026-2029.

The Town of Peace River is a regional economic, commercial, and service hub for northwestern Alberta and the surrounding rural communities, located approximately 490 km northwest of Edmonton. The Town provides a wide range of commercial, healthcare, educational, government, and community services to the broader Peace River region, supported by economic activity in the agriculture, forestry, oil and gas, transportation, and service sectors. While Peace River has experienced some population fluctuation over the past decade, its population has remained relatively stable overall. Peace River serves as an important regional center and provides educational services to students from the Town and surrounding communities.

Ecole Springfield Elementary School is a Grades K-4 Elementary School that was originally built in 1967. Modular classrooms have been added to the school in 1981 and 1991, with a modular link added in 2015. Additions to the original school were completed in 1972 and 2006. Portions of the school were modernized in 2004 and 2006. Springfield Elementary School has a current enrollment of 310 students, with a utilization rate of 79%. It is anticipated that the student population will fall slightly to 300 students by 2031 which suggests a fairly stable student population.

T.A. Norris Middle School is a Grades 5-8 school that was originally built in 1956. Multiple subsequent additions to the school have occurred in 1958, 1963 and 1990. Along with the 1990 additions, a major modernization of the school occurred in 1990. T.A. Norris Middle School has a current enrollment of 263 students, with a utilization rate of 68%. It is anticipated that the student population will drop to 246 students by 2031, and remain stable beyond this point.

Peace River High School is a Grades 9-12 school that was originally built in 1955. A major modernization and addition to the existing school was completed in 2004. Peace River High School has a current enrollment of 263 students, with a utilization rate of 65%. It is anticipated that the student population will drop to 246 students by 2031, and remain stable beyond this point.

The objective of the Value Scoping Session was to explore all viable options for Ecole Springfield Elementary School, T.A. Norris Middle School and Peace River High School to address the aging infrastructure, student population trends and to help bring the school(s) up to the current standards for 21st century learning. During the 2 day Value Scoping Session, The Workun Garrick Partnership facilitated group discussions to identify and develop options for the replacement, modernization and addition/ right sizing of the 3 schools with Peace River. A total of 4 grade configurations were reviewed and discussed, noting the pros and cons of each option and how each of these options may affect Ecole Springfield Elementary, T.A. Norris and Peace River High School. The information and discussions generated throughout the Value Scoping Session are intended to assist the Peace

River School Division in the further development of their capital planning submissions.

Recent enrolment data indicates continued demand for education in the community, with enrolment within all 3 schools remaining relatively stable in the coming years. Accordingly, the Town's continued role as a regional service center and its relatively stable educational demand should be considered when assessing future school facility requirements and long-term enrollment capacity.

1.2 Background Information

Ecole Springfield Elementary School:

- Originally built in 1967 and has received modular classroom additions in 1981 and 1991. A modular link was added to the facility in 2015.
- Additions to the school were completed in 1972 and 2006.
- Modernizations of the school occurred in 2004 and 2006 (in conjunction with the addition).
- Serves grades K-4 with a capacity of 388 students, and has a current utilization rate of 79%.
- The facility is struggling to keep up with technology requirements and it is difficult to meet the general needs of the educational programming offered at the School.

T.A. Norris Middle School:

- Originally built in 1956 and has received additions in 1958, 1963 and 1990.
- A modernization occurred along with the 1990 additions.
- Serves grades 5-8 with a capacity of 385 students, and has a current utilization rate of 68%.
- The facility is struggling to keep up with technology requirements and it is difficult to meet the general needs of the educational programming offered at the School.

Peace River High School:

- Originally built in 1955 and received a major modernization and addition in 2004.
- Serves grades 9-12 with a capacity of 406 students, and has a current utilization rate of 65%.
- The facility is struggling to keep up with technology requirements and it is difficult to meet the general needs of the educational programming offered at the school.
- The condition and long-term stability of the Peace River High School site is a significant consideration in evaluating the long-term viability of the existing facility. A recent landslide has affected pedestrian access to the school and has prompted further investigation into site conditions. While initial assessments indicate that the building remains structurally sound and has not been directly affected, the ongoing investigation introduces an additional level of uncertainty associated with continued investment in the existing facility

1.3 Workshop Process

The Value Scoping Session was broken into 3 phases:

Pre-workshop Phase:

This phase involves the information gathering, which included community engagement sessions undertaken by the Peace River School Division regarding the educational offerings in Peace River. Additional information was provide to the team regarding all 3 schools within Peace River so that the team had a full understanding of the facilities within the community. This helps the team identify program requirements, any code deficiencies and site opportunities.

Workshop Phase:

This is the facilitated, two-day value scoping session. This phase includes discussions about the current schools conditions, programming, deficiencies and what is needed/ desired for the replacement, modernization, addition/ right sizing of the schools. During this time the participants will engage in brainstorming exercises and develop potential options for the project(s). Participants will create a road map for the desired grade configurations and overall approach to the "Peace River Solution" which will be reviewed and ranked based on a set of evaluation criteria identified by the group prior to development of the options.

Post-workshop Phase:

This phase involves the creation of the draft report for review by the Peace River School Division Board of Trustees.

Participants of the Value Scoping Session include representatives from the Peace River School Division Board of Trustees, Town of Peace River, Northern Sunrise County, Alberta Infrastructure, Alberta Education and The Workun Garrick Partnership.

1.4 Session Participants

David Rushton	Peace River School Division (Chair)
Marie Dyck	Peace River School Division (Trustee)
Paul Quinney	Peace River School Division (Trustee)
Janet Przybylski	Peace River School Division (Trustee)
Edith Giesbrecht	Peace River School Division (Trustee)
Jeff Thompson	Peace River School Division (Superintendent)
Rhonda Freeman	Peace River School Division (Secretary Treasurer)
Audrey Senft	Peace River School Division (Principal, Ecole Springfield Elementary School)
Kassandra Luce	Peace River School Division (Teacher, Ecole Springfield Elementary School)
Jon Pittman	Peace River School Division (Principal, T.A. Norris Middle School)
Jonathan White	Peace River School Division (Teacher, Peace River High School)
Wade Johnson	Peace River School Division (Principal, Peace River High School)
James Pobuda	Peace River School Division (Vice-Principal, Peace Regional Outreach Campus)
Robin Erickson	Town of Peace River
Claude Rodrique	Northern Sunrise County
Kenneth Wong	Alberta Infrastructure
Peter Burgess	Alberta Education
Robert Rabinovitch	The Workun Garrick Partnership
Kurt Von Kuster	The Workun Garrick Partnership

2.0 The Process

2.1 Summary of the Process

The objective of the Peace River Schools Value Scoping Session was to develop a detailed scope definition to assist the Peace River School Division in the development of their capital plan. The focus of the session was to explore potential options regarding the replacement, modernization and addition/right sizing of the Ecole Springfield Elementary School, T.A. Norris Middle School and the Peace River High School.

This Value Scoping Session is not only to inform the approach to the Peace River Schools, but the entire School Division as the final report will be provided to the Peace River School Division Board of Trustees for their use in developing their final 2026 - 2029 Capital Plan Submission.

Prior to the Value Scoping Session, the Peace River School Division conducted a Community Engagement on the Educational Offerings in Peace River, to solicit input from a wider audience and obtain feedback that would help drive discussions within the Value Scoping Sessions.

2.2 Agenda

Day 1

- Introductions
- Overview of Process
- Review of Stakeholder Vision, Goals and Objectives
 - Peace River School Division
 - Alberta Education
 - Alberta Infrastructure
- Review of Existing Information
 - Existing Floor Plans and Site Plans
 - Current Enrolments and Utilization
 - Projected Enrolments
- Review of Preliminary Engagement Report
 - Grade Configurations
 - Language and Programming
 - Facilities and Location
 - Quality Education
- Review of Potential School Options
 - K-6 and 7-12
 - K-8 and 9-12
 - K-12
 - K-6 and 7-12 with Nampa School and Peace Regional Outreach Campus
 - K-8 and 9-12 with Nampa School and Peace Regional Outreach Campus
 - K-12 with Nampa School
 - K-12 with Nampa School and Peace Regional Outreach Campus
- Establishment of Evaluation Criteria
- Brainstorming Exercise
 - Group Discussions About Benefits of Each Potential Grade Configuration
- Presentation and Review of Brainstorming Exercise
- Evaluation of Ideas from Brainstorming Exercise

Day 2

- Review of previous day's discussions and conclusions
- Presentation
 - Review of Current Education Design Standards Area Allocations.
 - Discussion on educational trends, best practices and innovative learning spaces – 21st Century Learning.
 - Discussion on design and construction principles for educational facilities.
- Brainstorming Exercise
 - Group Discussions About Optimal Grade Configurations for Peace River Schools.
- Discussion of Advantages, Disadvantages and Risks of each option
- Ranking of Options
 - Discuss potential preferred Option
- Confirmation of preferred Option
- Wrap-up and Next Steps

2.3 Summary of Objectives

Each of the stakeholders was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and briefly identify their objectives, vision and goals for the project. These are summarized as follows:

Alberta Education:

- Proposals to be well thought out and have a clear reason for the project.
- Project Drivers for successful projects:
 - Health and Safety
 - Legal
 - Building Condition
 - Programming
 - Efficiency Solutions
- Ensuring the proposal is the right choice for the School Division and the Community.

Alberta Infrastructure:

- Value Scoping Session assists with defining the scope of the project.
- Functional Facilities - the school should effectively support the educational program and day-to-day operation of the school.
- Sustainable Facilities - A sustainable school should be durable, energy efficient, cost-effective to operate and maintain, and designed to provide long-term value.
- Flexible and Adaptable Facilities - Flexibility recognizes that the way schools are used can change over time. Classroom sizes, instructional methods, technology, student needs and programming can all evolve. Adaptability takes the concept of flexibility further by ensuring the school is designed so that the building can respond to significant changes in educational needs, enrolment, demographics or community use over its lifespan.
- Accessibility - Accessibility should be considered integral to the design and the school should provide an inclusive environment that allows all students, staff, and community members to access, navigate, and participate in the full range of activities offered by the facility.
- Affordable - Affordability recognizes that school facilities are long-term public investments and that responsible planning must balance the needs of the educational program with available capital and operating resources. An affordable school considers the construction cost as well as the operating costs, maintenance, renewal, durability, energy consumption, and eventual replacement or adaptation over the life of the facility.
- Form - Good school design should create a building that is recognizable and welcoming while remaining practical, durable, and appropriate to its surroundings.

Peace River School Division:

- Addressing aging and inadequate facilities
- Providing appropriate grade configurations
- Maintaining quality educational programming
- Supporting French Immersion
- Improving student support and inclusivity
- Addressing the long-term risk associated with Peace River High School
- Maintaining a viable educational presence in Peace River
- Minimizing disruption during construction
- Developing a financially sustainable long-term solution

2.4 Summary of Preliminary Engagement Report

Community Engagement on Educational Offerings in Peace River was conducted by the School Division prior to the value scoping session. The community engagement Respondents were Community members, Peace River School Division Staff and Jr/Sr High School Students. Overall, the survey responses are in line with the overall objectives echoed by the Value Scoping Participants. Note: The Value Scoping Sessions primarily focused on the Grade Configurations and Facilities & Location Topics of the survey.

Grade Configurations

- Strong desire for a two-school model.
- Grades 5 and 6 are misplaced. These grades are better suited for an elementary setting due to curriculum and maturity of the students.
- Grade 9 placement to be considered. Some concern that Grade 9 students may be misplaced within the High School setting.
- Leadership opportunities within schools matter. Grade configurations to allow older students to serve as leaders and role models for younger students.

Language Programming

- French Immersion is a valued part of the programming offered with in Peace River Schools and is to be maintained.
- Additional opportunities and supports for French Immersion programming need to be provided/implemented.

Facilities and Location

- There is concern with a potential new school build on the West side of Peace River. This is due to concerns with accessibility, transport for parents and students, and proximity to existing community amenities.
- Modernization of existing facilities preferred over building new.

Quality Education

- Participants perceive that students with complex or high needs are not receiving adequate support.
- Students should be prepared for real-world skills and high expectations.
- Teachers and staff are the most important factor in quality education.
- Program breadth and access to diverse course offerings matter.

2.5 Summary of Planning Discussion

Prior to the brainstorming exercise and further discussions, the team reviewed the criteria used in the capital planning process and utilized by Alberta Education and Alberta Infrastructure in the evaluation of School Division capital plan requests.

- Alberta Education receives a significant amount of capital plan applications every year and typically approves just under 1% of these requests. The main criteria used by Alberta Education in evaluating the capital plan requests and subsequent approvals are:
 - Health and Safety
 - Enrolment (current and projected)
 - Programming requirements
 - Technology and infrastructure
 - Legal Rights
- Current demographics and enrolment trends and projections are used to establish the required capacity for the modernization/addition or replacement school.

The following information assists in developing the framework for meaningful discussions regarding potential solutions for the Peace River Schools.

Ecole Springfield Elementary School:

- Ecole Springfield Elementary School is currently utilized at a rate of 79% with a current enrolment of 310 students. School enrolment projections indicate that Ecole Springfield Elementary School utilization will drop slightly to 78% in 2031.
- Current grade configuration is K-4.
- The facility is struggling to keep up with technology requirements and it is difficult to meet the general needs of the educational programming offered at the School.

T.A. Norris Middle School:

- T.A. Norris Middle School is currently utilized at 68% with a current enrolment of 263 students. School enrolment projections indicate that T.A. Norris Middle School will drop to a utilization rate of 64% by 2031.
- Current grade configuration is 5-8.
- The facility is struggling to keep up with technology requirements and it is difficult to meet the general needs of the educational programming offered at the School.

Peace River High School:

- Peace River High School is currently utilized at 65% with a current enrolment of 263 students. School enrolment projections indicate the Peace River High School will drop to a utilization rate of 61% by 2031.
- Current grade configuration is 9-12.
- The facility is struggling to keep up with technology requirements and it is difficult to meet the general needs of the educational programming offered at the School.
- Peace River High School is situated on the top of a hill that is currently degrading and with a major landslide occurring this year which has affected the pedestrian access to the school from the east. Proximity of the school to this slide has generated concerns for the structural integrity of the school. Initial assessments by a Structural Engineering Firm suggests that the School is structurally sound and has not been affected by this slide, however, further investigations are in progress to ensure this is the case.

3.0 Establishment of Evaluation Criteria

In order to evaluate the appropriate grade configurations for the Peace River Schools, the team identified a number of key contributing factors for consideration and review of the potential options generated through the brainstorming exercise.

Through discussion with the Value Scoping Participants, the following were noted as the key items to be considered in the evaluation of the design options that were generated through the brainstorming exercise:

- Student health and safety.
- Provide the best learning environment possible for students.
- Balance education with operational components/ costs.
- Long term viability of the school(s). It needs to be the right size for today and for the future to ensure the school is not underutilized.
- Ability to adapt and grow.
- Improved functionality of the school(s).
- Meets the requirements of 21st century learning.
- Sustainability.
- Impact on community in the Town of Peace River.
- Infrastructure/age of building(s).

4.0 Brainstorming Exercise

The value scoping participants were divided into groups and each tasked with coming up with pros and cons of each potential grade configuration for the Peace River Schools.

Grade configurations discussed were as follows:

- K-6 and 7-12
- K-8 and 9-12
- K-12

To further inform the participants and to help facilitate the discussion regarding the grade configurations and the possible impacts to the schools, the team was presented with the potential Area Allocations for new schools of the proposed grade configurations, based on the projected 2031 school enrolments. Areas for each school and grade configuration were pulled from the Alberta Education Capital Manual. It was assumed that regardless of new or modernized schools these areas would be used as a baseline for these discussions.

Additional consideration was given to the above grade configurations in regards to incorporating the nearby Nampa School (Elementary) and the Peace Regional Outreach Campus (Grade 10-12).

Each group contained members of the Peace River School Division Offices, Peace River School Division Trustees, representatives from the Schools, and the Town of Peace River.

The purpose of this exercise was to determine potential benefits or road blocks regarding certain configurations and to help further the discussions regarding school options. The participants were reminded that this exercise is to focus on the potential configurations, however some discussion regarding the potential impacts to the existing schools was also incorporated into the discussions.

Peace River Schools Value Scoping	
PROS	CONS
K-6 and 7-12	
Eliminates multiple bell schedules.	Loss of CTF/ CTS and athletic programming opportunities for grade 5 and 6 students.
Transition between grades is easier.	Potential separation of family members/ friends in other grades.
Grade configuration aligns with Alberta Education assessments.	
Instruction times align in all grades.	
Safety of younger students as separated from older students.	

Peace River Schools Value Scoping	
PROS	CONS
K-8 and 9-12	
New K-8 would provide some additional CTS Spaces.	Participants expressed concern regarding the appropriateness of grouping Grades 7-8 with younger elementary students.
Increased size of the K-8 facility would provide these students with more programming opportunities.	Peace River High School, even if modernized, still has concerns with the structural integrity of the hill.
Maintains the Peace River High School CTS spaces and Gym.	If a new K-8 facility is built, what is the likelihood that Peace River High School would be replaced if the hill degrades further and the school is not safe for occupancy.
Grade 7 and 8 students would have the opportunity to grow into leaders and mature before heading into a high school setting.	
Grade configuration is better.	
Instruction times align.	

Peace River Schools Value Scoping	
PROS	CONS
K-12	
All new build resulting in minimal disruption of learning.	Could end up with a smaller overall building area/ classroom area vs. 2 separate schools.
Greater sense of community. Both within the school and within the Town of Peace River.	There is no back up facility should something happen to the school.
Ability to host larger events.	Only one admin team.
One physical plant for improved School Division maintenance.	Different grade dynamics than what we currently have.
One custodial team.	The larger student population may create additional supervision and operational challenges.
Potential operational efficiencies associated with consolidating three facilities into one purpose-designed building.	Participants recognized potential benefits associated with the K-12 model but expressed concerns regarding the scale of the facility and its suitability for the Peace River community.
Improved study facilities.	Lack of gym space for school and community use
Shared learning commons and gathering spaces.	
Allows for more study spaces and interaction of students.	
New facility would be completely up to today's standards for 21st Century Learning and inclusivity.	

During the brainstorming exercise, participants identified an additional grade configuration for consideration: K-3 / 4-12. The pros and cons of this grade configuration are listed below.

Peace River Schools Value Scoping	
PROS	CONS
K-3 and 4-12	
Separates the youngest students from the remainder of the older students.	Different grade dynamics than what we currently have.
Slightly larger brand new school than what would be provided by a new 7-12 school.	The larger student population may create additional supervision and operational challenges.
Ability to host larger events.	Grades 4-6 have different curriculum requirements and bell schedules.
Easy to convert Ecole Springfield Elementary School into K-3 by removing the existing aged modular classrooms. (Which need to be replaced anyway)	
New 4-12 school could be accommodated on the T.A. Norris site.	
Provides the School Division with flexibility for the future as the new school could adjust to a 7-12 school if required by increase in student population by adding new modular classrooms to Ecole Springfield Elementary School to accommodate Grade 4-6.	
Improved study facilities.	
Shared learning commons and gathering spaces.	
Allows for more study spaces and interaction of students.	
New facility would be completely up to today's standards for 21st Century Learning and inclusivity.	

5.0 Evaluation of Options and Solution

Following the review of the pros and cons of the grade configurations, the Value Scoping participants were asked to discuss the merits of the options and determine the preferred solution based on these discussions.

The participants agreed that while all options had merit, the K-12 option was the least desirable as this would be a very large school and there were concerns with how this may work within the community.

The K-8/ 9-12 option assumes that the K-8 school would be built to replace Ecole Springfield School and T.A. Norris School while maintaining Peace River High School. The main concern for this solution is the potential future scenario. What if once the new K-8 school is built, the hill at the high school continues to degrade and the Peace River High School needs to be closed. Where will those students be placed. Will the School Division receive funding to build a second new school in quick succession to the new K-8 school. If no replacement for the Peace River High School could be accommodated, the School Division would need to relocate the high school students to other communities, or risk losing them to other school divisions with closer facilities. These concerns made this option less desirable to the others.

The participants then discussed the two more favorable options for the "Peace River School Solution", the K-6/ 7-12 and K-3/ 4-12 options.

While the K-6/ 7-12 option better aligns with timetables, curriculum, bell schedules, and gives the desired separation of younger and older grades, a key consideration in evaluating the K-6/7-12 option was the limited ability of the proposed facilities to accommodate future changes in enrolment or programming. While the projected enrolment indicates relatively stable or declining student populations in the near term, long-term capital planning should also consider the potential for demographic change, regional enrolment shifts and changes in program delivery.

While community engagement demonstrated strong support for both K-6/ 7-12 and K-8/ 9-12 configurations, the Value Scoping participants evaluated these options within the broader context of facility condition, site constraints, future flexibility, capital investment, and long-term risk. Considering these factors collectively, the K-3/ 4-12 configuration emerged as the preferred solution.

Based on the information reviewed and the discussions undertaken during the Value Scoping Session, the K-3 / 4-12 configuration emerged as the preferred approach for the Peace River School Solution. This option provides an opportunity to address the aging infrastructure at Ecole Springfield Elementary School, T.A. Norris Middle School and Peace River High School through a coordinated long-term strategy rather than through incremental investment in three existing facilities. The K-3 portion of the solution can be accommodated within Ecole Springfield Elementary School through the removal of the existing modular classrooms, which are beyond their service life and in need of replacement. The 4-12 configuration would be accommodated through a replacement school for T.A. Norris Middle School and Peace River High School on the T.A. Norris site, providing an opportunity to avoid significant long-term capital investment in the existing Peace River High School facility and reduce the long-term planning uncertainty associated with its current site.

The proposed replacement school would allow the existing schools to remain operational during construction and would provide an opportunity to establish a contemporary, functional, sustainable, flexible and adaptable learning environment designed to support current and future educational programming. The new facility can be organized to provide appropriate separation and identity for elementary, junior high and senior high students while also taking advantage of shared learning, athletic, CTS, student support, gathering and community spaces. Functionally, the new 4-12 school would provide purpose-designed instructional, CTS, athletic, student support and administrative spaces that are difficult to accommodate within the existing facilities. From a sustainability perspective, a new facility would provide an opportunity to improve energy performance, durability and long-

term operating efficiency compared with continuing to maintain multiple aging buildings.

The new facility should be planned around a range of future enrolment and programming scenarios, providing flexibility and adaptability over its service life rather than simply being right-sized to current needs. This approach should focus on planned flexibility rather than excess capacity, ensuring that the facility is appropriately sized to demonstrated enrolment and programming requirements while incorporating reasonable opportunities to respond to future changes without requiring significant reconstruction or premature replacement. The building should provide a framework capable of adapting to changes in enrolment, programming, technology and educational delivery without requiring major additions or alterations. A new facility would also provide an opportunity to comprehensively address barrier-free accessibility and inclusivity rather than relying on incremental modifications to aging facilities. From an affordability and lifecycle perspective, the solution should be considered in terms of the potential long-term costs associated with the maintenance, renewal and operation of multiple aging facilities in addition to the initial capital investment. The new facility would also provide an opportunity to establish a strong civic and educational presence that responds appropriately to the existing neighbourhood and site.

The Value Scoping participants acknowledged that the Grades 4-12 configuration would not provide the same physical separation between younger and older students and would introduce some additional complexity to bell schedules and programming requirements between elementary and junior/senior high school. However, the participants agreed that these challenges could be addressed through the design and internal organization of the replacement school.

While further analysis will be required to confirm the final scope, capacity, site requirements, phasing and project costs, the K-3 / 4-12 configuration provides the strongest overall response to the functional, sustainable, flexible and adaptable, accessible, affordable and form-related objectives identified through the Value Scoping process.

The preferred solution represents a planning direction based on the information available and the discussions undertaken during the session and is not intended to establish a final project scope, site plan, building design or funding requirement. Further technical, educational, financial, site and program analysis will be required as the School Division advances the project through the capital planning and project development process.