

November 14th, 2013

City of Spokane  
Planning Services Department

**RE: Hutton Elementary Conditional Use Permit Written Narrative**

**Statement of Development Objectives:**

Hutton Elementary is a modernization and addition to an existing 1921 school conforming to the guidelines of the Spokane Public Schools Standard Elementary School Educational Specification. It will provide 25 classrooms, an art room, a music room, a multi purpose room and stage, a separate gymnasium, a library and administrative support spaces. Through a site design proposal responsive to SPS standards for public use, play area, vehicle circulation, staff parking and safe pedestrian access, it is intended to provide enhancements to the nearby residential neighborhood while serving the needs of Spokane Public Schools patrons and the families of the Rockwood Neighborhood attendance area. The school district invited members of the Rockwood Neighborhood Association and other local parents/residents of the area to participate in several design workshops. The resulting design is a collaborative effort between the school district and the committee.

The existing architectural character of Hutton Elementary will be preserved and the addition will respond not only to the existing structure but to the established neighborhood by complementing the existing architecture without being an exact copy. The surrounding neighborhood has homes mostly dating from the 1920's through the 1940's. The Hutton Elementary project will involve renovation of the most historic portions of the existing school, removal of some non-historic existing portions of the building, construction of a new addition to the school, and removal of "temporary" structures, including the existing modular building at the west end of the site. This allows views to the original entrance and historic west façade to become visible again, re-creating the "school on the hill" appearance.

The project sits on 5.8 acres in an established residential neighborhood in the heart of the south hill. There are no arterials directly adjacent to the site, and the residential streets that abut the site are typically narrow with limited through-access. Students access the site from all directions and there is a high degree of students walking and bicycling to the site. Currently the vast majority of all bus and parent traffic co-mingle along a short section of Plateau Road making it difficult for vehicles to pass each other in normal conditions and even more difficult in wintertime as snow berms decrease the width of the streets even further. The new design strategically locates new pull-out zones for cars and busses, separating these uses to relieve congestion and provide safer pedestrian and vehicular routes to and from the school. Added on-site parking also helps improve the congestion issues.

The most historical portion of the school is located on top of a small hill, placing the floor elevation around 5 feet higher than most portions of the site. Mature trees create a park-like setting at the west (entrance) side of the school, and the playfield is bordered on the north and east sides by trees and other landscaping, creating a nice buffer to the immediate neighbors on those sides. Even though the design adds approximately 50 total parking spaces, the total green space will stay approximately the same. This is mostly due to the current asphalt area being greatly oversized and the existing school layout being very inefficient with portables and other one-story uses. Portions of the new addition are two-story.

**Consistency with City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan:**

This proposal for Hutton Elementary meets many goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

**LU 6.3 notes that "school sites should be well located to serve the service area" and that "they are readily accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists."** With an existing building and the site defined by two local streets, the proposal for Hutton accomplishes this. The proposed modifications to pedestrian circulation and the close attention to bus parking and parent

drop off provides a safe and convenient route for students to access the building on foot or bicycle while at the same time alleviating much of the existing congestions of bus and parent traffic.

**LU 6.8 Schools as a Neighborhood Focus** *Encourage school officials to retain existing neighborhood school sites and structures because of the importance of the school in maintaining a strong, healthy neighborhood.* It was important to Spokane Public Schools to retain this building not only because of its importance to the Historic Rockwood District but also because of its importance to the neighborhood in general. The building and site are well-used by the district and the community which reinforces their concept of integration between schools and community, an important design standard established by the district. This represents an expansion of education in people's lives and a greater sharing between educational and other community facilities such as libraries, health centers, parks and recreation, etc. Spokane Public Schools acknowledges the impact and importance of a school contributing to a strong healthy neighborhood.

**LU 6.9 Shared Facilities:** *Continue the sharing of city and school facilities for neighborhood parks, recreation, and open space uses.* As noted above, the integration of city and school facilities is a goal of Spokane Public Schools. Joint use of on-site and off-site facilities is also a goal of Spokane Public Schools with every project. Hutton Elementary will accommodate community use with a Community/Art room, shared use of the Gymnasium and Multipurpose room after hours, a dedicated community storage room for sports equipment, before and after school programs and other community activities. The playfield is available for use by the community and other appropriate organizations as well.

**TR 2.5 encourages designers to "Design parking facilities to enhance mobility for all transportation users (including those not driving) and to mitigate impacts on surrounding areas."**

The new parking lot for visitors is located directly west of the school allowing the disabled and visitors to park and conveniently enter the building at the main entrance. The additional parking lots to the north and south allow an arrangement where pedestrians and bicyclists do not cross the main vehicular paths to access the school. TR2.7 and 2.12 are addressed similarly. Landscape screening is incorporated to reduce the visual impacts of the lot from the street as you approach the building. Pedestrian traffic can easily circulate through the west end of the site and safely around the parking lot to access the school.

**TR 7.3 encourages designers to "Plant trees wherever possible to enhance the transportation environment."**

New street trees will be introduced along Plateau, 25th and 24th Avenue to meet city standards while adding shading, calming traffic, and contributing to the pedestrian nature of the area.

**DP 1.4 encourages designers to "Ensure that new development is of a type, scale, orientation, and design that maintains or improves the character, aesthetic quality, livability of the neighborhood."**

The project not only retains the historic facades that define this piece of the neighborhood, but removes the "temporary" structures that were added to the building decades ago. The scale of the new addition is complimentary to the historic building. In order to maintain the historic character of the existing Hutton Elementary School building there should be a balance between differentiation and compatibility. The intent is that the addition is not identical nor an extreme contrast to the existing historical structure but will be compatible while still emphasizing the original architecture as the prominent face to the public. The proposed resulting addition is located east of (behind) the existing façade allowing the original building to be visually prominent from several locations around the site.

In an effort to meet codes, policies and plans that the city has adopted the design team has explored several items that will protect and improve the existing neighborhood quality.

1.) **The design team has explored options to reduce parking between the building and the street:**

Due to the small site and narrow streets surrounding the site as well as critical programmatic requirements the options for parking lot configurations are limited. In an effort to reduce the impact of one large asphalt parking lot the Design Team had broken the lots into three separate locations and reduced the typical number of parking stalls by 25%. Each lot will meet the City of Spokane standards for landscaping. The issues driving the locations and sizes of proposed lots are as follows:

- Minimize impact to existing playfield area
- Maintain existing tree buffers at north and east site boundaries
- Minimize vehicular impact to play areas
- Enhance student safety by separating parking lots and student play areas
- Configure play areas for efficient supervision

2.) **The Design Team has addressed Institutional Design Standards pertaining to blank walls:**

Many of the walls on the building addition will be detailed with openings expressive of the existing building. The walls without openings are detailed typically in masonry with both horizontal and vertical articulation matching similar proportions to the fenestration around the building. Belt courses, cornice/overhangs and medallions are also used to add visual interest to otherwise blank walls.

- 3.) **The Design Team has addressed Institutional design standards pertaining to massing (base, middle & top):**  
Although Spanish Colonial Architecture does not always include a distinct base, middle and top the massing and detailing of the new addition to Hutton incorporates an existing belt course which allows for an accent "rusticated" base. The belt course is aligned with an existing course on the original building providing horizontal continuity from old to new. Wall brackets supporting small overhangs at key locations provide a top to the walls creating a shadow line and some shading for the upper windows. The longer south elevation is broken up with vertical tower-like features providing reading alcoves in the classrooms.
- 4.) **The Design Team has addressed landscaping and street trees per the city's standards:**  
The landscaping, street trees and site design will meet city standards and are physically compatible with the adjacent residential development. The proposed plantings of street trees shall extend along the north and south sides of the existing building as well as the proposed new addition and continue to the east end of the school district property. Parking lot areas shall be screened from the public right of way with type L2 for screening of headlights but not greater than four feet for safety and security concerns. These see-through buffers will be a mix of evergreen and deciduous shrubs. All species shall be native or adapted to the Spokane region and will be selected for the applicable micro climate at this site.

Sincerely,



Walt Huffman, AIA