

**SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**TO:**            *MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: BURNABY CHILD CARE DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** Building the Future: Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines, as presented in Attachment 1 to the report title “Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines” dated October 16, 2024, of the Social Planning Committee meeting, be adopted and applied to all new City-related child care facilities.

**REPORT**

The Social Planning Committee, at its meeting held on October 16, 2024, received and adopted the attached report seeking Council approval of the Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines.

On behalf of the Social Planning  
Committee,

Councillor A. Gu  
Chair

Councillor M. Santiago  
Vice Chair

**TO:** SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE (SPC)  
**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
**SUBJECT:** **BURNABY CHILD CARE DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**  
**PURPOSE:** To present draft child care design principles and guidelines for the approval of Council.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Building the Future: Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines, as presented in Attachment 1 to the report title “Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines” dated October 16, 2024, of the Open meeting of the Social Planning Committee, be adopted and applied to all new City-related child care facilities.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In alignment with the Burnaby Child Care Action Plan (2021), this report introduces proposed child care design principles and guidelines for all new City-related child care facilities (e.g. City initiated, funded, owned, or supported facilities, including those built through the Community Benefit Bonus Policy or new Amenity Cost Charges).

### **1.0 POLICY SECTION**

The directions in this report align with the:

- Corporate Strategic Plan (2022);
- Child Care Action Plan (2021);
- Social Sustainability Strategy (2011);
- Economic Development Strategy (2007); and
- Official Community Plan (1998).

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

Burnaby has taken a strong leadership role in facilitating the provision of child care in our community. The City has done this in recognition of the crucial role it plays in the well-being of families and its contribution to complete communities and a thriving economy. Access to quality child care helps parents to balance work and school, and plays a critical role in the decisions of where to locate businesses, and the recruitment and retention of employees. Quality child care also benefits all aspects of children’s development and lays the foundation for school success, higher education, development of social-emotional skills and life-long learning.

In July 2021, the City adopted the Burnaby Child Care Action Plan that provides a 10-year road map on ways to address the child care needs of our growing population. The Plan has four strategic directions: increasing accessibility; improving affordability; enhancing quality and strategic partnerships. This report focuses on the strategic direction of enhancing quality. A key action under this direction is the creation of a set of design principles and guidelines that will assist the City in the development of child care in civic spaces.

Further to this direction, the Social Planning Committee received a presentation from members of the City’s Child Care Resources Group at its meeting on March 15, 2023 on the importance of quality design in the delivery of quality child care programs. Arising from the presentation, the Committee introduced two motions that were subsequently adopted by Council at its meeting on March 27, 2023:

**THAT** staff investigate the feasibility of enforcing adherence to design principles and guidelines that facilitate quality child care and are not a barrier to the addition of new spaces for all child care developments that receive funding from the City.

**THAT** Council support the necessary staff resources for a policy to be developed that supports the addition of new, quality spaces, and for continued partnership in developing new child care facilities.

In alignment with this direction, this report and Attachment 1 present child care design principles and guidelines for the approval of Council.

**3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

Building the Future: Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines (Attachment 1) was created to provide the City with a framework and set of requirements for creating high quality, licensed child care facilities. The principles and guidelines are intended to apply to all new City-related child care facilities (e.g. City initiated, funded, owned, or supported facilities, including those built through the Community Benefit Bonus Policy or new Amenity Cost Charges). They will also serve as a public education resource for anyone interested in developing child care spaces in Burnaby.

The proposed design principles and guidelines were developed in consultation with staff of the Planning and Development Department and Lands and Facilities Department and the City’s Child Care Resources Group, and with the guidance of consultants with expertise in child care operations, regulation and architectural design.

**3.1 Existing Regulation and Legislation**

The principles and guidelines complement existing regulations, legislation and standards and do not replace any provincial or City of Burnaby regulatory requirements including B.C.’s *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the *Child Care Licensing Regulation*.

Burnaby's principles and guidelines align closely with the recently released (August 2024) B.C. Ministry of Education and Child Care Design Guidelines for Child Care Centres. This provincial resource was designed to provide consistent guidance for the design of child care centres and detail beyond regulatory requirements with the goal of achieving a higher and more consistent quality of child care centres throughout B.C. At this point, the provincial guidelines are a resource for new facilities receiving provincial New Spaces funding.

If approved, Burnaby would join the Cities of Vancouver and Richmond in having specific requirements for the design and finish of civic-owned facilities to achieve quality facilities.

### 3.2 Proposed Design Principles and Guidelines

For many parents of young children in Burnaby and elsewhere in the Lower Mainland, the ability to participate in the paid labour force or pursue higher education depends on their ability to secure child care. For children, access to high quality child care is linked to many positive outcomes, while poor quality care can have negative long-term effects.

The physical environment of a child care centre, both indoors and outdoors, sets the stage for a quality child care program. The location, layout, size, materials and design features directly influence the quality of a program and therefore children's long term healthy development. The design principles and guidelines in Attachment 1 reflect current best practices in early learning and care and offer guidance in creating quality spaces that will nurture the well-being and development of all children.

Attachment 1 – Building the Future: Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines – identifies seven overarching design principles and specific requirements associated with each one. The seven principles are listed below along with notable requirements.

1. **Location, Siting and Safe Access** – Child care centres must be in safe, accessible areas that are carefully chosen to foster a sense of community and build trust among families.

This principle emphasizes the importance of locating child care centres with or near other services used by families like schools, community centres and parks, and in new residential centres or commercial areas where larger numbers of families can be expected to live or work.

2. **Children – Indoor Spaces** – Child care centres must provide a minimum of 3.7 m<sup>2</sup> of usable indoor floor space per child. Additionally, there should be a safe and direct connection, both visually and physically, to the outdoor playground.

The usable indoor space per child requirement is consistent with the provincial *Child Care Licensing Regulation*. In addition, the guidelines associated with this principle require centres to have support spaces such as a staff office, staff breakroom, a small meeting room and an adult fully accessible washroom(s). Other requirements involve

floor layout and features. In combination, the guidelines are designed to support smooth operations, staff well-being, appropriate child development and experiences, and meaningful interactions with parents.

- 3. Children – Outdoor Playground** – Child care centres require dedicated outdoor playgrounds for each program, offering both covered and open areas for children's use. These playgrounds must provide a minimum of 6 m<sup>2</sup> of usable space per child, excluding areas like storage, waste disposal, walkways, gate/door swings and planters. Additionally, there should be a safe and direct connection, both visually and physically, to the indoor spaces.

Of note, Burnaby's proposed requirements require a dedicated outdoor playground for each child care program within a centre (e.g. dedicated outdoor playgrounds for age groups 0-36 months, 3-5 years). In contrast, the provincial *Child Care License Regulation* allows programs within a centre to share outdoor play with scheduled rotations. Where this occurs, spontaneous outdoor play may be limited, especially during winter months. Also, a shared space designed for a wide age range can prioritize safety for younger children, potentially limiting the play value for older ones. Child care providers note that as our cities grow and many children are living in smaller residential units, ample access to quality outdoor space becomes even more important for the physical health and well-being of children.

- 4. Families** – Child care centres must be designed to be welcoming, inclusive spaces that promote family involvement and encourage families to enjoy and benefit from the community that is created.

This principle and associated guidelines provide guidance on centre layout and features such as welcoming entrances, cubby areas, small meeting rooms, adult seating, windows at children's heights between corridors and rooms to allow for transparency and adult height family counters for sign in/out and information sharing. Together, these features are designed to foster strong relationships between families, educators and caregivers.

- 5. Staff- Workplace Environment** – Child care centres must include support spaces for staff to promote a positive, healthy, and productive work environment.

This principle and associated guidelines emphasize the importance of separate spaces for child care centre staff for staff learning and break times. One of the biggest challenges in child care operations today is the recruitment and retention of child care staff. Well-designed facilities with dedicated staff spaces demonstrate that staff are valued and their physical and emotional well-being is important.

- 6. Accessibility, Inclusion and Equity** – Child care centres must be designed to be fully inclusive and accessible to ensure the meaningful participation of children with diverse abilities, developmental needs and backgrounds.

This principle and associated guidelines are consistent with provincial accessibility requirements but ensure that spaces are truly welcoming spaces for children and adults of all abilities. A key requirement of provincial New Spaces funding is that programs are fully inclusive and accessible.

**7. Resiliency and Future Proofing** – Child care centres must be designed to be flexible, durable, cost efficient to operate and incorporate climate resistant strategies.

This principle and associated guidelines address the long-life cycle required of new centres, the need to adapt to changing climate and the importance of cost-efficient operations over time. To receive maximum funding available through New Spaces funding, new applications must demonstrate that facilities can remain in operation for a minimum of twenty years.

In summary, Building the Future: Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines provide a consistent framework and set of requirements for both critical early planning decisions and for the detailed design and development work required to create high-quality licensed child care spaces that will last well into the future. They are consistent with new provincial child care design guidelines and will promote the construction of new facilities that will provide healthy and inspiring environments for children while also addressing the needs of child care staff, parents and caregivers.

**4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Should Burnaby’s proposed child care design principles and guidelines be adopted, staff would prepare communication materials to inform applicants of the design requirements for all new City-related child care facilities.

**5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

Respectfully submitted,

E.W. Kozak, General Manager Planning and Development

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Building the Future: Burnaby’s Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines

**REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Margaret Manifold, Planner 3, and reviewed by Johannes Schumann, Director Community Planning and Lee-Ann Garnett, Deputy General Manager Planning and Development.