

Town of Snowmass Village

Agenda Item Summary

DATE OF MEETING:

August 5, 2024

AGENDA ITEM:

Little Red Schoolhouse Project Update

PRESENTED BY:

Clint Kinney, Town Manager
Greg LeBlanc, Assistant Town Manager
Mike Horvath, Town Engineer

BACKGROUND:

The Little Red Schoolhouse, previously operated by the not-for-profit Little Red School House Organization, has been operated by Woody Creek Kids since the start of 2022. In 2021, the Town Council adopted a goal to “Explore an enhanced use of the Little Red Schoolhouse to provide an improved and enlarged childcare/early learning facility.” Following that direction, staff hired a consultant to conduct an early childhood education needs assessment and financial analysis for the Town with the primary focus on the Little Red School House property. The Town’s overarching goal is to ensure that childcare and early childhood education continue to be provided and expanded at the Little Red School House facility.

The needs assessment, site analysis and budget analysis were completed in 2022. In the meantime, the Town continued the working relationship with Woody Creek Kids by extending the lease through the end of 2025.

Following the completion of the needs assessment, the Town contracted with the design team of Land + Shelter and Alan Ford Architects earlier this year to start the design process for the expansion project at the Little Red Schoolhouse. The design team is part of a broader project team consisting of Town staff, the design team, and Christina Holloway with Woody Creek Kids.

First Design: Five-Classroom Model - Based on the needs assessment and input from the current childcare provider, the original program determination for the site was five classrooms, accommodating approximately 72-84 students. This level of programming would double the current enrollment, as identified in the early childhood education needs assessment as a feasible level of service for Snowmass Village. The

five-classroom model was to be divided by child age, one infant classroom (8-10 student), two toddler classrooms (16-20 students), and two pre-k classrooms (30-34 students). The layout of each classroom was intended to maximize flexibility of these enrollment age groups and to integrate into the property's outdoor spaces to extend the learning environment into nature. The proposed five classroom solution would total approximately 8,000 square feet in programmable space and would retain the historic schoolhouse as a prominent feature of the site.

The five-classroom model was estimated to cost approximately \$15 million, an amount significantly higher than the \$8.5 million budgeted for the project. With this information, the Town Council directed staff to reduce the size of the project to fit the budget while still addressing the needs of the community.

Second Design: Four Classroom Model – Incorporating the suggestions of the Town Council, staff, and the existing childcare provider, the design team developed a four-classroom model for the expansion project.

The four-classroom design includes a reduction from 5 to 4 classrooms, deleting the second story from the first design schematic. Other changes included a change to slab on grade construction, no basement, and all spaces slightly smaller (to childcare regulation minimums), and less entry space, for an overall 5,700 SF (gross). Radiant heat and geothermal were deleted, and to maintain displacement ventilation using air source heat pumps. Finally, the green, flat roof was deleted, replaced with conventional wood framing for walls and roof.

The new build facility has design capacity for a maximum of 60 children, which still significantly helps to meet the demand as outlined in the 2022 needs assessment. The minimum recommendation of 24 parking spaces is proposed with available space for expansion in the future.

The revised site plan includes dedicated pedestrian space from the parking lot to the entrance to the building, bicycle parking, and a small select user drop off space. This provides a safe and organized space for families during drop-off and pick-up times. These elements were incorporated in response to Council's comments last time the project was discussed.

A wetlands delineation has been completed and the attached updated site plan was overlaid to understand wetland impact areas. The project impacts less than one tenth of one acre of wetland; therefore, the project can move forward without extensive permitting and mitigation.

Certain design elements remained consistent throughout the design process, including access to the existing natural elements on the site, which include outdoor play areas and shaded areas from mature trees.

Construction Considerations& Budget – Both the historic structure and the auxiliary building are planned to remain in operation during construction. The historic structure is slated for renovation as a future phase of the project. The future renovation of the historic structure is expected to include a multi-purpose room intended for use by all ages. The auxiliary building is anticipated to be demolished or kept for outdoor storage after the new schoolhouse is completed and the space will be converted to an outdoor play/learning area.

Parking and vehicle circulation at the site will also be improved, increase from the current number of approximately 15 spaces to 24 spaces. Parking will continue to be shared with the adjacent park. Parking design meets industry standards for child care centers.

Other considerations for the site include efficient use of energy, which helps the Town achieve its sustainability goals, housing and occupant health. Both sustainability and occupant health will continue to be considered as design work continues. Housing has been considered, but not recommended to be integrated into the school building. Siting locations for housing project have been considered, however viable options will have negligible efficiencies for construction.

The anticipated project cost is \$8.5 million which includes the soft construction costs of construction administration and the hard construction costs. Given the estimated square-footage of the new schoolhouse, the opinion is that construction costs will be around \$800/square foot. \$8.5 million has been included in the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budget for 2025. The project schedule of construction in 2025 remains possible if the project progresses into land use and construction document development in the near future. Staff is exploring grant opportunities and a partnership opportunity with the County to assist with anticipated construction costs. Staff expects grant applications to become more competitive once the project applies for land use as it is viewed as a “real” project by selection committees.

Attached is an overview of the schematic design for the Little Red Schoolhouse expansion project, an overview of the programming for the expanded childcare facility, the shade study for the project, and a copy of the need assessment completed in 2022.

Staff has solicited feedback from other advisory boards to the Town Council, including the Planning Commission, Financial Advisory Board (FAB), and the POSTR Board and incorporated feedback into the design presented.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The Town of Snowmass Village has budgeted \$8.5 million for construction of the Little Red Schoolhouse expansion project in 2025 Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Budget.

COUNCIL OPTIONS:

The Council may direct the project team to submit an application for development or direct the design team to make additional changes to the design.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Town Council direct the project team to submit the formal land use application in order to begin the formal land use review process.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Little Red Schoolhouse Design Overview
- 2) Little Red Schoolhouse Programmatic Overview
- 3) Little Red Schoolhouse Shade Study
- 4) Little Red Schoolhouse Site Plan
- 5) Early Childhood Education Needs Assessment