

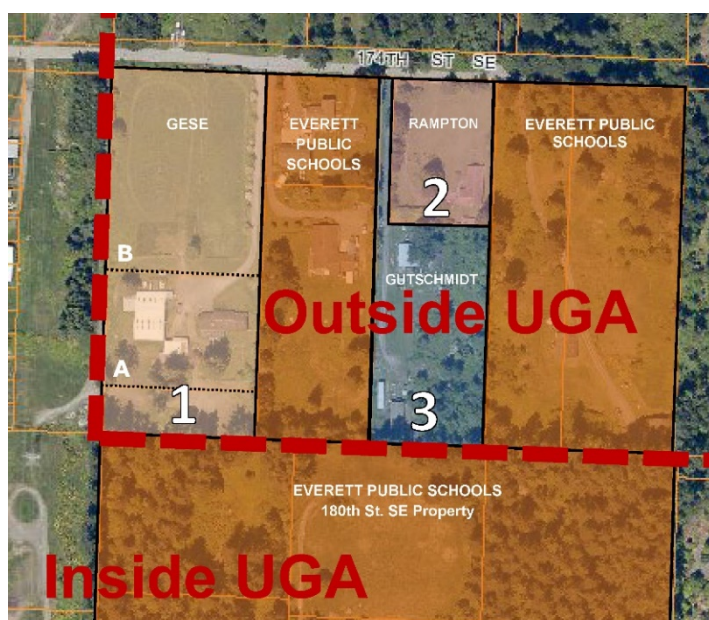


**News release**  
**January 19, 2018**

## **Board to help landowners with moving costs**

*Moving expenses added to allowable costs for negotiating purchase of three properties for district's fourth comprehensive high school*

Following its Jan. 16 executive session on land acquisition, the school board unanimously approved a motion to include reasonable and allowable costs, such as moving expenses and humanitarian concerns, when negotiating settlements with three property owners as part of the eminent domain process.



The district is negotiating to purchase three properties located outside the Urban Growth Area (UGA) to construct the district's fourth comprehensive high school. This land has less market value than land inside the UGA, which can be subdivided into much smaller lots.

The district has been in negotiations with property owners for more than two years to purchase properties adjacent to district property off 174th Street Southeast to construct the district's fourth comprehensive high school. Construction of the high school is contingent on voter approval of the Feb. 13 bond measure.

"The laws governing the processes of eminent domain were written to protect both property owners and public resources. However, laws don't always reflect the difficulties people face when they are in the midst of legal processes," said Board President Caroline Mason. "The process of eminent domain takes a toll on property owners, our community and families, and it is one of the most difficult decisions a governing body will ever face."

Historically, school districts have not paid relocation assistance as part of the eminent domain process if federal funds are not used to acquire property or build a school. "Because of that history, we followed that precedent in our eminent domain process," said Mason.

One of the property owners, Bruce Gutschmidt, attended the Jan. 9 board meeting and shared the challenges he and his partner are facing related to the eminent domain process. "We empathize with those challenges," said Mason. "We have carefully considered the challenges he brought to our attention and the challenges and rights of the other property owners who have already moved and our responsibility as stewards of public funds."

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In 2015, southern region property owners approached the district about their properties. The district and those landowners began negotiations for purchase to make the site large enough for a high school. The district answered questions about the status of negotiations [Nov. 2, 2017](#).

In the last 25 years, the district has purchased 20 properties without using eminent domain. This is the ideal way to set aside land for schools and students. Eminent domain is not a common process for school districts.



The last time was in 1993 when the school board followed eminent domain laws to buy three land parcels for Jackson High School. They did so for the same reason the current board is doing so—no other land was available at a reasonable price in a location where Jackson High School was needed, and existing schools were overcrowded as they are now. The two high schools in the district at that time were Everett and Cascade.

Jackson High School was built for 1,500 students. Today, it has more than 2,100 student and 17 portable classrooms on site. District enrollment is at an all-time high with 19,887 students. More than 1,600 additional students projected in the next 10 years. Most of that growth will be in the southern portion of the district where a new high school is needed—and where the district already owns some land intended for future schools. Additionally, 22 of the district's 26 schools are at or above capacity and closed to out-of-district transfers.

The school board placed a [Capital Bond](#) on the Feb. 13 ballot to build a new comprehensive high school to relieve overcrowding, add 36 permanent classrooms to reduce K-3 class sizes, remodel sections of existing high schools to add vocational training programs, and renovate aging facilities.

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**For more information:**

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