



Master Plans- Sound Educational Planning

Access to Australian and State Government grant support for capital projects is dependent upon schools being able to demonstrate sound educational planning underpinning proposed projects. A comprehensive, well-structured, up-to-date Master Plan represents the consultative process which has been undertaken to guide the future development of quality educational facilities for a school site.

CONSIDERATIONS

A school site Master Plan is one of the major, school-based planning documents. It extends from an overarching Strategic Plan which is, in turn connected to a long-term business plan. Together, these promote a rational, cohesive approach to decisions influencing the direction and development of a school as a learning environment.

A Master Plan provides a roadmap for a school's future capital projects for a defined period, at a point in time. It operationalises the collective vision for the physical development of a school; its buildings and other site-based infrastructure, in support of student learning outcomes.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

School leaders will develop a Strategic Plan in consultation with other stakeholders which will likely include staff, parents, students and the wider community.

A Strategic Plan will give consideration to varying combinations of the following elements:

- Mission and vision – the core values, underpinning educational philosophy, religious beliefs and goals for the school
- Desired education outcomes
- Statutory requirements and changes (e.g. Australian Curriculum)
- Teaching and learning pedagogy
- Year levels to be catered for
- Subdivisional grouping (e.g. early learning, middle school)
- Class sizes
- Integration / separation of subject areas (e.g. specialist faculties to be together or dispersed)
- Desired enrolment growth and maximum enrolment
- Future plans for expansion in year levels, streams etc
- Any specialised curriculum offerings or programs (e.g. Montessori, Reggio Emilia or International Baccalaureate)
- Any specialisation in particular curricular programs (e.g. VET offerings)
- Relationships and programs undertaken with the local community (e.g. local business, community groups, church)
- Context of the community within which the school exists
- Implications of any anticipated changes to any of the above over time.





Much of this information may already be covered in existing documents, such as the requirements of the Queensland Non-State Schools Accreditation Board (NSSAB), but it is important to consider the relationship between each element of the Strategic Plan and the future site development required to meet the educational facilities needs of the school community.

THE BUSINESS PLAN

The school's Business Plan for expenditure on capital works also needs to be considered to ensure that any facilities plans have a sound financial basis. A Master Plan should be costed by a Quantity Surveyor (QS) as part of the planning process, to allow it to be synchronised with a school's Business Plan. Costing the stages or key components will enhance the annual capital expenditure budget and make the financial forecasts more meaningful.

THE MASTER PLAN

A Master Plan should be undertaken by planning, architectural and/or building design professionals in conjunction with school leaders and others, as required. Meaningful Master Plans will evolve from a close collaboration between educators and facilities designers who appreciate each other's area of expertise. It is necessary to work closely with the designers engaged, to foster an in-depth understanding of the educational facilities requirements of the Strategic Plan.

The simplicity or complexity of a Master Plan will be determined by:

- the size of the school
- its stage of development, and
- the clarity of the Strategic Plan for the future.

Strategic Plan/Master Plan Relationship

Often, schools use the finalised Master Plan as a marketing tool as it provides a tangible record of the vision held by the school's governing body for quality educational delivery well into the future. A good Master Plan will flow from a clear understanding of the intentions of the Strategic Plan and an analysis of the site features, including any constraints.

The Master Plan should be regularly reviewed and updated as it is a living document. As such, it should not include too much detailed information, as this may serve to discourage the desire to make improvements in response to the range of factors which impact on schools. The Master Plan must be maintained as current and relevant to be useful.

Developing a Master Plan will have different considerations for a new (greenfield) site, compared with one that contains existing buildings. Not all of the elements of the site and its buildings listed below will need a detailed assessment for every school, however, during the master planning process consideration should be given to the need for inclusion of elements such as:

Site Planning

A. Environmental

- Existing site features – topography, including site slope, soils type, water courses, overland and stormwater flows, as well as potential for flooding and bushfire
- Significant trees and other plantings, both on the site and on adjoining sites, for retention or with restrictions for use, such as wetlands or koala habitat
- Summer and winter winds (take advantage of desirable and protect from undesirable)
- Landscaping, gardens and plantings



- Heritage impacts.

B. Government and Service Provider Requirements

- Local government / State government planning requirements
- Any existing site easements, unless benefitting the site
- Water, sewer, stormwater, electricity, green energy options, gas and communications services (internal and external) locations and capacities to meet future development needs on the site
- IT services – copper cabling, optical fibre cabling, wireless coverage.

C. Buildings and other site infrastructure

- Existing buildings and their suitability for inclusion in current and future development
- Other existing site infrastructure
- Disability access requirements around the site and to buildings
- Intended building locations, including room for expansion with permanent and/or relocatable / temporary buildings
- Consideration of the sites for relocatable / temporary buildings and their ease of being installed and removed
- Acoustic treatments
- Locations of formal and informal play areas (grassed and paved), including desirable orientations (north-south preferred)
- Locations of and relationships between general learning, specialist learning, outdoor learning areas, administration and recreation buildings
- Playgrounds, seating / eating areas
- Desirable views from buildings
- Site security and any fencing (need or no need), including line of sight for supervision and safety of students.

D. Site Access


- Public entrance locations and the image to be created for the school
- Desired access points for vehicles and paths pedestrians and bicycles
- Service and emergency vehicle access
- Car parking access and pick up/set down provisions
- Separation of pedestrian and vehicle access routes
- Shelter locations and requirements.

E. Community and Neighbours

- Neighbouring properties, their current and potential developments and any impact that may have on the school
- School noise abatement for neighbouring properties
- Potential for colocation of education facilities with community useable facilities, i.e. halls, sporting fields, open spaces.

Building Planning

A Master Plan should be used as the basis to determine the scope of work for any proposed building project and to brief the architect / building designer accordingly. Projects proposed for government capital assistance through QIS BGA must be consistent with sound educational facilities planning.

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- Compliance with building and construction codes
 - Single and multi-storey options and implications
 - Building orientations and proportions for desirable natural passive environmental design provisions
 - Locations of building entrances
 - Relationships between buildings
 - Relationships between buildings and outdoor areas
 - Implications of staging new building and redevelopment projects, including builder's access for future building works
 - Assessment of existing buildings for suitability for redevelopment or demolition
 - Security and safety issues
 - Understanding the difference between building design, trends and fads.

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