

Fremont district board approves deal that will produce new elementary school in Warm Springs

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An agreement finalized earlier this month will give Fremont Unified School District a new elementary school for 1,100 students in the Warm Springs/South Fremont area by fall 2018.

The district's Board of Education on Dec. 9 unanimously approved a construction agreement with housing developers Lennar Corp., Toll Brothers Inc. and Valley Oak Partners LLC, setting into stone a promise the developers made to build an elementary school that will be handed off to the school district.

Lauded by officials as a first-of-its kind collaboration and partnership between a school district, city and developers to offset the impacts new housing developments have on school enrollment, board trustees said at the meeting they hope other developers will follow suit.

Board Clerk Larry Sweeney called it a "win-win deal" for everyone.

"It is a win for the city of Fremont because it supports the city's vision for the innovation district and it's a win for the developers because a new school is a great selling feature for any new home," Sweeney said. "The biggest win is that we have charted a new course in the way the city, the district and the developers work together and it charts a new course for the future."

The developers, who own approximately 170 acres in the Warm Springs/South Fremont Community Plan area and want to build up to 4,000 residential units there, also will build a turn-key school on a 5-acre parcel at the intersection of Innovation Way and an unnamed street and a park and play area on an adjacent 4-acre parcel that will be donated to the city.

The developers are building the school instead of just paying the level-two developer fees mandated by the state, which district officials say barely cover the impact those developments will have on the district.

In May 2014, the three developers signed a letter of intent with Fremont Unified to build a two-story, 750-student elementary school for about \$25 million and to pay \$14.2 million toward improvements to Walters Junior High and Kennedy High School. In the agreement approved Dec. 9, the elementary school will be larger than initially proposed to accommodate 1,100 students.

"The final mitigation for the developers calls for a 1,100-seat school because the district wants to have the additional capacity there. Based on all the analysis we did, we know that there is going to be students in that new community between 750 and 1,100," Superintendent Jim Morris said.

"The developers are going to contribute \$25 million to the school and \$14.2 million toward mitigation at the secondary level and the \$14.2 million was supposed to be paid over time as each home was built, but they agreed to put the entire \$14.2 million upfront and combine it with the \$25 million and build a larger elementary school and just build it now and that will give us enough space if the student generation rate is higher," he said.

Morris said the district has meetings scheduled for the first week of January with the architect to finalize the design for the new school.

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