



# POSITION BRIEF (PROVISIONAL)

July 29th 2022

Department: Administration

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## RENEWAL OF NANTON'S SCHOOL BUILDINGS

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*FAO: Ministers of Education, Infrastructure, Livingstone Range School Division*

### **SCOPE:**

The Town of Nanton urges the Province to recognise the urgent renewal priorities of Livingstone Range School Division and approve funding for the modernization or replacement of A.B. Daley and J.T Foster schools. *This is a provisional position brief until Council have had the opportunity to review the draft Nanton Schools Value Scoping Workshop Report (June 2022).*

### **PRINCIPAL CHALLENGES AND REQUESTS FOR ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE:**

- Nanton has a demonstrably stable youth population (0-19) that has grown 5% since 2001. Under certain possible growth scenarios, that cohort could optimistically be anticipated to increase by another 25% during the lifecycle of modernized or new school buildings. **The Town believes that any modernized school infrastructure should be capable of accommodating at least 550 students based on a combination of local statistics and residential development potential.**
- Lack of progress on the modernization or replacement of J.T. Foster School is having a detrimental impact upon:
  - student enrollment/ retention
  - successfully attracting working families to Nanton (including teachers)
  - building greater educational capacities and opportunities within the high school environment and wider community
- Lack of progress and the poor overall condition of the J.T. Foster School building is leading stakeholders and parents to question the long-term commitment to there being a high school in Nanton at all. It is neither equitable nor fair to a community for successive governments and MLAs to essentially promise such a critical project 'soon' for over a decade, yet never deliver.
- For the general economic confidence of Nanton and area, the uncertainty around J.T. Foster School's future must be resolved as soon as possible. Schools and their capacities are an *animateur* of local and regional economic growth.

**BACKGROUND:**

***Demographics and Enrolment***

According to Government of Alberta data, Nanton’s youth cohorts have been inherently stable for the last 20 years. By the government’s own figures (last updated in February for 2021), the 0-4 age cohort contracted by -6.25% in the last twenty years while the 5-9 age cohort grew 11.5%. The ages 10-14 cohort has contracted -19%, while the 15-19 age cohort has grown 14%. Overall, the youth population within the Town has grown by over 5 per cent in the last 20 years. It underlines a significant turnover or renewal of youth population within Nanton that is more complex than one age cohort simply maturing into another.

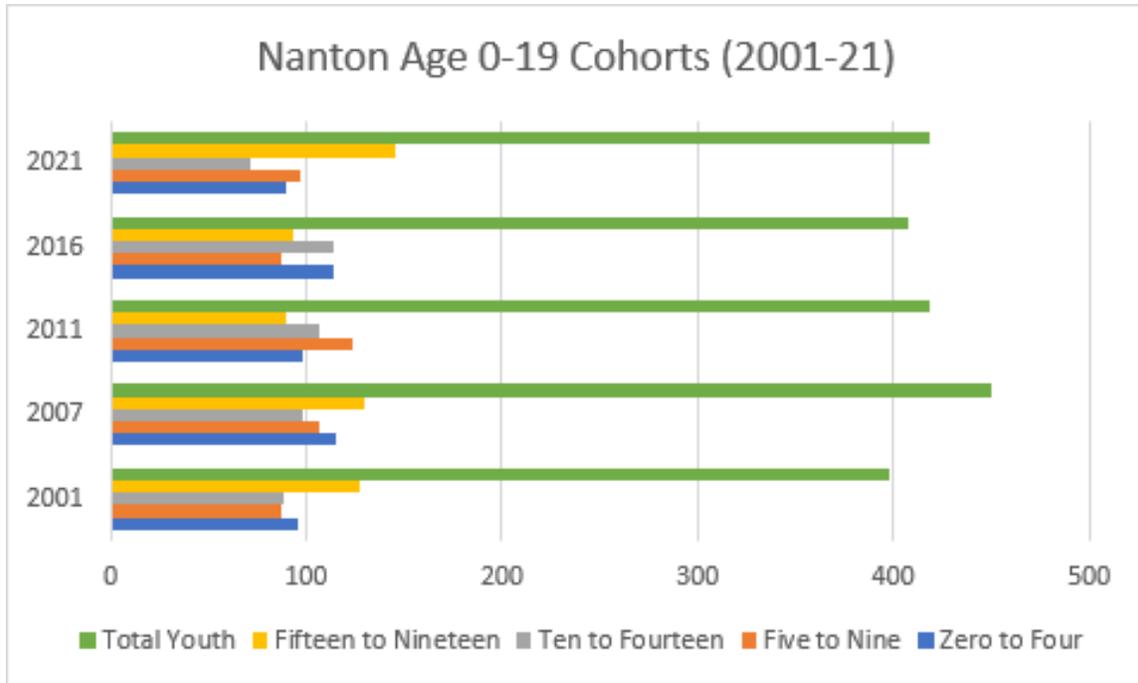


Figure 1: Data sourced from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/nanton/population/#/?from=2017&to=2021>

Enrolment Snapshot (LRSD Figures)		
School	2020	2022
A.B. Daley	223	224
J.T. Foster	214	194
Combined Enrolment	437	418
Combined Utilization Rate of Existing Buildings	50%	48%

The population data is different from the enrolment data in that the former is purely for the demographics within the Town and latter for enrolment throughout Nanton and area, plus any international and ‘out-of-district’ students. It would not seem unreasonable to estimate that students from the MD of Willow Creek, out-of-district and international students comprise approximately a quarter (25%) of the combined student enrolment in most years.

It is well known locally that a significant minority of students who reside in Nanton attend high schools of either the Foothills School Division or Catholic School Board for a variety of reasons. They are an arguable growth target for J.T. Foster School now and in the future. More needs to be done to understand how many local students are learning elsewhere and inversely how many students from

elsewhere are learning at J.T Foster School. There needs to be a 'Nanton Advantage' to going to high school here that goes above and beyond the attractive teacher-student ratio.

While the combined utilization rates for the two schools appear low, the apparent stability and incremental growth of Nanton's youth cohorts over twenty years should be considered in any decision. A minimum combined capacity of 450 students should arguably be assumed as a capacity baseline and the community's current capacity for residential growth considered the aspirational school population target of 550.

### **Growth Capacity**

Nanton is planning for sustainable growth and it is important that any new or modernized school infrastructure has some reasonable capacity to accommodate. The current proposed Westview Area Structure Plan shows that Nanton can easily accommodate significant population growth with available and readily serviced residential land with capacity for nearly 3-400 more residents overall. [422-DRAFT-Concept-Map\\_Map2022 \(nanton.ca\)](#)

If an aspirational population of 2,500 residents was achieved in Nanton, based on previous census figures, a youth cohort numbering approximately 500 could be anticipated within the Town, making an estimated combined school enrolment population of up to 550 students genuinely feasible during the lifecycle of modernized or new buildings. If senior government, private developers, or the Town chose to invest in expanded sewer collection systems in Nanton, the possibility of even greater figures than 550 become debatable due to the expanded capacity for further subdivisions and variable densities.

The Town is actively working upon the exploration of a new regional water system with the Town of High River to stabilize and potentially grow its long term water resource access. That work is funded by the Province. Additionally, once upgraded to its full potential, Nanton's Wastewater Treatment Plant can support a population double or more Nanton's present size.

### **Modernization or Replacement?**

The scale of modernizations required at J.T Foster school may ultimately justify the building's complete replacement in order to obtain value for money from the Province's investment. Most of the upgrades recommended in the *Feasibility Assessment and Life-Cycle Cost Analysis* report prepared in June of 2018 are extremely invasive and will require significant demolition to access most of the in-place equipment. This will require that much of the interior space be vacated and many of the finishes removed. All windows would most likely require replacement (circa 1991). *Stormwater management at the existing location needs to be thoroughly assessed in terms of its current and future impact on municipal wastewater infrastructure as the Town needs to minimise groundwater infiltration into its Wastewater Treatment Plant to limit and reduce operational costs..*

***The Town supports an appropriate solution for modernizing and/ or replacing elements of the A.B Daley and J.T. Foster sites, with an emphasis on vastly improved high school buildings and improvements.***

### **Community Considerations**

The Town and its partners have been deferring major decisions around public buildings and operational relocations for years as the modernization or replacement of J.T. Foster School (and all the possible domino effects from that investment in the community) have caused arguable paralysis in a number of areas, including:

- The best long-term home for Nanton and District Library;
- The best long-term home for Nanton Quality of Life Association (FCSS);
- The best long-term home for the Town of Nanton's offices;
- How best to address renewal or replacement of the publicly owned Medical Clinic building;
- The highest and best use of larger municipally owned properties in general.

Without conviction that a positive decision is coming, the local public sector is reluctant to take its own overdue decisions. What is or is not included in the modernization project(s) in terms of community partnering will determine several other major decision-making processes.

Even with the best asset management possible, the Town will likely need to replace its outdoor swimming pool, currently at the Tom Hornecker Recreation Centre, within 10-15 years *at an entirely new location*. It is open to exploratory dialogue if there is interest in working toward identifying a future site that could assist both Nanton's schools and this long term community need.

Similarly, the Town has substantial space at the Tom Hornecker Recreation Centre that could be redeveloped to enhance school or youth programming. The Town is open to exploratory dialogue. Architects' conceptual drawings are available for review.

If a smaller new build for J.T Foster is ultimately pursued, service clubs may well desire an opportunity to fund raise for large-than-proposed facilities (e.g. gymnasium) or value-added capital or hardware investments best installed during the build.

*It is also hoped that the decision, if taken, would expedite addressing such matters as the ownership of a portion of 24<sup>th</sup> Street, the future of the modular daycare buildings on the school site, as well as a review or renewal of the Joint Facilities Agreement (2008) before the provincial deadline in June 2023. Council and Administration are more than prepared to invest time in a revised and executed **Joint Use and Planning Agreement (JUPA)** pursuant to the MGA and Education Act, if it is essential to a positive outcome on this or any other issue.*