



Land Use Bylaw amendments: Portable classrooms and interim uses key messages and FAQ May 2026

Key Messages

What is happening?

The City is proposing amendments to the Land Use Bylaw to support school boards in responding to changing enrollment levels. These amendments will be brought forward to the **July 15 Infrastructure and Planning Committee** meeting, and the **September 15 Public Hearing of Council**.

What are the amendments?

- Introduce a new definition for portable school classrooms, allowing up to **six portables per site** to be exempt from requirements for bicycle parking, pick-up and drop-off stalls, loading stalls and landscaping.
- Interim uses on school sites that provide a public benefit and are compatible with school board purposes are approved through the Joint Use and Planning Agreement do not need a development permit.

Why now?

Many Calgary schools are experiencing increasing pressure due to enrolment growth. In the 2025-2026 school year, 31 schools were in overflow status. Meanwhile, there are some school buildings that are underutilized.

These changes:

- Streamline approvals for portable classrooms so students can attend school closer to home.
- Allow school boards to maintain underutilized schools through interim uses, ensuring they remain available as enrolment increases.
- Are enabled by updates to the City Charter and Joint Use and Planning Agreement with related public engagement conducted in 2021.

What are the benefits?

- Supports school boards in responding to changing enrolment levels.
- Helps students attend school in their communities
- Reduces transportation and keeps communities connected
- Enables continued use of underutilized schools, reducing vacancy and vandalism
- Helps retain school sites for future needs

Frequently asked questions

Portables:

Why does this support schools?

Community demographics change over time. Portables provide a flexible way to increase capacity so students can attend schools closer to home, rather than being transported to other communities.

How are portable needs determined?

School boards use various tools to project enrolment.

- The Province identifies 85% utilization as “full capacity” (allowing space for non-classroom uses)
- Portables are typically used when enrolment within a school’s designated boundary exceeds capacity.
- Overcapacity from out-of-boundary students is typically addressed through other approaches

What is changing?

Applications for portable classrooms will no longer require additional:

- Bicycle parking
- Pick-up and drop-off stalls
- Loading requirements
- Landscaping

In current practice, these rules are consistently relaxed, and an additional 21-day advertising period is added to the process. This change removes the need for an additional **21-day advertising period** and streamlines the planning review process.

Do school boards plan for parking, bike parking or crosswalks if they’re not required?

Yes. School boards consider how students and staff travel to and from school when planning a site. They collect information directly from each school. A typical breakdown is:

- About 40% walk, bike or use other active modes
- About 50% take the bus
- About 10% are dropped off

Bike parking is included in Land Use Bylaw requirements, but some spaces may not be heavily used.

Upgrades like **sidewalks, crosswalks and other offsite improvements** are not funded by the Province. School boards do not have funding for this work and are not typically required as part of development permit approvals.

Why allow up to a maximum of six portables to be exempt from certain requirements?

Six portables typically accommodate approximately **150 students**.

More than six may still be permitted, but standard requirements (e.g., parking, landscaping) would apply beyond that threshold.

Will the community still be circulated?

Yes. Community associations will continue to receive circulation for information.

Can The City still require infrastructure upgrades?

Yes. The City can require upgrades (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks) to ensure engineering/design and pedestrian safety

Interim uses:

How do interim uses support schools and communities?

Community needs change over time. Some neighbourhoods may have fewer students for a period, while others grow.

Allowing interim uses helps:

- Keep school sites active and maintained
- Support community use of existing buildings and land
- Avoid permanent school closures during low enrolment periods
- Allow schools to reopen more easily when student populations increase

This approach helps ensure school sites continue to serve Calgarians as community needs evolve.

What interim uses are allowed on school sites?

Interim uses must provide a public benefit and be compatible with school operations.

Under the [Joint Use and Planning Agreement](#), acceptable uses are those that:

- Support education goals
- Contribute to safe, healthy and vibrant communities
- Do not interfere with current or future school use

Examples may include community-focused services, depending on what works for the site and the school.

Why are interim uses allowed?

Provincial legislation allows The City and school boards to approve additional uses on certain school and reserve lands if they provide a public benefit.

The City and school boards formalized this through the **Joint Use and Planning Agreement (2023)**. This agreement allows interim uses when they:

- Meet the agreement requirements
- Are supported by both The City and the school board
- Are approved by the Joint Use Coordinating Committee (JUCC)

The Land Use Bylaw update supports this by allowing more flexibility for interim uses on school sites.

Interim uses are:

- Chosen in collaboration with the school board
- Based on what works with the school and surrounding community
- Typically approved through a **short-term agreement (for example, around two years)**, with the

option to review or extend

Because timing and conditions are managed through these agreements and reviewed by JUCC, a separate development permit review is not needed.

What public engagement has been done?

There was **no new public engagement specific to this amendment.**

However, The City completed public engagement in **April to May 2021** as part of updates to the Joint Use Planning Agreement. This included asking about interim uses on school sites.

Participants showed the most support for:

- Recreation centres
- Libraries
- Community association spaces
- Daycares