



May 14, 2008

Hello everyone!

Here is some information on important and promising new developments concerning the fate of Ridgeway Elementary School.

Members of the Ridgeway Heritage Committee met with the School District last week for a presentation on the latest plans for Ridgeway and funding issues.

To recap, the idea has been to sell land on the Queen Mary site currently used for the School District administration building and half the disused Lonsdale School site to a residential developer, and to use those funds to build a new administration building and Artists for Kids gallery on the front part of the Lonsdale site. Some extra funds would be created by squeezing in more density than zoning rules allow, which would be used for Ridgeway's restoration. The School District would also be allowed by the City to sell unused density rights from the rest of the Queen Mary site for "special projects," including the restoration of Ridgeway and Queen Mary heritage schools.

First, Ridgeway. Simply put, the School District's latest proposal is to retain the façade – both the 1911 and 1926 wings – while building a new interior, with a lower addition at the rear for a gymnasium. The exterior structure would be retained and rehabilitated, and reinforced with new shotcrete. The windows, cupola and other exterior elements would also be retained and repaired, while the roof would be replaced. For the interior, ceiling heights would mostly be retained, and 12 of the 18 classrooms would exceed standard sizes, retaining some of the original's advantages. Other aspects would be built to current ministry standards. They are open to hiring a heritage consultant to make recommendations for the incorporation of important heritage elements to the interior design, but say it is too early to discuss specifics. All other elements of the broader site would remain, with the exception of the car park, which is being relocated to the north side, and the kids' club, which would be demolished. (A new after-school care facility would be incorporated into the south wing.)

As you may recall, the Ridgeway Heritage Committee submitted its latest position late last year, which included:

- An insistence that the 1926 wings be retained (versus the cheaper option of their demolition, as proposed);
- A willingness to consider interior reconstruction as a compromise to reduce costs, if the interior design respected key elements of the building's heritage and character;

- Clarification and a firm commitment to plans for Ridgeway before Council approves incentives for Lonsdale-Queen Mary;
- Legal protection of the Ridgeway and Queen Mary buildings;
- Further work by the School District and its architect on designs for the full 1911/26 building; and
- Retention of a recognized heritage specialist be retained as a consultant for advice or oversight on exterior and interior designs.

City staff attending last week's meeting said that legal protection for Ridgeway and Queen Mary would be required under the proposal.

The Ridgeway Heritage Committee met this week to discuss and review the latest proposal. In our view, the School District has made great progress in meeting our hopes and requests for the project. Our enduring concerns largely involve firming up promises into clear commitments, namely:

- Retention of the heritage consultant for interior design recommendations;
- Implementation of those recommendations through the incorporation of heritage and character elements into the design;
- Involvement of the RHC, staff and PAC in interior design details;
- Clarification of the value of the Queen Mary School site's density transfer, the extent it would be used for heritage projects, and the procedure for guaranteeing that use;
- A clear and binding commitment by the School District to the current design proposal for Ridgeway; and
- The legal protection of Ridgeway and Queen Mary against future threats.

Subject to these issues being ironed out, the Ridgeway Heritage Committee proposes lending its full and enthusiastic support to the School District's proposal for Lonsdale-Queen Mary and its linkage to heritage restoration and protection at Ridgeway and Queen Mary.

We plan to get back to the School District in a week with our concerns and questions. If you have comments or suggestions, please send them within the week to ridgewayheritagecommittee@hotmail.com. As ever, we will try to incorporate any comments from our supporters into our position.

Funding details are contained in an appendix. Basically, there remains a \$6.9 million gap between the cost of demolition and replacement at Ridgeway (which is what the provincial Ministry of Education will fund) and the proposed restoration project. The School District would meet \$4.1 million of this from extra density in the residential developments at Lonsdale and Queen Mary. Provisionally, the remainder would come from some extra provincial funds for relocation costs, a City contribution to the daycare facility and other funds such as the density transfer from Queen Mary. The School Board is prepared to commit to the restoration project even if a shortfall remains (eg subject to the sale of QM density rights).

We hope we are now on the home straight. According to the current timeline, the proposal would be submitted to Council in late May, with a public hearing – the key

event – in early July. In the meantime, the School District plans to hold meetings to brief staff and PAC.

We will keep you posted. We take this opportunity to thank you all for your support in achieving this progress so far, and ask for your help in a final push to secure the future of our beloved school.

Yours,
The Ridgeway Heritage Committee

Appendix

A. Excerpt From School District Proposal

11.0 Overview of Project Finances

The final purchase price for the Lonsdale and Queen Mary parcels depends on the final approved density. Based on the current plans, the revenue is as follows:

Revenue

Sale of residential development rights at Lonsdale and Queen Mary (1.6 FSR)	\$38.4 million
Sale of residential density above 1.6 FSR at Lonsdale and Queen Mary	\$4.1 million
Total	\$42.5 million

Allocation of Funds

Artists for Kids Gallery	\$8.3 million
Education Services Centre (Admin)	\$20.4 million
Underground Parking	\$9.4 million
Open Space at QM Site	\$0.3 million
Total	\$38.4 million

"The \$4.1 million in revenue from market residential density above 1.6 FSR at the Lonsdale and Queen Mary sites will be allocated to the restoration and upgrading of Ridgeway School. The total cost of the Ridgeway School project is \$22.8 million. The balance of the cost, about \$18.7 million (i.e. \$22.8 million less \$4.1 million), will be funded through contributions from the Ministry of Education, the sale of transferable density from the Lonsdale and Queen Mary sites, and future NVSD land sales. NVSD is committed to renovating Ridgeway School in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

"Proceeds from the sale of transferable density from the Lonsdale and Queen Mary sites will be used towards special NVSD projects in the City, including the restoration and upgrading of Ridgeway School (as noted above) and Queen Mary School."

B. Feasibility Study for Ridgeway School

Summary of Options (excerpts)

\$ million	Option 3: New School	Option 3A: New School in 1911/26 Facade	Option 3B: New School in 1911/26 Façade (with after school care)
Construction Cost	12.2	16.2	16.5
Total Cost	15.9	22.3	22.8
Difference from Ministry Formula	--	6.5	6.9
Total Area (m2)	3,677	4,123	4,271