



Matters continue to edge forward in the right direction, with the City of North Vancouver Council on Monday approving a framework for the next stage of the School District's plans. In essence, these center on developing the closed Lonsdale School site and the section of the Queen Mary site currently used for the School District administration buildings, using part of the funds for a new administration and Artists for Kids building at Lonsdale, and part -- mainly from density transfers -- for heritage preservation projects at Ridgeway and Queen Mary schools.

The heritage school building at Lonsdale would be demolished, but elements of the building would be incorporated into the new development. Perhaps most importantly, the School District has agreed under the latest proposal to legal protection of the Ridgeway and Queen Mary heritage school buildings as part of its development application. Council would also require a legal covenant stating that revenues generated by the density transfers would be used for "School District-City Community Amenities," namely capital projects not normally funded by the province and including the upgrade of Ridgeway school "as the highest priority." Finally, the City will write to the provincial government encouraging it "to more adequately fund heritage school buildings."

It's important to note that the proposal is still in the conceptual stage, and that there will be a lengthy process of more consultation and public meetings. We'll keep you posted as these move forward.

At Monday's Council meeting, a School District delegation expressed full support for the proposals submitted by City staff.

In the Council debate, Councillor Barbara Perrault said protection "with teeth" for Ridgeway and Queen Mary was "an absolute must." She also called for the province to provide more adequate funding of publicly owned buildings of this nature. Buildings 200-300 years are still standing and used "back East," she said, but here we tend to knock them down after 40-50 years and rebuild -- a mentality that needs to change. The Artists for Kids gallery also needs to be brought into the heart of the community as proposed, she said. Councillor Craig Keating said the proposal combines the need for Ridgeway funds, social housing, a new School District administration building, a new Artists for Kids gallery and residential housing. Councillor Pam Bookham suggested development further along 8th Street on the Queen Mary site as an alternative to a higher building on the front of the Lonsdale site. Councillor Bob Fearnley sought to add a transfer of School District lands at the Cloverley site to the proposal. The motion was supported 6-1, with Fearnley voting against.