



October 24, 2007

Hello everyone!

We hope you had a great summer. Although matters are moving slowly on the fate of Ridgeway Elementary School, we wanted to send out another update to keep everyone in touch. Here is the latest news:

The North Vancouver School District Board met on Oct. 23 to discuss the "Lonsdale-Queen Mary Land Disposition Bylaw" -- the formal proposal for their plan to develop the closed Lonsdale School site and the section of the Queen Mary site currently used for the School District administration buildings. As you may recall, the School District would use 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 bylaw basically authorizes disposition of the land at both sites. There is apparently an interim agreement with a developer that could be formalized once the bylaw is passed. The district is thinking in terms of a four to six month timeline to the start of the development. The developer would deal with resident concerns and go before City of North Vancouver Council. The School District board backed the bylaw unanimously.

Separately, School District staff say their consulting team continues to develop costs for Option 1 (retention of the 1911 and 1926 wings) and Option 2 (retention of the 1911 core), and says an important factor is "the magnitude of seismic upgrading required in the heritage building." Tests were conducted over the summer on beams and columns to assess the quality of concrete and reinforcing steel, and, according to the staff, the structural engineer now says greater-than-anticipated upgrades are required. The School District plans to present its revised costings at a public meeting; we will let you know of details when available. The staff note that the density transfers at Lonsdale and Queen Mary still need to be approved by City Council, and that they "don't know whether there is sufficient density to transfer to address the total cost of a heritage upgrade."

Put simply, it's not yet a done deal.

We will continue to monitor the School District and Council closely, and will let you know when and how you can help.

In other news, Ridgeway Heritage Committee representatives attended a meeting of the North Shore Historical Society, where local historian John Stuart gave a presentation on the historical and architectural significance of Ridgeway School. A lively discussion followed on the importance of such buildings and the development plans for Ridgeway.

The North Shore Heritage Preservation Society ranked North Vancouver schools -- notably Ridgeway, Queen Mary and Lonsdale -- as #1 in its recently published list of the North Shore's Top 10 Endangered Heritage Sites. The publication received prominent coverage in the local media, and can be viewed at www.northshoreheritage.org/top10.

Thank you again for all your support earlier this year, which proved vital in influencing the process. Going forward, it's important that we keep up momentum.

Yours,
The Ridgeway Heritage Committee