



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: July 9, 2005
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TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

FROM: Director Of Current Planning

SUBJECT: Province of BC: Seismic Upgrading Program and Vancouver Public Schools

RECOMMENDATION

- A. That Council direct staff to consult with the Vancouver School Board and the Provincial Ministry for Education, regarding their Seismic Mitigation program for schools to achieve the following:
- Establish an interest based planning process for schools sites with heritage value with the goal of developing creative solutions that meet the interests of the Provincial Ministry of Education, the Vancouver School Board and the City's goals of heritage preservation;
 - Re-evaluate the costing formula in the Provincial "Feasibility Study Guidelines" for Seismic Mitigation Projects that guides when a school is replaced versus repaired; and
 - Report back on findings and conclusions.
- B. Direct staff to continue processing the Development Permit for the replacement of Charles Dickens School at 3351 Glen Drive, and concurrently explore options with the Vancouver School Board that could assist with the retention of the original building. Options could include:
- Land use incentives to off-set upgrading costs; and
 - Partnerships with the Park Board or community groups.
- The exploration of viable options must not affect the construction schedule anticipated for the replacement school.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

General Manager recommends approval of A and B.

COUNCIL POLICY

Heritage Policies and Guidelines

PURPOSE

This report seeks council's direction on working with the Provincial Ministry to re-evaluate their guidelines for repair and replacement of schools with heritage merit and to assist the Vancouver School Board in their efforts to create a policy that will direct actions regarding these schools in the future. In addition, the report seeks council direction on exploring incentives that would off-set conservation costs for Charles Dickens School.

BACKGROUND

Provincial Ministry of Education: In the spring of 2005 the Provincial Government committed \$ 1.5 Billion over a 15 year term towards upgrading schools in BC. An assessment of schools was conducted by the Ministry with costing based on 2004 construction estimates. Vancouver is expected to receive approximately \$365,000,000 from this program. Given the term of government, funding commitments are limited to 2005-2009. [It is unclear at this time, whether the funding will be indexed to include increases in construction costs. The Ministry is expected to inform local Boards in September on this and other issues related to the program.]

To assist local School Boards in administering these funds, the Ministry of Education drafted "Feasibility Study Guidelines" for Seismic Mitigation Projects. The objectives of the program are to identify, prioritise and up-grade buildings of high risk to a seismic incident. The draft formula to determine if a building should be replaced or repaired is based on repair costs and if they exceed 60-70% of the replacement cost for a new school, than the local school board must consider replacement options. This formula is different from the previous formula where repair costs (including renovations) were permitted to reach up to 100% of replacement costs before considering replacing the building.

The new seismic program funding is limited to seismic upgrading costs only. It does not include building upgrades, such as exterior repairs or replacement of a heating system. Building upgrade costs come from the VSB's maintenance budget, which is responsible for all other costs associated with the building and the physical requirements of delivering the VSB's educational objectives. For sites that require a considerable amount of building up-grades, which would place the building within the Provincial guidelines category for a replacement school, the VSB could not access the needed funds to retain the school from their maintenance budget, as this would have a detrimental impact to the maintenance needs of other schools in the district.

Statistics on Public Schools in Vancouver: There are a total of 109 public schools in Vancouver. The following is a preliminary assessment by the VSB of these buildings and their Vancouver Heritage Register (VHR) Status;

VHR Listed Buildings:

# up-graded to date	3
# to be upgraded	21
# potential for replacement	11
Total # on the VHR	35

Non VHR listed buildings:

# of new schools	5
# to be upgraded	55 (likely 1/2 are candidates for the VHR)
# potential for replacement	14 (likely 1/2 are candidates for the VHR)
Total # of non VHR buildings	74

In a very preliminary estimate, it appears that another 35 schools in Vancouver could have heritage value, bringing the total number of heritage schools to 70. These estimates are based on the age of the building only and not on a thorough analysis of the heritage value of each site. Of the 70 schools identified, the School Board intends on retaining and upgrading 52 of these buildings with the remaining 18 considered for replacement. It is important to note that a building that falls within the ministry's guidelines for replacement would not necessarily lead to its demolition. There may be viable options for some of these sites that retain the original school while permitting the construction of the new school on the same site.

Charles Dickens School: The building was evaluated under the Ministries old guidelines which dictated that the repair costs of a building should meet or exceed 100% of the replacement costs, before the decision to replace the building is made. Through the VSB feasibility study, it was determined that the costs to structural upgrade, including the 20 year life cycle costs, exceeded the cost to construct a new building. At the time of the VSB's initial enquiry, the potential heritage value of the site was not identified since the building is not on the Vancouver Heritage Register.

Community Input on Charles Dickens School: In 2004, VSB met with parents and residents from the local community and the Cedar Cottage Kensington CityPlan Committee, to present information about the options for seismically upgrading Dickens school. In early 2005, VSB held an Open House and a separate question and answer meeting with the local community. The VSB funded a Statement of Significance for Charles Dickens School. City staff have evaluated the SOS and the site and determined the building would merit addition to the VHR in the "B" category. In May 2005, a development application was submitted to the City to demolish Charles Dickens School and replace it with a new building.

City staff have received correspondence both for and against the demolition of Charles Dickens School. The supporters for a replacement school are citing issues of building safety, educational impacts and the need to be fiscally responsible by the Province and the VSB. The supporters for retention of the building also cite building safety however note that many other heritage buildings have been up-graded to meet seismic standards. Supporters for retaining the building have concerns over the costing formula, lack of a public consultation

process that includes options to retain the building and are sceptical of the information the VSB has presented to date. They are calling for a comprehensive policy for heritage schools in Vancouver, which would look at full cost accounting and an analysis of best candidates for preservation in terms of architectural and historical importance.

There is an emerging interest in this neighbourhood to retain their heritage buildings and as noted in their Community Vision Statement, they desire to play a larger role in making decisions for their area. As well, Heritage Vancouver has placed Charles Dickens School on their top 10 endangered list, bringing city awareness to the issue of preserving schools with heritage value.

Vancouver School Board Directions: VSB's primary concern is the delivery of K-12 education programs in Vancouver. The VSB shares goals with the community and the City in a number of other key areas, they include the safety of buildings and note the importance a school plays in building communities.

The decision to repair versus replace a building contains several factors in addition to the Ministry's funding formula. The Ministry's funding process for seismic projects requires a two stage feasibility study. Ten year enrolment projections and building capacities are assessed. Costing estimates are based on the local areas past practices and industry standards and include a specific assessment of a particular building. Life-cycle costing is included in the evaluation of a building and is based on guidelines developed by the Ministry. In addition, the VSB has several construction/program principles they employ for all replacement buildings. They include:

- Maximize the learning environment for students;
- To limit disruption to students caused from large scale construction projects;
- That all new replacement schools incorporate sustainability principles;
- To review the possibility of constructing gymnasiums in replacement schools as a post disaster relief center;
- To design schools for after hours activities for the local community without compromising the security needs of the school.

DISCUSSION

The VSB agrees that a policy is needed for schools with heritage value. They have advocated a very co-operative approach with city staff and are engaged in mapping out new protocols that would address some of the communities concerns around public consultation and the assessment of heritage schools. City staff suggest that several "deliverables" are achieved under the VSB's new policy initiatives and they include the following:

- Identify creative opportunities for the VSB, the City and the Ministry of Education to work in partnership to achieve shared aims of building safety and community building;
- Form a working group of local representatives, heritage advocates, city staff and the VSB to discuss issues of heritage retention, building safety, the Ministry's funding formula and community needs;
- A heritage evaluation of the schools not on the VHR. Those identified with historic value should be brought forward for addition to the Heritage Register. A discussion should occur around the relative value of these buildings from a heritage and community perspective and decisions made around best candidates for repair and retention; and

- Protocols around future development applications for the repair or replacement of heritage schools.

In addition to the excellent work the VSB is pursuing there is a need to look to the Provincial Ministry and the recent changes to their funding formula. The new draft Ministry Seismic Guidelines that set criteria for replacement of buildings affects 23 of the 25 sites identified for possible replacement. The other two sites (Charles Dickens and Sexsmith) were under the old formula of needing to exceed 100% of upgrade and renovation costs before a replacement school would be considered.

The proposed consultation with the Ministry of Education would focus on the new funding formula and request an assessment from an interest based planning process to increase the opportunities to conserve schools with heritage value. A separate consultancy may be suggested through these discussions that looks specifically at full cost accounting methods for project assessments. Finally we would seek to set protocols around opportunities to save schools with heritage value that are presently not afforded under Ministry guidelines.

Vancouver Heritage Commission: After a discussion around the pending demolitions of Charles Dickens and Sexsmith Schools, the Commission passed a motion on June 6, 2005, carried unanimously and resolved the following:

- THAT the Vancouver Heritage Commission (VHC) is concerned about replacement of heritage school buildings with new buildings; and
- FURTHER THAT the VHC is concerned that the Vancouver School Board (VSB) Liaison to the VHC has not attended VHC meetings for the past two years and requests that the VSB reaffirm its commitment to the VHC and encourage the Liaison to attend; and
- FURTHER THAT the VSB study relating to city-wide schools and seismic upgrading be presented to the VHC in advance of any specific property with heritage school buildings coming forward for redevelopment.

The VSB was scheduled for the July 18th, Commission meeting. The presentation included a review of the Ministry's seismic program and the possible implications for schools with heritage value.

Charles Dickens Schools: The VSB has signed a contract with the Ministry for funding the new school and this contains an escalation reserve fund that expires in January of 2006. Given this, the VSB is anxious to proceed and delays past January 2006 would place onerous constraints on the project.

Consultation with the VSB on possible incentives to retain the building could take several forms. Staff are discussing retaining the building with both the VSB and the Park Board, while looking for opportunities that could involve Sunnyside Park across Glen Drive. Other options could include transferable density for sale as compensation for conservation costs. All of these options need exploring more fully with the VSB and the Park Board and must occur in a timely manner so as not to disrupt the funding timelines set out by the Ministry. If a viable option presents itself, staff will report back should the options proposed have an implication to City policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS There are no financial implications to the City as a result of the recommendations contained within this report. Staff will pursue options to address heritage retention that specifically would not burden City finances.

CONCLUSION

The new Provincial guidelines for seismic upgrading of schools and the associated funding formula could have a potential impact on schools in Vancouver with heritage value. To address this, Council is asked to direct staff to consult with the Provincial Ministry of Education and the Vancouver School Board through an interest based planning process, to seek opportunities for retention of heritage schools. In addition, Council is asked to direct staff to consult with the VSB on retention options for the Charles Dickens School site that could include development incentives and/or mutually agreeable partnerships to achieve shared interests.

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