

PRESS RELEASE

Current School Board plans don't mesh with EcoDensity goals

Issued by parents of the General Gordon PAC

The province has launched an ambitious \$1.5B seismic mitigation program for BC schools. So far so good - until you dig a little deeper and see that whether renovation or demolition is the selected option, neither the city nor the provincial government is taking an integrated approach to upgrading our schools to meet current and future community demands. Both are focusing almost exclusively on seismic upgrading, with only a small additional amount for non-seismic improvements.

Vancouver's draft EcoDensity Charter champions "new, holistic ways to align density, design, and land use with other tools for environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability." This would seem to include various government bodies working together to find sustainable ways to plan for our children's education and build strong communities for at least the next generation. Tearing down 100-year old schools to build smaller schools with a projected lifecycle of 30 years because the level of government responsible for capital education spending is not working creatively with the level of government responsible for schools planning doesn't seem to make much sense when viewed through any lens, let alone an EcoDensity lens.

Two proposed "initial actions" of the City's EcoDensity plan are

- "amenity tools...to ensure that growth is accompanied with adequate community amenities"
- "a neighbourhood Plaza or community gathering place...in keeping with EcoDensity commitments"

Rather than taking away "communal" spaces in schools through down-sizing because of provincially prescribed guidelines, we should be capitalizing on them.

The draft EcoDensity Charter calls for the City to "engage and consult with the broad public and with communities to prepare plans and policies to guide change and to build and reflect broad community ownership and capacity-building...that supports communities' distinct approaches to meeting their needs."

But this didn't happen in the case of the plans to demolish General Gordon. By the VSB staff's own admission, the public input into the process consisted of the completion of 12 questionnaires. Billed as "seismic mitigation" (not school demolition), the issue has fallen outside the radar of most community residents. There are still parents within the school who are not aware that the VSB is about to vote on the demolition of their children's school.

We all agree that we want "the best school possible" for our community's children. What's missing is long-term planning, public input and creative, collaborative thinking.

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