

Victoria High School Land Exchange and Lease: Engagement Summary Report November 25, 2019



INTRODUCTION

In early 2018, the District went through an extensive consultation process with the community on the future of Victoria High School. Informed by over 1,700 peoples input via community open houses and a public survey, a final decision was made by the Board of Education. Out of the three options proposed, the decision was made to move forward with the 'Seismic Plus Enhancements (1000) Plus Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC)' option.

This option requires additional funding over and above what the Ministry of Education will provide for an H-1, the highest priority need seismic upgrade. In addition, knowing that school districts are expected to partially fund seismic projects, the District needs to find alternative methods and monetary sources to fund the remainder of the Victoria High seismic upgrade project.

In Fall 2018, the City of Victoria, Capital Regional Housing Corporation (CRHC) and the Greater Victoria School District No. 61 entered into a Letter of Intent to undertake a land swap to provide for the redevelopment next to Victoria High, called the Caledonia Affordable Housing Project. This redevelopment would create new units of affordable housing while at the same time providing the school district with funds required to cover the deficit for the seismic upgrades and renovation. This exchange will result in an expansion of lands currently leased by the school district to the Capital Regional Housing Corporation.

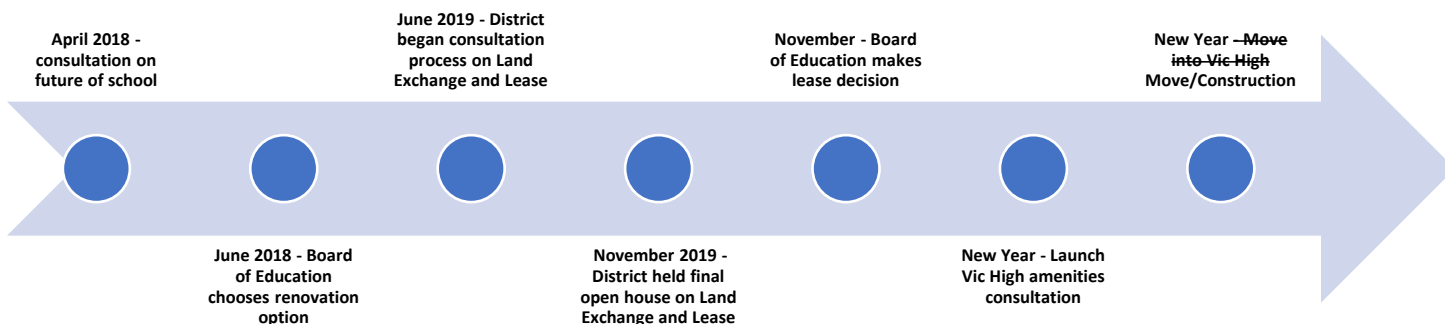
THE PROCESS

When the original Victoria High seismic upgrade consultation relative to the land swap occurred in June 2019, the District committed to additional consultation once the Ministry of Education funding was confirmed.

That consultation, in the form of an open house, was held on Tuesday, November 12, 2019 from 6:00pm-8:00pm at Victoria High. More than 200 community members attended the open house.

The engagement summary provides a copy of all comments provided, as well as a tally and analysis of the input received. Emails and letters regarding the proposed land swap and exchange have also been attached.

For more information on the proposal, visit: www.sd61.bc.ca/news-events/community/vic-high-planning-for-the-future/



WHAT WE DID

Communications and awareness efforts

This final consultation process on the land exchange and lease was broadly communicated to raise awareness and build relationships with interested stakeholders.

Actions included:

- Front page of Greater Victoria School District website;
- Shared on GVSD Facebook and Twitter throughout active engagement period from October 29-November 12, 2019;
- Media release issued Friday, November 8, 2019, about the open house, titled “Greater Victoria School District Seeks Input on Potential Land Disposition Near Victoria High”;
- Media Coverage;
- Letters emailed to all Victoria High parents;
- Ads in local community newspapers (Victoria News) and the daily paper (Times Colonist) over two consecutive weeks;
- Frequently Asked Questions on District website based on questions being received from the public;
- Email invitations to Community Associations, CSF and Independent Schools, Esquimalt and Songhees Nations;
- Victoria High also shared the information within their social media, newsletters and websites;

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF INPUT

Open House - Tuesday, November 12, 2019

Approximately 215 people attended the open house between 6:00pm- 8:00pm. People started arriving by 5:30 p.m.

The open house was a drop-in format with information boards with staff available for one on one conversations. Based on feedback received from the first consultation session, there was a preference from the community to have an opportunity to ask questions directly with staff members.

Trustees in attendance:

- Jordan Watters, Board Chair
- Ann Whiteaker, Vice Chair
- Rob Paynter, Trustee
- Ryan Painter, Trustee

District staff in attendance:

- Shelley Green, Superintendent
- Deb Whitten, Deputy Superintendent
- Kim Morris, Secretary-Treasurer
- Katrina Stride, Associate Secretary-Treasurer
- Greg Kitchen, Associate Superintendent
- Colin Roberts, Associate Superintendent
- Chuck Morris, Director of Facilities
- Jim Soles, Associate Director of Facilities
- Lisa McPhail, Communications Officer

School staff in attendance:

- Aaron Parker, Principal
- Alissa Moore, Vice Principal
- Chris Koutougos, Vic Principal

Others onsite to answer questions directly related to the Caledonia Affordable Housing Project:

- Representation from the City of Victoria
- Representation from BC Housing
- Representation from Capital Regional Housing Corporation

KEY TOPICS

Participants were presented with background information on previous consultation sessions, additional information about the seismic project, the District’s long-term facilities plan, student enrolment projections, financial overview, and the details of the proposed land swap and lease with the Capital Regional Housing Corporation.

Information Display Boards included:

- Purpose of open house
- Information about Victoria High and the Seismic Program
- Additional background details; consultation, Ministry funding announcement
- Funding sources and allocations – capital options
- Student projections over the next 10 years
- Requirements for land disposition
- Land valuations
- Overview of the proposed land exchange and lease
- Map of the proposed land being exchanged
- Timelines

The information display boards are attached in Appendix – C.

Open House Written Comments

Below is a summary of 172 pages of comments received. Note - this table is separated into two sections: a section of input topics related to the GVSD consultation, and one related to the affordable housing project.

Topic	Total	Opposite opinion
Directly Related to GVSD Consultation on Land Exchange and Lease		
Increasing enrolment and future land requirement/loss of land for current and future students/future needs of land	45	I’ve lived in Fernwood for over 7 years and this is the most exciting project that’s come up during that time. My partner and I don’t have kids yet and are worried we’d have to move out of the city if we did - but this proposal gives us hope that we could continue to live here in the future.
Lease proceeds too low	17	
Losing green space	16	Complaints against green space are a red herring.
Didn’t look at other options	14	
What amenities will be offered (note – will be consulted on in future phases)	7	
Concern on outcome of land post-lease	6	

Project feels rushed	5	I totally applaud the process and thoroughness of the consultation. Well done SD61.
Likes to keep heritage values and solution pays for it	4	People voted to maintain the heritage of this building at a higher cost. That's great; it also means that this higher cost must get paid for.
Insufficient transit service	2	
Directly Related to Caledonia Affordable Housing Project, Not GVSD		
Size/density of housing project	16	
Traffic congestion already an issue	9	
Concerns that Victoria High, so close to a new affordable housing project, will cause the school to have lower services.	7	
Possible crime, drugs, etc. from low income housing residents	5	It will improve my family's life in Fernwood and create security for others!
Pedestrian/cyclist/ student safety	3	As a Vic High parent and homeowner in area, I see it improving safety for our kids ...
Parking for school and new housing	2	

Overall Key Insights

- Approximately half of the comments supported the land exchange and lease and half did not
- Almost all of the input supporting the exchange and lease were also supportive of the affordable housing project
- Some people who supported the exchange, lease and affordable housing did flag the concern that there may not be enough green space if the lease were to proceed
- The main reason stated for lack of support of the land exchange was concerns over future space needs, and/or loss of land for current and future students
- Several commenters perceived that the proceeds of the lease are too low
- Comments in support of the plan include:
 - positive remarks on amenities being added
 - affordable housing
 - retaining the heritage values (and needing to pay for it)
- A small number of commenters demonstrated a lack of knowledge about affordable housing, specifically linking affordable housing with criminality – all of which the students at Victoria High would be at risk of if the housing were to be nearby

Input Directly Emailed to the Board

Approximately 300 emails were submitted as input directly to the Board during the consultation period. A large portion of them were supportive of the land exchange and lease. Please find all email correspondence in Appendix – D.

NEXT STEPS

All of the input is being shared with the Board of Education for their consideration to help inform their next steps.

The Board of Education will receive the compiled input in this Engagement Summary Report.
This report is also being shared publicly.

APPENDIX

- A – Media Release
- B – Advertisements
- C – Open House Information Boards
- D – Comment Cards
- E – Email and Letter Correspondence