

Wednesday, July 15th, 2020

Walking Through History: A Final Tour of the Oldest School in Western Canada

VICTORIA, BC – The Greater Victoria School District is capturing Victoria High School, an important piece of history, before it undergoes significant seismic upgrades. The District has launched a 3D virtual tour of the school that originally opened in 1914, for members of the public to do a final “walk through” prior to it undergoing construction this fall.

“The District had hoped to host a final celebration that included group school tours before the start of upgrades, however, COVID-19 forced us back to the drawing board. A virtual tour is a creative solution to allow the community into the school one last time,” said Board Chair Jordan Watters. “Our Board understands the historical significance of this school and has heard many stories over the past two years through our consultation process about how much our community values the building. With the use of specialized technology, we are able to document the iconic landmark that has been standing for over a century, and preserve precious memories.”

The virtual tour explores highlights of the school’s front foyer, auditorium, gymnasiums, classrooms, hallways, cafeteria and the boiler room. It also includes tags that share historical information about the spaces. The tour can be accessed online through use of any digital device (computer, phone, iPad).

Here are some tips on how to navigate the Matterport 3D Virtual Platform:

- Click on the “Dollhouse” feature to select a space within the school.
- Zoom in and out by using the scroll feature on your mouse.
- Click with your mouse to move forward and back (similar to Google maps). Look for the white circles; this is your available path to travel.
- Look out for our “tags” (blue circle rings) they are loaded with historical information.
- Be patient with loading time - it’s worth it!

VICTORIA HIGH 3D VIRTUAL TOUR: <https://bit.ly/VicHigh3DVRTour>

In June 2019, the Ministry approved \$77.1 million in funding to support the ‘Seismic Plus Enhancements (1000) Plus NLC’ option put forward by the Board of Education. This seismic option includes:

- Retaining the heritage of the historic landmark;
- Adding additional space for increasing enrolment;
- Modernizing the school to meet current and future learning needs;
- Creating a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC); and

- Renovating S.J. Willis Education Centre where students will be relocated during this seismic project and in the future for other seismic projects.

The project includes structural engineering and upgrades such as wiring, mechanical, plumbing and heating. Some spaces within the school will also be reconfigured to create optimal learning environments and safety improvements for students and staff. Interior features, including the marble and art glass in the main entrance and lobby, and the painted wood panels and art glass in the auditorium/balcony, will also be preserved. Exterior elements, such as terracotta, granite and brick masonry, will also be restored.

In February, the Board of Education approved an additional \$1.5—1.9 million for amenities and enhancements after consulting with the public. The improvements include new spaces for physical education health and learning, an astronomy observatory deck, improvements to the memorial stadium and theatre, and additional upgrades to the gymnasiums.

For more background information on the Victoria High seismic project visit: www.sd61.bc.ca/news-events/community/vic-high-planning-for-the-future/

The District will be sharing architectural designs for the upgraded Victoria High School in the Fall. Students will be relocated to a renovated S.J. Willis Education Centre while the project is underway. The seismic project is expected to be completed by September 2022.

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