

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 20, 2024
Author: Maryn Ashdown, Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services
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Meeting Date: February 28, 2024

TO: Library Board
FROM: Maryn Ashdown, Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services
SUBJECT: West End Community Hub Renewal Plan

SUMMARY

This report recommends VPL Board endorsement in principle of the West End Community Hub Renewal Plan, as developed through a collaborative partner and community planning process, and provides background relevant to VPL from the report to Vancouver City Council for February 27, 2024. This plan involves the future renewal and growth of the Joe Fortes branch, which is co-located with the West End Community Centre.

PURPOSE

This report is for decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the Board approve in principle the West End Community Hub Renewal Plan to guide the renewal of community-serving facilities and optimization of the site over the next 10-20 years to support the West End Community Plan.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The West End Community Hub Renewal Plan aligns with VPL Strategic Plan Goal 2.2 Develop welcoming, accessible and sustainable facilities that meet current and future needs and expectations.

INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS

Through VPL's Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy and our engagement with the City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy and actions, VPL has recognized the rights of First Nations, including the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations who hold rights to the land on which the West End Community Hub project is situated. The following statement on Reconciliation is from the Council Report:

The City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy notes that "the government-to-government relationship is at the heart of reconciliation and the work to undo and redress colonial impacts and dispossession on the rights and title holders of these lands." The Renewal Plan process has included government-to-government referrals with quarterly project updates sent to the three local Nations beginning in September 2021. To date, the City and VSB project teams have met with staff from Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations to outline potential opportunities for collaboration during future phases of work.

BACKGROUND

The current Joe Fortes Library branch is one of VPL's busiest branches, circulating approximately 262,000 items per year, and welcoming nearly 220,000 visitors annually. Built in 1976, this branch serves one of Vancouver's densest neighbourhoods with its 4,500 square feet of space. In VPL's 2018 Facilities Master Plan, the Joe Fortes branch was the second highest priority branch for re-investment, after Collingwood branch, and had the second highest intensity of use, after Carnegie branch. VPL's Facilities Master Plan recommended 15,700 square feet of growth for branch, with a total recommended size of 20,000 square feet as a standalone branch.

VPL has participated in all stages of the development of the Renewal Plan, guided by our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and our Facilities Master Plan.

The following background draws from the Council Report for the February 27, 2024 meeting.

The West End Community Hub Renewal Plan lays out a long-term vision for the renewal of the West End Community Centre, Joe Fortes Branch Library, King George Secondary School (KGSS) and the combined 1.8 hectare (4.4-acre) site on which they sit. The project represents a significant collaboration of the five (5) project partners who are the City of Vancouver (COV), Vancouver Public Library (VPL), Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (VPB), Vancouver School Board (VSB), and the West End Community Centre Association (WECCA).

The Renewal Plan provides a flexible framework to guide redevelopment of the West End Community Hub site in future years. Key features in the Renewal Plan include:

- Renewing, expanding and relocating the secondary school to the eastern portion of the site (lead: VSB);
- Renewing and expanding the community facilities on the western portion of the site, including the Joe Fortes branch (lead: COV); and
- Renewing and expanding the school sport field and outdoor education space in the centre of the site (lead: VSB).

The Renewal Plan was shaped through a robust public engagement process. Key partner and community values, sound urban planning principles, and important city objectives addressing liveability, sustainability, and Reconciliation formed the foundation of the WECH Renewal Plan.

Staff engaged with partner boards at significant milestones throughout the project, including sharing the renewal plan concepts in Spring 2023. The final Renewal Plan report is being shared with partner boards for endorsement. West End Community Centre Association provided approval in principle on November 7, 2023, and staff will bring the Renewal Plan to the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation on February 26, 2024, and the Vancouver Public Library Board on February 28, 2024, to seek their endorsement.

DISCUSSION

Vancouver City Council will consider the West End Community Hub Renewal Plan on February 27, 2024, and the Council report and full Renewal plan (329 pages) are available at:

<https://council.vancouver.ca/20240227/documents/r8.pdf>

The West End Community Hub Renewal Plan suggests a future size of 14,000 square feet for the Joe Fortes Branch, which is growth of 9,500 square feet in addition to the existing 4,500 square feet. While this size would be 6,000 square feet less than the recommended size in the VPL Facilities Master Plan, which was based on a standalone branch, staff anticipate that the gap in size will be made up through shared spaces, including lobby and meeting space, staff space, washrooms, and Indigenous cultural space.

Figures 4 and 5 below offer implementation scenarios for the site. In Figure 4 (preferred) the VPL branch is located on Denman street. Additional detail is available about the implementation scenarios in the full report, linked above.

The remainder of the report is drawn from the Council Report for February 27, 2024.

Community Engagement

An in-depth community consultation process was undertaken to gather feedback and ideas from the community including service providers, non-profit organizations, students, teachers and school staff, residents in the area, current users of the West End Community Centre and Joe Fortes Library, and those who do not currently access the facilities.

Over 7,000 touchpoints have been recorded in the overall engagement process. Engagement activities and events throughout all phases included:

- Coast Salish Chronicles of the West End (project launch event)
- Visioning workshops
- Open house events at key milestones
- Public Surveys and pop up events
- Focus Groups (Including recreation and ice arena users, arts and culture groups, library users, and community organizations serving diverse populations)
- Spaces and Activities Workshops
- Workshops with Secondary School students
- Workshops with Elementary and Secondary School parents and PACs
- Individual interviews with caregivers, newcomers, Indigenous residents, and attendees at Gathering Place and WECC Warming Centre
- Postcards mailed to West End residents, posters, and leaflets in public spaces
- Outreach by partners and key community organizations

Program of Spaces and Activities

The community placed a high value on the role the existing WECC & KGSS play as a multi-use community services hub. Through a series of Spaces and Places workshops and Program Verification sessions, space needs were identified for broad program areas as follows:

- Gathering Spaces – public plaza, entrance and lobby with space for casual connection;
- Multipurpose and Arts and Culture Spaces – flexible spaces to meet community needs;
- Social Development – full-time licensed childcare, youth and seniors spaces, community kitchen, and space for non-profit partner programming;
- **Library - a service hub to foster intergenerational activities – children’s area, teen zone, and adult collections to foster life-long learning;**
- Recreation - active living facilities supporting sport for life including ice rink, gymnasium, fitness centre, and multipurpose fitness studios;
- Indigenous Knowledge and Culture Hub – spaces for cultural practices and ceremony;
- Firehall – renewing and expanding the essential life safety services that Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services provides within the existing response zone;

- Secondary School – pending approval and funding from the Ministry of Education, the proposed expansion to provide a new seismically safe 1,000 to 1,200 student capacity secondary school, sport field and outdoor education areas.

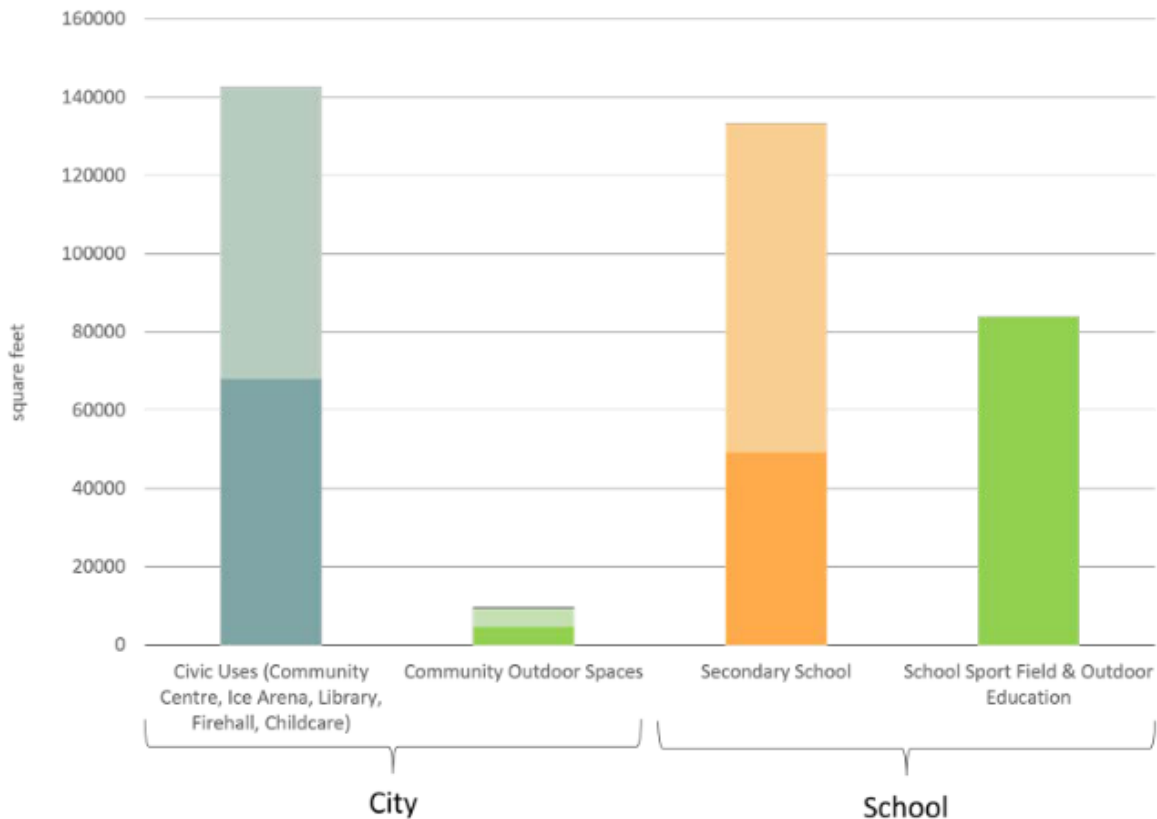


Figure 3 - Potential renewal areas (saturated colour) and growth areas (lighter colour above)

The Renewal Plan evolved from a combination of technical requirements, partner policies and objectives, urban design best practices, and community input from the Visioning, Spaces and Activities, and Site Development Scenarios consultations. The WECH Renewal Plan will serve as the basis for renewing and transforming the site over the coming years.

Key features and planning elements of the Plan include:

- Community facilities and a public plaza located along Denman Street;
- Secondary School located in a peaceful setting for public education;
- Accessible and safe pedestrian connections and improved public realm;
- Vehicular access concentrated on Barclay Street and elimination of surface parking lots;

- Firehall located to allow optimal response times for emergencies.

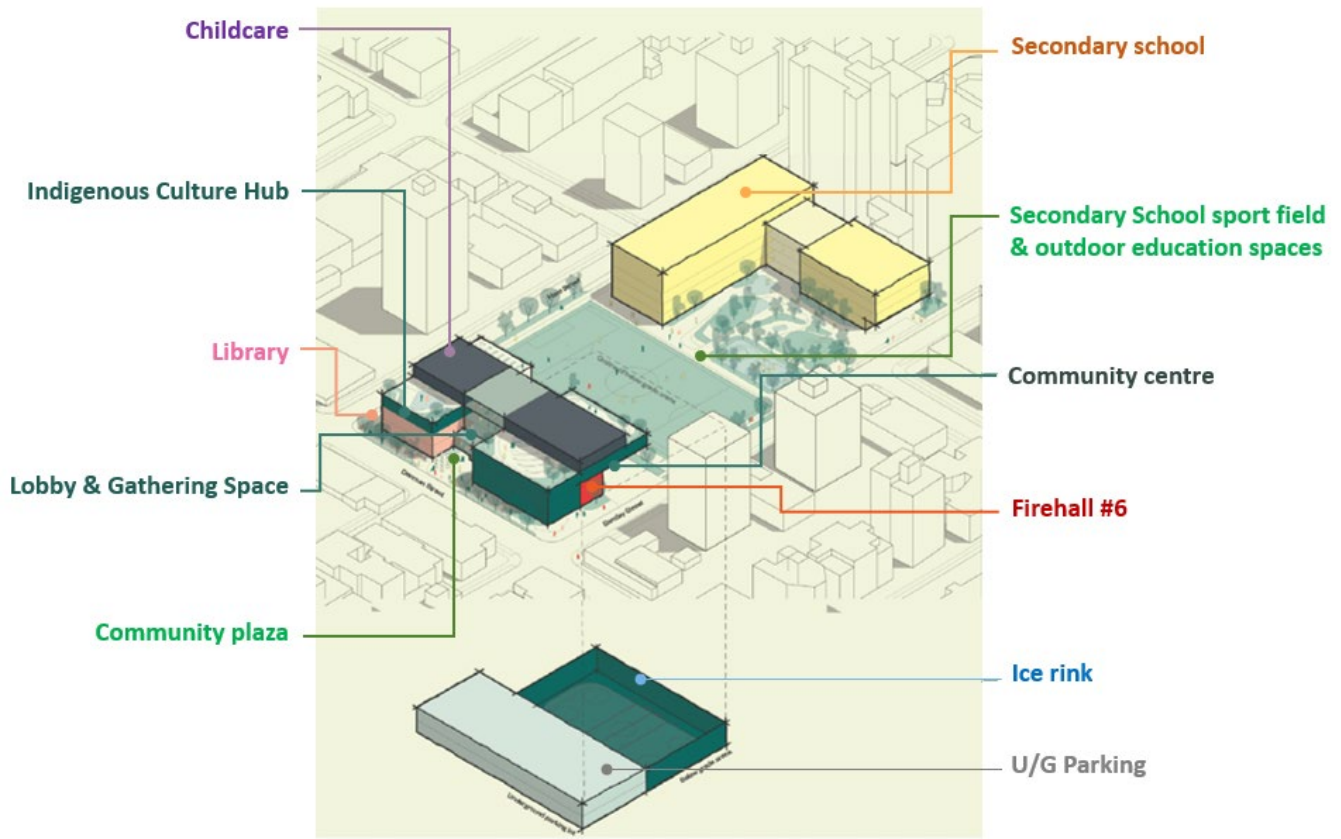
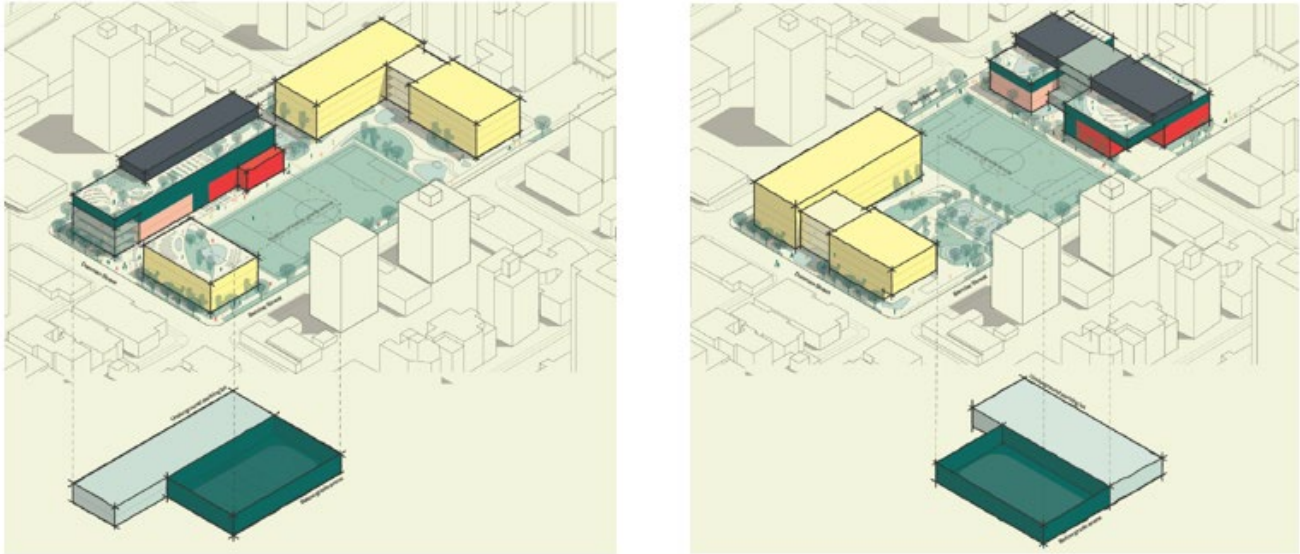


Figure 4 – The Preferred Renewal Plan

(colours and massing are not intended to represent building form or design)

Recognizing the different funding sources and the timing and availability of funds for project partners, the Renewal Plan identifies two alternative implementation scenarios to ensure the Plan is a flexible framework that can respond effectively to a range of future funding sequences optimizing the Renewal Plan’s feasibility for success. As the Alternate Plans (Figure 5) contain the same spaces, activities and similar outdoor spaces, the cost estimate, renewal and expansion areas are similar to the Preferred Plan.

Figure 5 – Alternate Plans - colours and massing are not intended to represent building form or design



FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost to prepare the WECH Renewal Plan is approximately \$2.25 million, with the City contributing \$2.025 million and VSB contributing \$0.225 million.

The City's component of the Renewal Plan contemplates ~150,000 sf of community-serving space, including ~70,000 sf of renewal and ~80,000 sf of expansion. The proposed size is equivalent to that of Hillcrest Centre, Vancouver's largest community facility. The proposed floor area is preliminary and subject to future site planning and funding availability. The cost (2023 \$) to implement the City's component is estimated to be \$300 to \$350 million, of which ~45% is renewal and ~55% is expansion. Renewal is primarily funded from property tax while new and expansion is primarily funded from development contributions.

The timing and funding for the WECH project will be considered as part of the City's mid to long-term capital planning process (10-year Capital Strategic Outlook and 4-year Capital Plan) and integrated into the implementation of the West End Community Plan and Public Benefits Strategy.

All the costs associated with the renewal and expansion of King George Secondary School, the school sport field and outdoor education spaces will be funded by the VSB.

Given the scale of the project, implementation of the Renewal Plan will not proceed until funding from all partners is secured.