

West Kitsilano Residents Association  
1911 Waterloo St.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6R 3G7

January 14, 2009

**Submission to the Vancouver School Board**

**Re: Committee 2 - Item 3 General Gordon NCLD Report**

The West Kitsilano Residents Association is a registered non-profit society that has been in existence since 1989. Our goals are to maintain the qualities of our neighbourhood that make it a wonderful and vibrant place to live. Our neighbourhood values heritage and history as well as sustainability and re-use of existing buildings wherever possible. One of the unique qualities of our neighbourhood is that it has a character that results from its socio- economic diversity and its heritage and character buildings. Our neighbourhood has a unique zoning that seeks to protect and enhance this character and heritage.

As a community group, we are extremely concerned about the possible demolition of General Gordon School. The original portions of the school have a very important heritage and historic meaning for our community.

**Our position**

We believe that full or partial retention of a seismically upgraded school is the option that best meets the values, aspirations and goals of our community. It will produce safety results that are comparable to a new school, will result in a superior, potentially larger learning environment for students, will be a more environmentally responsible option that minimizes the total carbon footprint, reuses and recycles material and reduces volume of waste going to landfill, and will retain our heritage and history. What better way to teach our children the value of history, architectural heritage, and recycling than to show them that we value this ourselves?

We note: if seismic safety requirements can be met in the renovation of Queen Mary School and Strathcona School, why can they not also be met at General Gordon School? We ask why it is that General Gordon seems to have been slated for demolition while other schools of a similar age and style are likely being retained? We question whether the reason is that on some sites it is more convenient than it is at General Gordon to plan for the temporary relocation of the students during construction? Is this a valid reason to demolish a historic school? We need to think long term, not short term.

## **Problem with the report's statistics**

We would like to draw attention to one very important apparent error in the consultants' report.

Despite the fact that the question of demolition versus renovation is not supposed to be part of the NCLD process, statistics are provided for Question 4 on the responses to the question about retention, partial retention or full replacement (demolition). (Please note that the terms used in this report are value laden. Replacement sounds so much better than demolition.)

The figures provided in the report appear to be incorrect.

The correct numbers based on our calculations are as follows:

- Total responses to this question was 85, not 116
- Per cent in favour of retention, partial retention, and renovation was 58% (49 responses)
- Per cent in favour of demolition and building new was 24% (20 responses)

Both parents and community members showed strong majority support for retention/renovation of General Gordon School.

## **Conclusion**

The decision as to the best alternative for General Gordon School should be based on a number of factors:

- student and staff safety
- educational values
- environmental impact/sustainability
- community values
- heritage and history

We believe that the retention and renovation of the portions of General Gordon School completed in 1911 and 1922 will best meet these combined goals.