

The Museum at the Pipe Shop

by EVE LAZARUS on JANUARY 30, 2016

Can you think of a better fit for the Pipe Shop than an interactive cultural history museum? I can't, and I'm furious that a mayor and a couple of North Vancouver City councillors were able to scuttle years of work and planning.



The Pipe Shop is part of the shipyard development at the foot of Lonsdale, next to the SeaBus and what will be the new Presentation House (Polygon Gallery). It's an area that has grown from a virtual wasteland to an exciting destination and the museum would have added an element that knitted past with present.

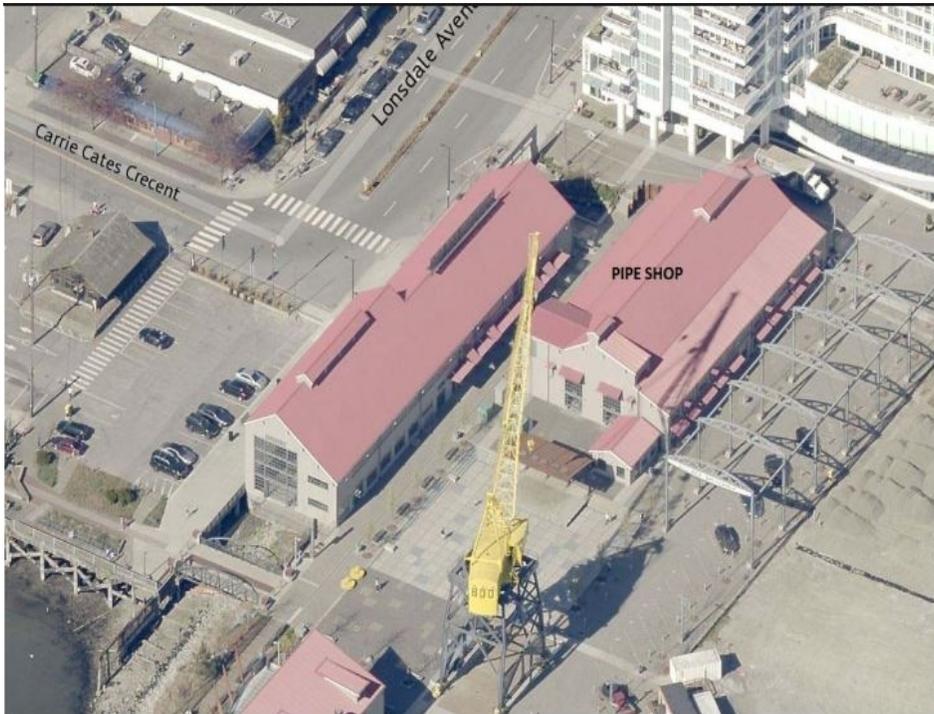


The plans are truly exciting for the space. Immersive exhibits incorporate the richness of First Nations history and connect our mountains and waterfront to squatters, mudflats, personalities, floating post offices, grocery stores, industry and growth. Was that the problem? Could council not grasp that this was going to more than a bunch of dusty artifacts?

3.0 EXPERIENCE



Coun. Craig Keating told the North Shore News that he voted down the project because of a BDO Canada report that was commissioned to knock holes in the report commissioned by the Museum. The report chose to base its rejection on the colossal failure that was Storyeum and the current Museum of Vancouver.



Let's take Storyeum. I was part of the media tour when it first opened. Storyeum was a huge, expensive disappointment that failed to deliver anywhere near the experience of Expo 86, asked a high admission price—\$21.95 in 2004, and relied on actors to deliver performances (a drunken John A. Macdonald was unforgettable for its awfulness, and a musical comedy piece highly forgettable). Storyeum was a private, for-profit business, buried underground in a cavernous (104,000 square foot) Gastown parking lot.

The second case is the Museum of Vancouver. Entrance is \$15 for adults (which incidentally, is more than double what North Van is proposing). As vice-president of the Vancouver Historical Society I'm quite familiar with the MoV as we hold our monthly speaker meetings there. While the waterfront location is stunning, and I love the mid-century building, it's extremely hard to get to—by car or by transit. There are no restaurants in the nearby vicinity—not even a coffee shop, and it doesn't even have its own building—it shares space with the HR MacMillan Space Centre. It's just not a fair comparison to the highly accessible, visible and smaller Pipe Shop.

So what does council think we should do with the space? Jam in a ferris wheel? Lay down some ice? Put in a roller derby rink? Or, hell, let's just mow the building down and put up more condos.

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