

Museum gets \$3M promise from Ottawa

Federal funding brings proposed Lower Lonsdale museum closer to City of North Vancouver approval

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An artist's rendering from June of how the new Polygon tower and North Vancouver Museum and Archives will look from West Esplanade. file image supplied

The North Vancouver Museum and Archives is a big step closer to making its new home in the base of Polygon's Site 8 tower a reality after receiving a promise of \$3 million towards the project from the federal government.

Ottawa announced the funding Wednesday, to be provided through the Canada Cultural Spaces fund in the Department of Canadian Heritage.

"It is fantastic news," said Nancy Kirkpatrick, director of the North Vancouver Museum and Archives. "It is the key that will unlock the whole project."

Receiving the federal grant was one of the conditions set by City of North Vancouver council this summer in order for the project to get the final green light.

A report on plans for the new museum project is expected to go before council next month, said Kirkpatrick. “We’re very optimistic we’ll get the go-ahead at that time,” she said.

Other funding for the museum project includes a \$2.5-million commitment from the city – which has been budgeted but not yet formally approved – a 16,000 square-foot space contributed by Polygon in return for additional building height and \$1 million to be raised in a fundraising campaign. Project proponents are hoping to open the doors to the new museum in 2019.

Wednesday’s announcement marks a milestone in the comeback for the project after city council rejected a long-held plan to move the museum into the Pipe Shop at the Shipyards in January after fundraisers fell short of their \$5 million target.

This summer saw the project rise from the ashes as main-floor anchor of Polygon Homes’ 14-storey mixed-use condo tower on Site 8, a parcel of land that is mostly a surface parking lot between West Esplanade and Carrie Cates Court.

Council approved the museum moving into the space on a 10-year lease, as long as it meets certain conditions. Among those, organizers can’t come back to the city or the District of North Vancouver asking for any more operating funds above annual inflationary increases; the museum must vacate its off-site warehouse storage space, and it must operate under a business plan approved by council.

The cancellation of the previous Pipe Shop project meant organizers had to reapply for federal funding, with no guarantees they would get it.

Proponents are hopeful that those who had pledged funding to the previous Pipe Shop project will renew those pledges to the new museum.

While proponents of a new museum were initially crushed by council’s rejection of the Pipe Shop project, “we truly do believe this opportunity is a superior opportunity to the one in the Pipe Shop,” said Kirkpatrick. The new museum space will be custom built and will have underground parking, as well as a large lobby area with high ceilings, where there are plans to display one of the restored original Lonsdale streetcars.

The operating budget for the museum and archives is currently about \$1.3 million annually, with the majority of that funded by the two North Vancouver municipalities.