## City of North Vancouver approves new museum on Esplanade Community history showcase near Quay to open in 2019

Jeremy Shepherd / North Shore News

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The museum's planned exhibition spaces include a group of core exhibits, a gallery devoted to changing exhibits on topics of local interest, and a network of portable exhibits that will travel between the museum and other public buildings in North Vancouver.

The past may be through with North Vancouver, but North Vancouver isn't through with the past.

The North Vancouver Museum and Archives officially found a new home Monday, as City of North Vancouver council unanimously voted to hang their history in the Polygon development at 131 West Esplanade.

The museum will be on the first floor of Polygon Homes' 14-storey condo development. The approximately 16,000-square-foot space has an estimated value of \$11 million.

Council's approval marks the end of "30 years of a dream," said Coun. Don Bell.

That dream was denied earlier in 2016 when council rejected plans to move the museum's itinerant artifacts into the Pipe Shop building after the NVMA's fundraising drive fell nearly \$1 million short.

The rejection represented a "great failure of the imagination," said Coun. Pam Bookham.

However, the disappointment led to a "better facility than could've been attained in the Pipe Shop," according to Bell.

The Polygon site will provide: "A first-class modern museum, and not just simply a repository of dusty artifacts." Coun. Linda Buchanan, who previously expressed concerns about the museum becoming a "financial burden" on the city, praised the museum's proximity to the new Presentation House Gallery.

"This is, in my opinion, the better location," she said.

While council was unanimous in their approval, at least two councillors maintained a healthy skepticism.

Discussing his consternation about the project's financial feasibility, Coun. Craig Keating emphasized oversight of the museum's business plan.

Besides annual reports from the NVMA staff, "substantive reviews" are set to take place at the three-, five-, seven- and 10-year mark to ensure "the viability of the museum," according to a staff report.

Keating also requested city staff have: "some Plan Bs, should things begin to go awry."

Coun. Holly Back echoed Keating's comments, noting she was "skeptical" of the project's sustainability and "not totally happy" with the business plan.

The initial budget for the museum is \$5.5 million, with the city providing \$2.55 million and the federal government pledging a little more than \$3 million.

The museum's prospects are strong, according to Bell.

"We have federal support, we have city support, and we know we have the ability for fundraising," he said. After years of uncertainty, the time has come to find a "proper home" for the museum, according to Mayor Darrell Mussatto.

The mayor thanked the District of North Vancouver for their support of the project and noted the museum's new challenge of shoehorning more than a century of history into the space on West Esplanade.

Bell took time to credit the founder of the North Vancouver Museum and Archives, Bill Baker, for collecting materials from the city's shipbuilding boom, from North Shore pioneers and founding families.

"Bill collected it, and collected anything and everything that anybody offered; not knowing what form in the future the museum would take," he said.

Museum supporters rallied in support of the new site in June, despite misgivings from Coun. Rod Clark, who suggested the new location would be more difficult to find and "won't be nearly as attractive."

However, the idea was trumpeted by NVMA commissioner Sanford Osler, who noted Site 8 was the last option in the neighbourhood.

Construction on Polygon's development is scheduled to begin in early 2017 with plans to open the museum in 2019.

The archives will remain at its home in Lynn Valley.