

# Coal Harbour waterfront social housing and elementary school approved by City Council

Kenneth Chan  
July 7, 2021  
Daily Hive



2021 artistic rendering of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex at 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)

Plans to build an elementary school and social housing on the Coal Harbour waterfront in downtown Vancouver are moving forward.

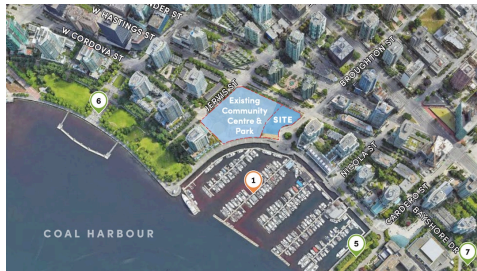
While the public hearing involving nearly 100 speakers was contentious, the decision by Vancouver City Council was not. The rezoning application for 480 Broughton Street was approved unanimously last week, with

independent councillor Colleen Hardwick absent from the vote.

A development permit application was approved by the city's Development Permit Board in March. The project's review process was expedited by combining the rezoning and development permit applications into one, with overlapping timelines.

- See also:
  - Electrical substation project under West End school officially going ahead
  - New milestone reached on future Olympic Village elementary school
  - New \$40-million elementary school for Kitsilano moving forward (RENDERINGS)
  - New Eric Hamber high school in Vancouver moving forward (RENDERINGS)

With the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver School Board (VSB) as the proponents, the surface parking lot right next to Coal Harbour Community Centre will now be redeveloped into a 127-ft-tall, 11-storey tower.



Site of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)



Site of 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver. (Google Maps)

The first three floors will have a 43,000 sq ft elementary school for up to 340 students, with a main entrance opening up to Broughton Street and the seawall, and a secondary entrance on the second level connecting to the community centre's rooftop public park.

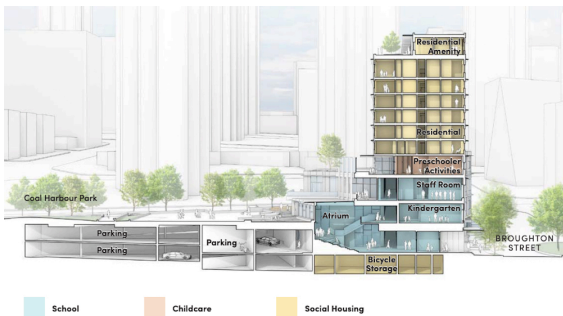
The existing park will continue to be accessible to the general public while doubling in purpose as the school's play area.

On the fourth floor, a 9,600 sq ft childcare facility, plus an outdoor play space on the podium rooftop of the school, will

have a capacity for up to 64 kids.



income families with children; the unit mix is six studios, 17 one-bedroom units, 23 two-bedroom units, and 11 three-bedroom units. It is estimated these homes will be able to accommodate 159 residents. Residents will have access to an expansive common amenity level on the rooftop with both indoor and outdoor space, including panoramic views of Stanley Park, the harbour, and mountains.



2021 layout of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)



2021 artistic rendering of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex at 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)

"This whole project is exciting, and it is a real model of how we want to move forward in terms of more complete and resilient neighbourhoods," said Green Party councillor Adriane Carr.

"To combine the community centre that's already there with the housing, school, and childcare is just incredible. To include social housing in such a fabulous location with such fabulous amenities located adjacent to it is where we should be heading."

COPE councillor Jean Swanson said, "I love the idea of

waterfront housing," adding that she sees the project as a "win-win-win," but she is hopeful the affordability of the homes can be increased through the possibility of funding from provincial and federal governments.

According to city officials, there continues to be a significant shortfall of elementary school, before-and-after-school care, and childcare spaces both within the downtown peninsula and across the city.

But this additional capacity over the longer term is intended to be replacement capacity over the short- and medium-term, as the Coal Harbour school will become the temporary home of students at the Lord Roberts Annex at Nelson Park in the West End.

This is a critical project for BC Hydro, which is funding the Coal Harbour school so that it can demolish Lord Roberts Annex to build a new major substation beneath the park. This substation is needed to replace the aging Dal Grauer Substation on Burrard Street near Nelson Street, and provide downtown with increased electrical capacity to meet the demand from the growing residential and employment density from continued densification. Electrical demand within Vancouver is expected to rise by 75% over the next three decades.





2021 artistic rendering of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex at 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)



2021 artistic rendering of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex at 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver) However, opposition to the school, childcare, and social housing complex has been mounting, with 232 notes of opposition received by the city, including three petitions with a combined total of 150 signatures and 259 attached email comments. Those supporting the project totalled 137 notes.

Residents against the project were generally concerned over increased traffic for the pick-up and drop-off of kids, potential impacts to the use of the park, visual impacts from the building form and height,

and increased crime and street disorder from providing social housing for people with drug addictions.

To help address the issue of increased traffic, city council directed city staff to conduct a transportation assessment and management review that includes mitigation measures through the “School Streets” program and an emphasis on active transportation.

“I actually don’t think we’re going to see a huge influx of traffic and vehicles, but what we’re going to have is families will be able to make different choices. They have housing, work, childcare, and school nearby,” said independent councillor Lisa Dominato.

“I have spoken to many families across the city, and the challenge for them is they can’t get into their catchment school or they can’t find childcare in their neighbourhood. They can’t spend two hours on the bus going back and forth. This will give families more choices.”



2021 artistic rendering of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex at 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)



2021 layout of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)

City staff say a school and a social housing component have been planned for the site since the 1990s, but it was stalled due to a lack of funding.

Vancouver School Board kick started this project again in 2018, after it reached an agreement with BC Hydro in which the electric utility will provide up to \$75 million to the school board to cover the cost of two new schools.

“The proposed uses for this site have been anticipated in the official development plan since 1990, and the original CD-1 bylaw approved in 1996,” said Lex

Dominiak, a rezoning planner for the city.

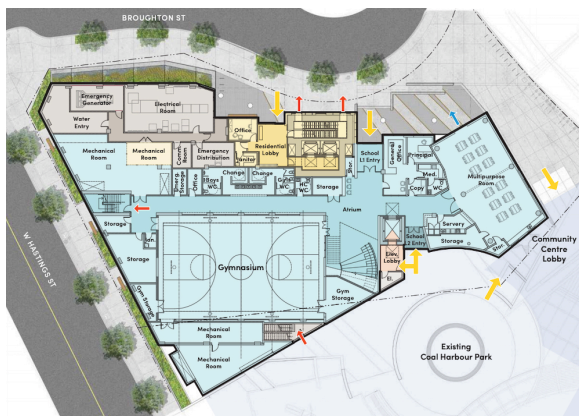
“The additional 20 units provides an opportunity to provide much-needed social housing while creating unique civic synergies with the other building uses in a neighbourhood that is highly walkable and rich in amenities.”

Following the public hearing, some residents opposed to the addition to their neighbourhood have indicated they will explore the possibility of legal action to prevent construction and seek compensation, alleging a lack of consultation, a “sham” review process, and that the city failed to do its fiduciary duties.

“I appreciate that this is an emotional issue for folks who did come to speak in opposition, but I think in time this project will prove to be a tremendous asset to the community,” said Green Party councillor Pete Fry.



2021 artistic rendering of the Coal Harbour elementary school, childcare, and social housing complex at 480 Broughton Street, Vancouver. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)



2021 layout of the ground level of the Coal Harbour elementary school. (Henriquez Partners Architects/Vancouver School Board/City of Vancouver)

The project is expected to carry a total construction cost of \$81 million — a high figure, which city staff previously explained was due to “aggressive energy efficiency standards” and the addition of a childcare facility. This will be a Passive House and LEED Gold certified green building.

The school component will cost \$31.66 million (funded by BC Hydro), the childcare facility will cost \$12.65 million, and the social housing will cost \$36.5 million.

Henriquez Partners Architects described their building design as a ship-like form, a slender building parallel to Broughton Street to maintain views to the water from design is intended to help improve the frontage of the seawall.

neighbouring buildings and to provide visibility to the seawall and marina. The building's public realm

Construction on the new Coal Harbour complex could begin as early as late 2021 for an opening by early Summer 2024, at which point Lord Roberts Annex will be demolished to allow for the commencement of substation construction.

BC Hydro will also fund the new replacement Lord Roberts Annex school building, which is expected to reach completion towards the end of the decade on top of the finished underground substation. All components of the substation replacement project, including the new schools, are expected to cost BC Hydro roughly \$300 million, based on previous early estimates.



Artistic rendering of a new replacement Lord Roberts Annex elementary school on top of the completed West End underground substation at Nelson Park. (BC Hydro)

- See also:
  - Electrical substation project under West End school officially going ahead
  - New milestone reached on future Olympic Village elementary school
  - New \$40-million elementary school for Kitsilano moving forward (RENDERINGS)
  - New Eric Hamber high school in Vancouver moving forward (RENDERINGS)

Copyright © 2022 Buzz Connected Media Inc.