

New track and observation deck among proposals for Vic High

[Jeff Bell](#) / Times Colonist

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Victoria High school in the Fernwood neighbourhood.
Photograph By ADRIAN LAM, Times Colonist

A new track and synthetic-turf field for the historic Memorial Stadium or an observation deck for astronomy students are among the options for Victoria High School presented in a survey by the Greater Victoria School District.

Gym improvements and upgrades for the school theatre are also options in the online survey, which is open for input until Jan. 10. The amenities would be over and above the cost of the \$79.7-million seismic/expansion project to refurbish the Fernwood school, which dates from 1914 at its current location.

Among the key components of the project are the retention of the school's facade and other heritage features, added space to increase student spaces to 1,000 from 800 and the creation of a neighbourhood learning centre that will include child-care spaces. Also part of the plan is the renovation of the S.J. Willis Education Centre, where students affected by this and other seismic projects will attend classes while their schools are being worked on.

Completion of the Vic High project is scheduled for September 2022.

The school district's share of the seismic/expansion project funding is \$2.6 million, which came from the up-to-\$4.5 million profit from a land exchange involving the City of Victoria, the Capital Regional Housing Corp. and B.C. Housing to provide affordable housing run by B.C. Housing.

The money left, up to \$1.9 million, will be used for the extra features that are selected, said Greater Victoria School Board chairwoman Jordan Watters.

The items in the survey are the ones that have "bubbled to the top," Watters said, but survey participants can add their own ideas.

Keith McCallion, a former Vic High principal and a member of the Vic High Alumni Association, said there is a separate fundraising effort to replace the stadium, track, field and lights. The stadium, the first at a B.C. high school, was built to honour Vic High students killed in the Second World War. It was completed in 1949, followed by the track in 1951.

McCallion said about \$600,000 has been raised toward the fundraising goal of more than \$8 million.

He said he is pleased to see the survey.

"I think it's great that the board has really sought input from what I would think is quite a wide variety," he said. "I'm going to be really pumped up to see what other folks want to see."

The survey will close at 4 p.m. on Jan. 10. It is online at surveymonkey.com/r/vichigh_amenities and is posted on the Vic High Alumni website at vichigh.com.

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