



SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION
community begins here

Community

B E G I N S H E R E

ISSUE NO. 23

April 2007

Coming Together at Last

The two buildings of Garden City Collegiate are about to be linked

Sometimes putting up walls can help tear them down.

That's certainly the case for Garden City Collegiate where an exciting new construction and renovation project will finally link together the two buildings that function as a single school.

One of the biggest challenges of operating one school from two buildings is creating a sense of inclusion and togetherness among staff and students alike. Each building has its own administrative offices and storage spaces so they can operate smoothly. Traveling outside from one building to the other through the rain and snow discourages students and staff from leaving their buildings unless it's necessary. Student groups have to work harder to get messages about social issues and activities to everyone in both buildings.

"We need a gathering place, somewhere where kids can be with each other during lunch and study periods," says Steve Medwick, Principal of Garden City Collegiate. "We don't have that right now."

"We're at around 950 students or so right now and we're expected to have about a thousand next year. When the new West Kildonan Collegiate opens, we'll be closer to 1100. I think as we get more kids and more teachers, separate buildings would make timetabling and developing student, staff and community communication more difficult!"

That's what makes the project so significant. It's not just going to bring the buildings together; it's going to bring



Sharing the Vision (l to r): Steve Medwick, GCC Principal, Howard Kowalchuk, GCC Vice-Principal, Adair Warren, GCC Vice-Principal, Bill McGowan, Chairperson (SOSD Board of Trustees) and Claudia Sarbit, Vice-Chairperson (SOSD Board of Trustees)

everyone in the school together, creating an even stronger school culture.

The Gymnasium and Cafeteria/Commons Area

The new Gymnasium and Cafeteria/Commons are the heart of the linked buildings and will, in many ways, become the heart of the school as well.

The new gymnasium space is a key component, as the low ceilings of the existing school gyms reduced the ability for competitive sports activities.

"The new gym was the first piece everyone wanted to go into the planning," explains Doug Hanna, one of the principal architects at Number TEN Architectural Group, which is guiding the GCC vision. "They wanted to have a large, competition gym that had a space for viewing and a linking fitness room."

"They also wanted to be able to sub-divide the area into individual teaching stations and to have good connections to the playfields, which are on the north side."

The commons, meanwhile, will be more than just a cafeteria and walk-through area. It will become a much-needed gathering place where students can develop the social and interpersonal relationships that are such a big part of the high school experience.

"Envision a food court in a mall. It's along the same kind of concept," says Hanna. "It will be quite open between the corridor and the commons. You will be able to see activity in the corridor and look from the corridor to see activity in the commons. We also want to have windows into the gymnasium so you can see activity in there as well. As a result, you have a very active space."

The high visibility is especially welcome because it will allow more people to watch events held in the gymnasium.

“During our Live Aid concert, we had something like 600 students packing the gym,” says Howard Kowalchuk, the GCC Vice-Principal. “But we still had kids outside, wanting to get in. The new gym will be more open and have windows and just let everyone see what’s going on. It’s going to make events more public and accessible.”

Renovations to Administration

Students aren’t the only ones getting a new gathering space. A newly renovated and centralized space will give GCC staff a place to get together.

“Having one staff room is really important,” says Medwick. “It makes so much difference to the administration when staff are really connecting and talking about things.” “There’s a staff room in each building,” says Kowalchuk, “So often, the staff in, say, the East building will just get together and eat separate from the staff in the West.”

“We do generally come together at some point during the day, but it’s not as often as we could.”

With the new centrally-located offices, staff will have a single place to eat lunch, swap stories, support one another’s professional development

and share insights that help them improve the school programs and culture for everyone.

The Ripple Effect

The potential for existing areas is just as exciting as the new spaces. People are already planning what to do with the soon-to-be-freed spaces in the school.

“There’s lots of talk about what the spaces will become,” says Medwick. “And the best part about it is that we believe we can do a lot of this with minimum cost.”

Medwick notes, for example, how the existing weight-training area and Phys Ed office will become a new and bigger Drama area. The current drama room will, in turn, become another band room to accommodate the school’s growing Arts programs (“That’s really no expense. It’s just moving some equipment and supplies.”) The existing staff room’s kitchen facilities can be used to expand programming for special needs students, giving them an area where they can learn to cook as part of learning to live more independently.

Kowalchuk also points out that this is an opportunity to plan for future growth as well.

“We have a dance course coming next year,” says Kowalchuk. “So if we’re looking at enhancing and developing a dance program, it’s a great

opportunity right now because we have these other spaces we can use.”

“Really, it just opens up a lot of other opportunities for new and different educational programs for our staff and students.”

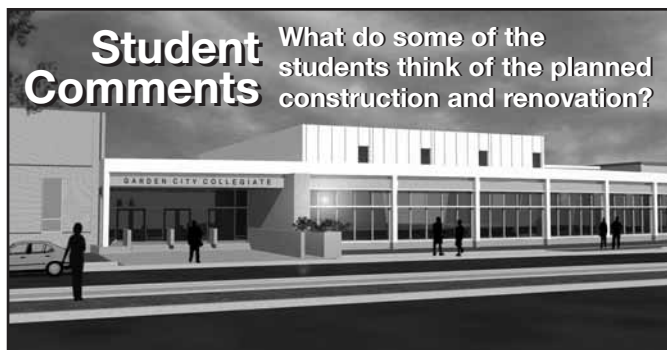
The Pace of Change

Like any dramatic change, the construction and renovations at Garden City Collegiate will take time... but not as much time as you might think.

While Number TEN Architectural Group is just in the beginning stages of the design and construction documents, the first phase of the project (the gymnasium, commons and administration offices) are slated for completion in 2009, with a second phase of renovations to the shops area following shortly.

Both Medwick and Kowalchuk credit a lot of the speed of change to the Seven Oaks Superintendent Team and SOSD Board of Trustees who voted unanimously to move forward with the project. Having everyone so supportive of the ideas and hopes for the new facility has made the energy, excitement and enthusiasm impossible to stop.

“To have the Trustees unanimously back this is just fabulous,” says Medwick. “There are a lot of changes that have been proposed... and it’s all to make things better for our students.”



Student Comments

What do some of the students think of the planned construction and renovation?

“I’m looking forward to not having to walk outside anymore...and having that rather large gym is going to be a plus!”
Chelsea, Grade 9

“I believe it’s important...because the students can interact with others a lot better. The sidewalk separating the buildings is like a barrier.”
Tanya, Grade 9

“I think it’s important because there will be more space for new classes.”
Nikolai, Grade 10

Seven Oaks School Division Board of Trustees

Bill McGowan (Ward II) Chairperson 694-0808	Dennis Ruggles (Ward II) 694-3976
Claudia Sarbit (Ward III) Vice-Chairperson 339-8758	Richard Sawka (Ward III) 338-1199
Gary J. Fogg (Ward II) 694-8998	Judy Silver (Ward II) 633-1845
Teresa Jaworski (Ward III) 334-3063	Ward I – West St. Paul
Evelyn C. Myskiw (Ward I) 339-1242	Ward II – Maples, Riverbend
Edward P. Ploszay (Ward III) 339-1260	Ward III – Garden City, West Kildonan
	note: all phone numbers provided are home phone numbers
	Website: www.7oaks.org Telephone Number: 586-8061