

WESTERN NEWS

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EVERY THURSDAY

Heather Pavilion demolition plans prompt counter-proposal

By Jeffrey Huberman

Five acres of park. That's what you're likely to see if Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) continues with plans to demolish its buildings east of Centennial Pavilion in the next few years.

In exchange for a development permit to build VGH's new 298 foot, \$150 million tower now under construction at 12th Avenue and Oak Street, the hospital agreed last April to demolish its buildings east of Centennial Pavilion and landscape and maintain a park there. The physical plant on 12th Avenue will remain.

The historic Heather Pavilion is also slated for demolition and that's got West Point Grey resident Pat de Vries worried enough to take some action. Ms. de Vries, who works in the pavilion as head nurse of VGH's discharge planning unit, has collected 160 signatures on a petition to save the 83-year-old structure and convert it into a community centre for the hospital and surrounding community.

"It's a beautiful old building," she says. "It doesn't work as a hospital building because it's not efficient enough and not capable of changing, but I think it would work beautifully as a community centre for the hospital and area."

Her petition calls for a converted building with amenities such as wheelchair accessible pools, theatres, meeting rooms, a library, concert hall, fitness centre and restaurant. She notes that she will send the petition to the city as a member of the public and not a hospital employee.

When officially opened in 1906,



Pat de Vries: Collecting signatures to save a "beautiful old building".

Heather Pavilion was VGH's main building. It has four large wings and six towers and is made of granite, which came to B.C. from northern England in 1901 as ship ballast. One of the city's few remaining cut granite buildings, it is largely hidden behind newer brown additions built in the 1930s and 1940s.

The hospital is building the new tower, expected to be completed in 1995, because it claims Heather Pavilion and others nearby are ob-

solete. The city wants the 5 acre park to offset the area's increasing density caused by the new tower and buildings like the twenty story residential towers next to City Square at 12th Avenue and Cambie.

VGH will continue to own the new park, which the hospital's director of planning, Bill Goodsir, says will be completed in 7 to 10 years. Landscaping plans include a fountain, open play fields and some of Heather Pavilion's foundations to commemorate the lost building.

Senior city planner, John Winsor, who has worked closely on the issue, says the city is getting a good deal from VGH. "We are essentially getting a vacant park for nothing. The value of that land alone in that area would be worth millions." Still he admits, "Obviously nothing's cast in stone and it could be reviewed."

The hospital agrees. Jim Flett, president of VGH, told *The Western News* if the city wanted to renegotiate, "We'd be delighted to do that." Until then, he said that he and the hospital board will treat the new park as 'fixed agreement.'

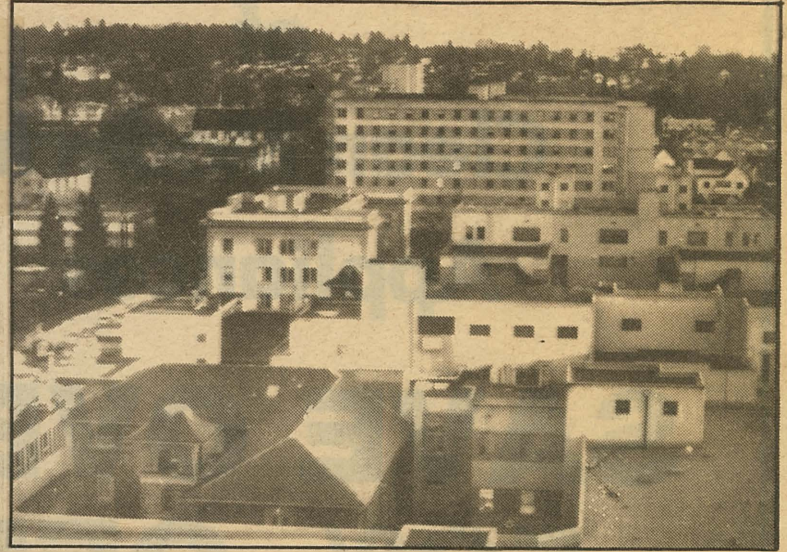
Told that the VGH is willing to renegotiate the deal, Non-Partisan Association alderman Gordon Price said, "I think there are a lot

of options that maybe we weren't exploring the first go around and I'm not of the school that believes that open space per se is necessarily the best way to go. If the hospital is willing to look at it, I am. Whether council would be just depends upon what else is entailed."

There may be a lot entailed. If converted to a community centre, Heather Pavilion would have to be upgraded to current earthquake resistant standards, a feat Bill Goodsir calls "a very big problem." Moreover, VGH will not spend any money to preserve the building and no one knows if the city will.

But Pat de Vries says money is not a problem. "There's money coming in from Hong Kong," she claims. "There's plenty of money around for doing worthwhile projects if people just touch the right sources."

City and VGH officials, who did not want to be identified, told *Western News* that neither side would renegotiate the deal without public opposition



The Heather Pavilion, as it is today, seen from the street level (below) and from above. The tops of towers and bits of the old structure are still visible. (Sturdy Photos)



first.

The pavilion's 400 beds will be distributed between Centennial Pavilion, the new tower and LSB1, the block built in 1982 for VGH's new emergency and surgery recovery rooms. Facilities in other buildings slated for demolition will move to the new tower and

possibly to a development being considered west of the tower.

The Community Arts Council's heritage committee will soon meet with city officials to discuss the situation. They welcome input and assistance.



Heather Pavilion as it once was.