



The Community Arts Theatre at Stelly's

Feasibility Study Report – November 5, 2016

Seeds of a Dream

- A small group of parent volunteers and teachers met and decided that the students of Stelly's need a new facility.
- The school district does not have the resources for a project of this magnitude on its own. Community participation is essential to success!
- The Society for the Community Arts Theatre at Stelly's (SCATS) incorporated to explore possibilities.
- Initial site walk through with architect Terry Williams and discussion followed.

Seeds of a Dream

- There is a need for a state of the art performance venue in the CRD. Why not at Stelly's?
- SCATS visited numerous venues to see what works and more importantly what should have been done differently.
- SCATS created its needs and wants list.

The Dream

- A state of the art facility for both school and community use capable of accommodating all types of events from intimate gatherings to theatrical productions.
- A mid-sized seating capacity in the range of 500-800,
- Large lobby with gallery and gathering spaces,
- A main floor with a balcony that may be closed off,
- Separate rehearsal space,
- An orchestra pit,
- A fly tower,
- Dressing rooms and adequate storage space.

Steps Toward the Dream

SCATS decided that a professional feasibility study which focussed on three key areas had to be commissioned.

What can the site physically accommodate architecturally? What are the viable options?

What support is there for a project of this magnitude in the broader community? That community extends well beyond the District of Central Saanich and must include all of the Capital Regional District.

What business plan will support this project long term? The theatre must be capable of meeting its operating costs as well as generating a fund for building and equipment renewal. Ideally it should also be a revenue generator for the Saanich School District.

First Steps Toward the Dream

SD 63 Board of Education approved the project in principle and supported need for a feasibility study.

The fundraising for feasibility study began in earnest. Significant contributions were made by:

The Saanich Fruit Growers Association,

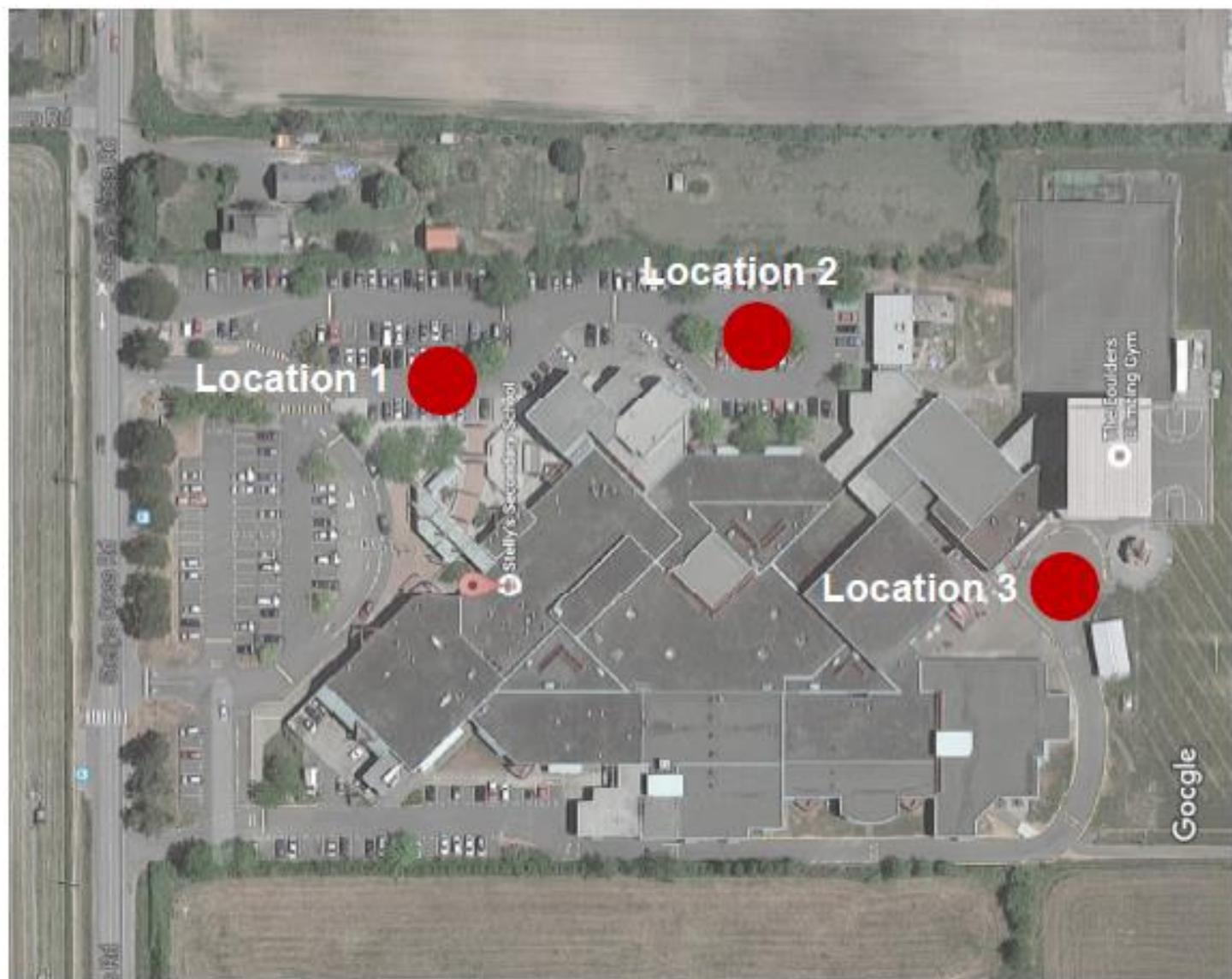
Saanich Board of Education,

Significant personal donations from Mr. Tommy Mayne, Mrs. Edith Jenner and

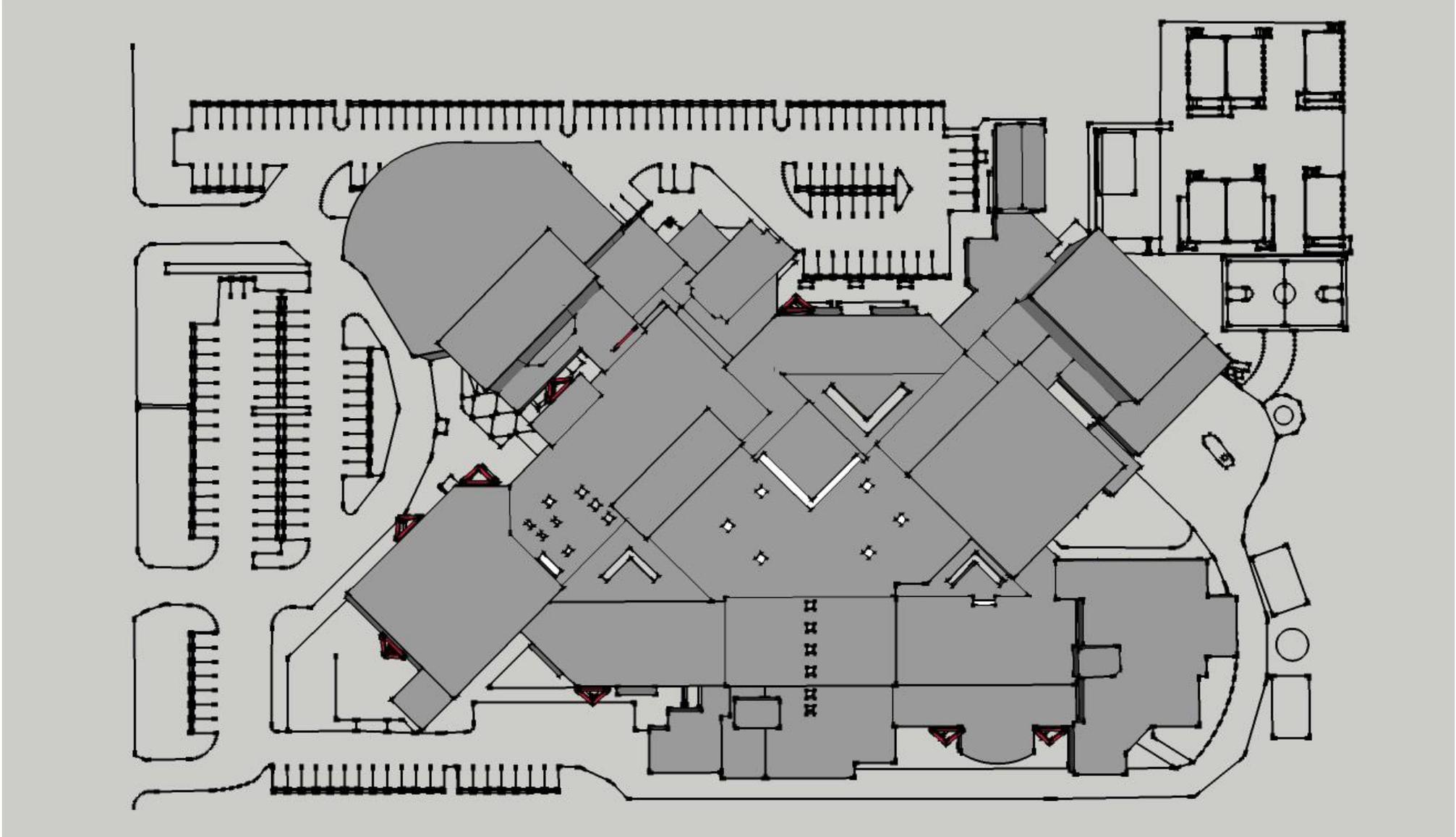
Mrs. Nancy Michell.

Numerous events initiated by Stelly's students and SCATS

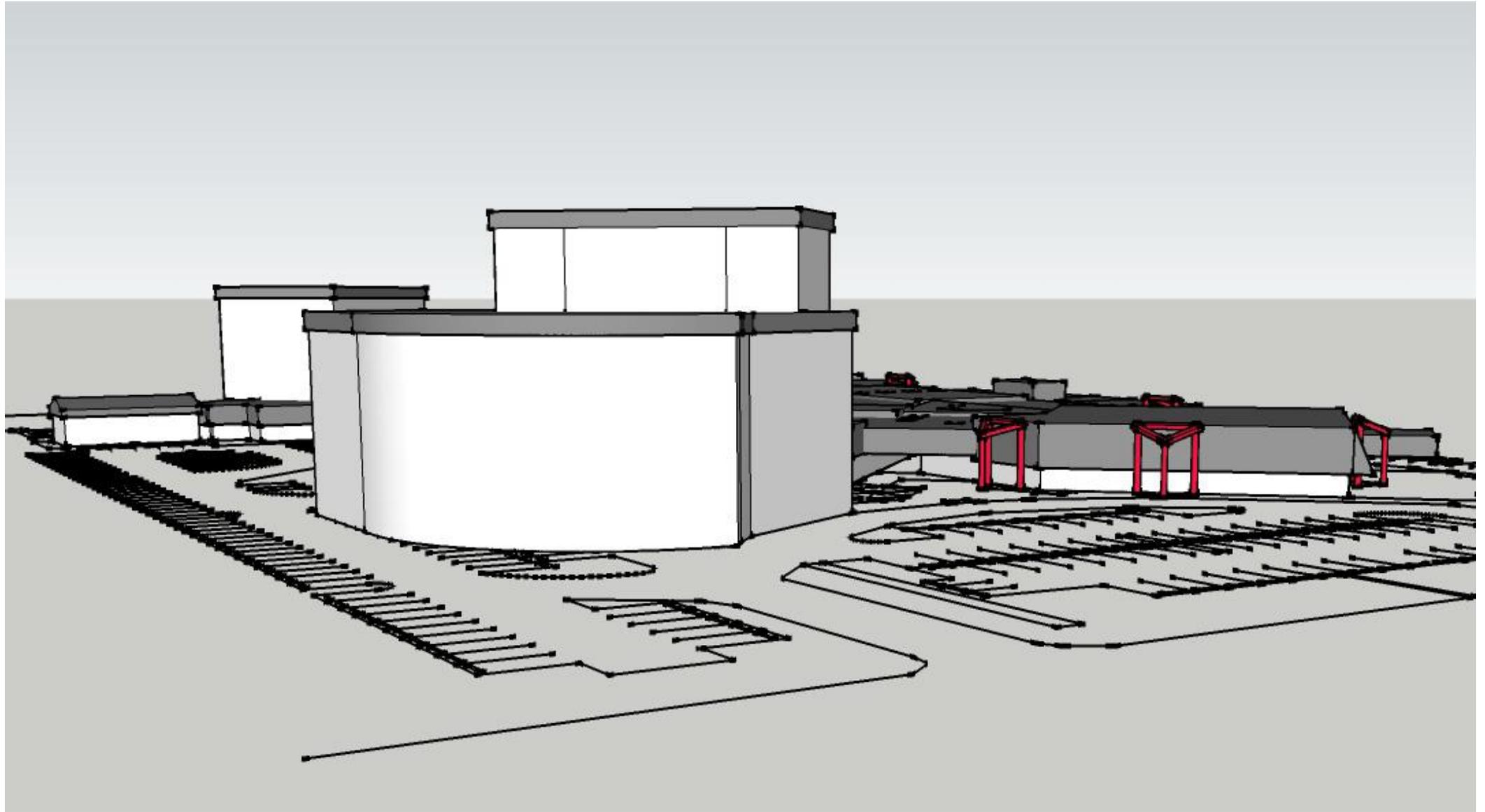
HCMA Architecture and Design was hired to conduct the feasibility study.

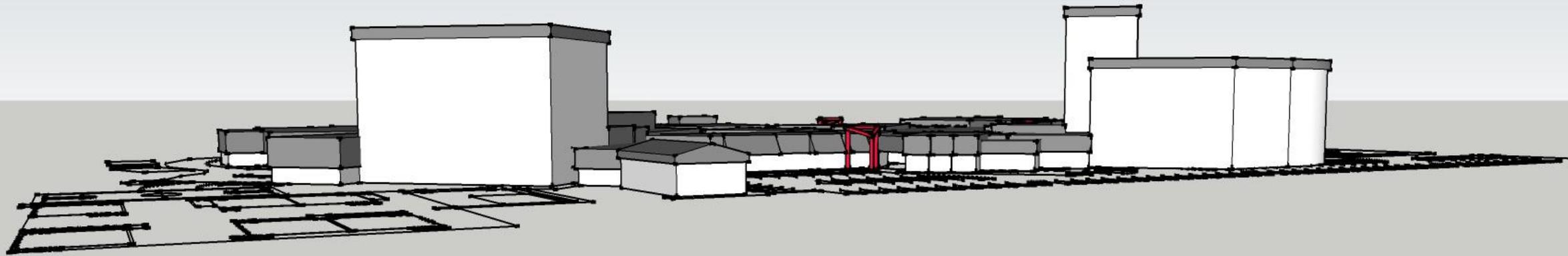


Aerial Image Showing Three Locations Reviewed









Refining the Dream – What is Realistic?

We learned that It was physically possible to shoe horn the dream onto the site, but not recommended. What is the right size to pursue?

Identify our users/market and fill their needs.

Hamilton McClymont Arts and Entertainment Management Consultant subcontracted to conduct a market analysis, theatre options survey and provide operating plan recommendations.

A Theatre That Will Meet the Needs of Stelly's and the Community

A theatre with around 400 seats can be accommodated on the school property and can meet the needs of the school and the local performing arts community. This facility would have the following characteristics:

- A main chamber containing a fully accessible stage with adequate wing space on both sides.
- Careful consideration given to good sightlines, acoustics and a sense of intimacy.
- Variable acoustics that can be tuned to meet varied types of performances.
- An orchestra pit or demi pit that would accommodate approximately 23-25 musicians in front of the stage. The provision of a mechanized lift to convert this area into a thrust stage can be considered during detailed design.
- Good technical systems to support the different types of performances anticipated.
- A balcony is not recommended for a theatre of this size.
- A fly tower and catwalks are not recommended for the theatre, though a cable grid system can be provided for lighting.

A Theatre That Will Meet the Needs... cont'd

- Carefully configured and designed public spaces, a separate entrance lobby that is located adjacent to the main school entry is recommended. Adequate accommodation should be made for the sale of refreshments and for well sized audience support spaces.
- Adequate back of house areas including dressing rooms with showers, a green room, storage and administration spaces are critical to the smooth operation of the proposed theatre.
- A separate and dedicated rehearsal room of a size equivalent the main stage without wing space should be included. The space can be designed not just as a rehearsal hall but as a flexible flat floor performance space, with consideration given to public access, performer support and technical capability.
- A separate band room should be included in the facility, either retained in its current location or reconstructed adjacent to it.

Factor for Success – The Market

The school is located in a rural enclave surrounded by a large urban area which is well served by performance facilities of many capacities and configurations.**

A Community Theatre at Stelly's will have to compete for attractions and audiences in this marketplace.

It can do so if it is designed distinctively**, and its programming is positioned so uniquely** that it will be able to penetrate and compete in the marketplace for artists and audiences.

Factor for Success – Operating Agreement

A carefully considered operating agreement between the school, municipality and community is also essential to establish operating and financing policies, priority use and booking protocols.

An independent non-profit society was recommended to provide governance and management for the facility, under the terms of an agreement between the Society, the School District and the Municipality (provided it got on board).**

Factor for Success – Ongoing Institutional Support

Community theatres in schools need support from either or both the school district and the local municipality to be successful. Without such support they cannot be sustained. The Society must convince the School District and the District of Central Saanich to provide meaningful, ongoing support to the Community Arts Theatre at Stelly's.

Ongoing Institutional Support – School District

What role can/will the District take in operating the theatre?

Is there a role for its business corporation?

How willing is the District to reconsider its policies regarding corporate or private sponsorship? Naming rights?

Will other upgrades to the school be incorporated into the theatre design and construction process? i.e. improved administration and lobby area, First Nations carving gallery, etc.

Ongoing Institutional Support – District of Central Saanich

Can/will Central Saanich assume an equity ownership role with the theatre as a community asset?

Will Central Saanich assume a role in operating the theatre?

What role does Central Saanich see for itself in providing arts access in the CRD, Saanich Peninsula, it's own community?

Ongoing Institutional Support - Regionally

How will the CRD's emerging regional arts strategy and proposed facilities framework impact a Community Arts Theatre at Stelly's

Is there an opportunity for partnership/co-management with The Memorial Park Society, Mary Winspear Centre?

Factor for Success – Capital Costs

Theatres are not cheap to build. Several million dollars will have to be raised.

Are there “angels” amongst us, private (i.e. Kay Meek) or corporate (i.e. Bell)?
Will SD policy accommodate them?

What opportunity is there for grants from senior levels of government?

If Central Saanich takes an equity role, is a referendum for tax support possible?

What effect will the CRD’s emerging strategy have on funding new facilities such as CATS?

What is the True Level of Community Support?

You can have whatever you want if you have both the ability and willingness to pay the price.

What does the community at large, both locally and regionally, want/need?

Are there shared or competing visions and needs that can be combined in a mutually beneficial way by this project?

What and how is the community willing to support?

Synergy, Collaborative Big Picture Thinking

“The big hairy goal that we all can rally around that isn’t in the plan (CRD’s emerging strategy) may be the long rumoured big performance venue for the area.”

There is a need for a state of the art performance venue in the CRD.
Why not at Stelly’s?

Questions? Suggestions!

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