

April 21, 2015

Dear Gordon Carter Environmental Learning Center Vision Advisory Group,

Thank you for your thoughtful recommendations for the Gordon Carter Conservation Site. I appreciate the enthusiastic commitment and the breadth of the committee participants. I'm very excited about the potential for this venue, and it's clear that our community partners play a vital role in the future of this site. There's no doubt that it's a community asset with great potential.

I really appreciate your inclusion of the history of the site in your recommendation; it's helpful to see its former uses and how, in the past, staff aligned student experiences at Gordon Carter to curriculum and programming. Thank you, too, for connecting your guiding principles with The Bellingham Promise.

Your recommendation is very valuable in helping us determine our next steps, which involve permitting processes (which may happen in several stages/phases) and establishing a schedule. I appreciate the desire to move quickly on the Gordon Carter site, but at the same time, we have to respect our bond projects' timeline that was shared with our community upon approval. As you may know, planning and visioning committees for the new Options and Sehome high schools, as well as plans for our new athletic fields are our next priorities, while construction projects are either just beginning or concluding at Lowell, Parkview and Happy Valley elementary schools. That said, we feel confident renovations at Gordon Carter will be completed before 2019, its original completion date.

In the coming weeks and months, the Department of Teaching and Learning will be working on ways to connect the conservation site to our current and future programming and curriculum, which may affect facility design and architecture. There are rich partnerships opportunities as we plan for programming, funding, and staffing. We agree that building a facility with natural light that includes spaces for kitchen/eating, learning/meetings, restrooms and allows us the flexibility to add on to it in the future is prudent.

In terms of next steps, as I mentioned above, our focus will be on our next facility priorities (see [Bond Timeline](#)), and we will explore the possibility of hiring consultants next year to help us move forward with some of the infrastructure work. When we get to further planning related to the facility, we sincerely hope that many on the advisory group will continue to stay involved.

Thanks again for all your time and effort, Greg Baker