

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



January 25, 2008

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Dear Concerned Residents,

Over the past two weeks a number of members of the community have contacted UBC expressing their views on the Vancouver School Board's consultation framework and the proposals to close the Queen Elizabeth Annex and establish a new secondary school through the renovation and expansion of the former home of the National Research Council (NRC) at UBC.

I appreciate both the candour and the passion with which this interest has been expressed. Your active involvement in this consultation process is a clear reflection of the important role schools play in our communities. In light of the current discussion, I want to provide you with some information with respect to questions that have arisen about UBC's commitments for a school in its South Campus neighbourhood.

There appears to be a misunderstanding with regard to development-related fees and their application to funding school construction. As reflected in the Official Community Plan (OCP) for the UBC area, most major development projects dedicate a suitable school site in their overall development plan. UBC has done this and has provided a 3-hectare site as required in the OCP. However, the funding for school construction and operations is provided by the provincial government which collects school taxes through the property tax system. UBC and University Endowment Lands (UEL) residents pay their school taxes directly to the province, which then funds the Vancouver School Board to provide neighbourhood schools throughout Vancouver and the UEL/UBC area.

The UBC South Campus Neighbourhood Plan contained an offer to finance the construction of a school should provincial government funding not be available:

*The school will be built in the first phase of construction of the neighbourhood. If government funding for the school is not available at this time, UBC will build the facility. The University would lease the school to the Vancouver School Board to operate the facility.*

This is not an offer to pay for the school (as some have interpreted ) but an offer to finance construction of a new school in return for long-term lease payments to offset these costs.

As a shell currently exists, UBC has suggested that the NRC building offers a cost saving opportunity, as it would require renovation rather than new construction. Although I understand UBC's financing proposal is subject to discussion between the provincial government and the VSB, UBC's offer stands. We also remain open to discussing other financing arrangements that might meet the various community education needs. These include the critical need for seismic upgrading and associated swing space and the underserved local school spaces of students living in the UEL and UBC.

I am attaching a more detailed document that provides further information on these and other points. I look forward to meeting many of you at upcoming VSB and other meetings called to address school issues in the Dunbar/UEL/UBC local area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen Owen".

Stephen Owen

Enc.

January 25, 2008

### Schools in the UBC Local Area

- 1) The UBC and UEL local areas are part of the Vancouver School District, administered by the Vancouver School Board (VSB).
  - a. Residents of these areas pay annual school taxes to the Province. The Province then provides to VSB the capital funding for school construction, renovation, and operations.
  - b. The VSB plans and delivers schools and educational programming for the UBC and UEL areas.
- 2) UBC has provided a 3.0 hectare site for a new school as required in the Official Community Plan (OCP) for this area. This site is further confirmed in the South Campus Neighbourhood Plan. UBC has no intent of altering this commitment to providing a site. Furthermore UBC has agreed to provide this site for the school at no cost to the VSB or the Province, which is consistent with what happens in Vancouver. Further information on the OCP is provided in Attachment 1.
- 3) UBC has also been working with the VSB for several years to try to advance the timing of construction of a new school in the area.
  - a. In 2000, UBC suggested, as an interim measure, that the VSB establish an elementary annex in the Hawthorn neighbourhood in the community centre. This option was not pursued for a variety of reasons including timing, availability of surplus space in the proposed community centre, operational considerations and the need to establish a full K-7 school. The UBC Comprehensive Community Plan was amended subsequently (in December 2005) to remove this suggestion as the focus had shifted back to providing a school facility in the South Campus neighbourhood.
  - b. In 2003, UBC suggested that re-use of the NRC building could save VSB and the Province substantial capital dollars and advance the timing of a new school in the area. The Province / VSB would only have to renovate the building rather than having to construct a new building from scratch. The opportunity was made available by the relocation of the NRC activities to the southern research precinct on campus. UBC has held the NRC facility vacant for more than a year, awaiting a decision from VSB on whether it will use the facility for a school.
  - c. UBC has also proposed that it would finance, through UBC Properties Trust (UBCPT), the renovations to the NRC building, in return for a long-term lease arrangement with the VSB. This proposal was included in the South Campus Neighbourhood Plan.
  - d. UBC has also spoken with senior provincial staff on several occasions to communicate the importance of the province providing capital funds for a new school in the UBC local area.
- 4) A decision by the end of March 2008 would enable the renovations of the NRC facility to be started by September 2008 and completed by September 2009. Delays past that time would result in relocating the school during the middle of the school year. Furthermore, it would delay the seismic upgrades of several schools in the neighbourhood as a result of not having the existing U Hill Secondary converted to be used as, on an interim basis, as swing space.

- 5) All revenues from the community development process at UBC go into UBC's endowment, which supports academic and research through initiatives that include student scholarships, student bursaries, and research grants.

The UBC Endowment began before the University itself existed. In 1907, the government of British Columbia passed the *University Endowment Act*, empowering the Lieutenant Governor to set aside land that could be sold to fund a provincial university. Approximately 3,000 acres were set aside for UBC on the Point Grey peninsula. Close to 1,000 acres were conveyed to the university. In 1989, the provincial government transferred 1,800 acres to the Greater Vancouver Regional District for the creation of Pacific Spirit Regional Park. Most of the remaining land is the UEL residential area. The 1,000 acres conveyed to UBC forms the Point Grey campus today. UBC has allocated about 200 acres to create a community that provides the opportunity for our faculty, staff and students to live close to the university, along with others who are interested in living on campus. The process also generates endowment wealth as noted above.

- 6) Schools in the UEL area (UHill Elementary and UHill Secondary) were operated by the UEL School District from 1927, when the first school was built, until 1971. At that time, the local areas and the schools became part of the Vancouver School District. These schools largely served the UEL community. UBC did not have families living on campus until the 1960s.
- 7) There are nearly 750 elementary-aged children living in the UBC and UEL local areas, including more than 200 children who are being transported to schools other than UHill Elementary – mostly to Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth elementary schools.
- 8) In conclusion, UBC is fulfilling its commitments under the OCP and is providing a school site of 3.0 hectares in the south campus area. It is the responsibility of the VSB through the provincial government to provide the capital required to build the new school and the operating funds to provide the educational programming. UBC has consistently supported the VSB and Province in their efforts to bring forward a new school in the UBC local area through offers of financing assistance, through securing potential buildings and through other activities.

Prepared by:

UBC Campus and Community Planning

January 25, 2008

### **Official Community Plan for Part of Electoral Area 'A', 1997**

Since 1997, there has been a requirement in the OCP for UBC to create a school site in south campus, at a size of not less than 3.0 hectares. The OCP refers to this as an elementary school site. If the VSB decides to use the NRC site as a secondary school, and provide the elementary school at the old UHill Secondary site, a simple text amendment to the OCP may be required.

### **The Comprehensive Community Plan, 2000**

The CCP proposed the possibility of a K-3 facility in Mid-Campus (now referred to as Hawthorn Place), as a temporary measure. The proposal was that this would be accommodated in a building that would later be converted to a community centre. UBC proposed that VSB would rent this facility and operate it as an annex to University Hill elementary. This option was not pursued for a variety of reasons including timing, availability of surplus space in the proposed community centre, operational considerations and the need to establish a full K-7 school. When the CCP was updated in December 2005 following adoption of the South Campus Neighbourhood Plan, the reference to this temporary annex was removed.

### **The South Campus Neighbourhood Plan, 2005**

The SCNP states:

*The school will be built in the first phase of construction of the neighbourhood. If government funding for the school is not available at this time, UBC will build the facility. The University would lease the school to the Vancouver School Board to operate the facility.*

This paragraph provides a financing mechanism for the Vancouver School Board's consideration, should provincial government funding not be available during the first phase of the neighbourhood's construction. UBC has offered to finance the school and rent it to the VSB, thereby enabling the VSB to pay off the renovation costs over a thirty-year period. That offer is still available to the VSB. However this financing mechanism was not supported by the Ministry of Education's Capital Project Funding Branch which has directed VSB to explore innovative methods to utilize capital funding only for the project.