

October 25, 2023

Sent by email to: campusvision.2050@ubc.ca

RE: Submission to the Public Hearing Committee

From: University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA) Board Chair Richard Watson, on behalf of the Board of the UNA

To Whom It May Concern:

The University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA) represents 15,000 UBC residents who will be directly impacted by UBC's revised Land Use Plan. Throughout UBC's Campus Vision 2050 planning process, the UNA has advocated for prioritizing sustainable, affordable, and livable neighbourhood development. These goals align with the University's own stated commitments on climate, housing availability and affordability, and the quality of its urban form. In spite of these shared goals, UBC has advanced a Land Use Plan that prioritizes the sale of land leases for market housing, much of which would come in the form of unaffordable, high-rise housing at twice the density of current neighbourhoods. The UNA, along with other representatives of UBC residents, faculty, staff, and students, have registered their profound disagreement with this order of priorities, but these calls have gone unheeded. We urge the Board of Governors to require the following revisions to the Land Use Plan before its final adoption.

1. Before setting the parameters of development in a revised Land Use Plan, UBC should complete its comprehensive revision of the Neighbourhood Climate Action Plan. The LUP currently under consideration offers to "work towards the targets and policies" of the as-yet unfinished NCAP. Instead of this vague and non-committal formulation, the Land Use Plan should draw on the NCAP to set clear and measurable targets for greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and ecosystem services, and commit UBC to achieving them. Given our current climate emergency, the Neighbourhood Climate Action Plan should be foundational to the Land Use Plan, not an afterthought.
2. In the face of the unprecedented shortage of local housing for UBC's faculty, staff, students, and area employees, UBC should increase the proportion of neighbourhood rental to 50% of total housing. Rental housing on campus addresses several priorities of the University, including attracting and retaining employees, decreasing the social and environmental costs of commuting, and generating revenue (through rents) for the endowment. In spite of these benefits to the University and its people, the proposed Land Use Plan sets a target of only 30% rental, reserving 70% of neighbourhood housing for market developments.

We call on the Board of Governors and the provincial government to prioritize the long-term financial, social, and educational interests of the University, rather than the short-term cash infusions derived from leasehold sales.

3. The Land Use Plan should establish parameters for the design of world-class residential neighbourhoods, with ample green/open space and community amenities. The proposed Land Use Plan promises only 1.1 hectares of open/green space per 1000 residents, which is at the lower end of the World Health Organization's recommended range of .9 to 5 ha. But the LUP reduces this to .5 ha in the case of "appropriate resident access to UBC-owned open space and facilities." This is both vague and very low, and would seriously compromise livability and the University's commitment to ecological and climate goals for the neighbourhoods.
4. Above all else, the Land Use Plan should reflect UBC's values and commitments to sustainability, housing affordability and availability, and leadership in urban design. The proposed Land Use Plan would sharply increase densities on UBC's remaining land endowment by enabling construction of at least twenty new towers, many over thirty stories tall. These new developments would be twice as dense as current neighbourhoods, with substantial, but under-studied, environmental and social impacts. UNA residents are accustomed to dense urban living, but they are concerned that the scale of the planned developments is far out of proportion to that of existing neighbourhoods.

We also want to express our disappointment with the Board of Governors Public Hearing Procedural Rules adopted at the Board's October 16 meeting. Any Land Use Plan amendments, current or future, should provide residents and other stakeholders meaningful opportunities for public comment and avenues for demanding public accountability. As mandated by provincial legislation, on October 16 the Board of Governors referred the Land Use Plan to a public hearing. Yet the Board's referral explicitly and unaccountably prohibits the Board from amending the Plan to lower neighbourhood densities following the public hearing. We fail to see the point of a public hearing that precludes changes based on public input. Residents want and deserve governance that gives them opportunities to question policy makers and hold them politically accountable.

Since early in the Campus Vision process, the UNA has supported calls for neighbourhoods that would be models of low carbon, sustainable, socially responsible, community-oriented urban planning. These priorities reflect UBC goals and values, as articulated in key documents such as the UBC Strategic Plan, the Declaration of Climate Emergency, and the Campus Vision 2050 Terms of Reference. In other words, UNA residents and UBC share an interest in vital, sustainable, and human-scaled neighbourhoods. The proposed Land Use Plan instead perpetuates a development

strategy prioritizing leasehold condo sales. While leasehold market housing has a place in the mix of housing types, it should not comprise 70% of all housing in UBC neighbourhoods. We call on the Board of Governors to realign the Land Use Plan to a different set of priorities and values: sustainability, climate urgency, rental housing availability, and the long-term stewardship of UBC's land endowment.

Sincerely,



Richard Watson
Chair, Board of Directors
University Neighbourhoods Association

CC: Hon. David Eby – MLA for Vancouver Point-Grey and Premier of BC
Hon. Anne Kang – MLA for Burnaby-Deer Lake and Minister of Municipal Affairs
UBC Board of Governors via the UBC Board of Governors Secretariat
Michael White – UBC Associate Vice-President, Campus + Community Planning
UNA Board of Directors
Sundance Topham – UNA Chief Administrative Officer