



September CAC Community Update

This is a quick update on current community news from the Community Advisory Council. Please forward this email to any neighbours who are not on the CAC mailing list. Neighbours can sign up for the mailing list by sending an email to council@uelcommunity.com.

The next meeting of the CAC will be on October 19th on Zoom. We will send out the Zoom link in the week before the meeting.

Area D Plan (which includes a corner of Area A) is ready for comment – We need your input!

We have posted a link to the updated Area D Plan on the CAC website ([here](#)). We highlight that the Plan includes the two lots on the corner of University and Wesbrook (the site of the old Lutheran Centre) which could be the site of a large multifamily development under the current Plan. We encourage all UEL residents to dive into the plan and send feedback to council@uelcommunity.com as well as PlanUEL@gov.bc.ca. Heather Shay and Kamelli Mark from the UEL Office will re-present the plan at the next CAC meeting on October 19th and we encourage all community members to come with questions. The UEL has asked for comments by October 23rd.

The CAC is also crafting a survey to solicit community feedback on specific part of the plan and in general. Please look for this in your email in-box in mid-October and take the time to make your opinion known. Your feedback will guide Council's response to the Plan.

Problem properties and tax avoidance in the UEL

The CAC continues to address the problem of abandoned and unsightly properties. As a result of our walking tour and inventory of properties of concern, we compiled a list of 64 addresses that are vacant,

abandoned neglected or in some phase of prolonged construction. This represents almost 15% of the single-family homes in the UEL!

Our local MLA David Eby took the time to see a cross-section of the tour in July. His office then performed title searches on properties of concern and has provided us with information on ownership (this is public information but would have been costly for the CAC to obtain). Astonishingly, fully 35 of these properties are listed as the primary residence of the owner. In many cases, the home does not seem to have a year-round occupant. **It appears these owners are avoiding the Vacant Homes and Speculation Tax.** The CAC has written to the Ministry of Finance, highlighting these addresses.

We have posted a [form letter](#) to our website, with the email address for the Ministry of Finance. The CAC encourages residents to send their own photos with addresses of neighbouring homes that are vacant or under construction to the Ministry, highlighting the problem of vacant homes and tax avoidance in our community. All letters and emails will help get this problem the attention it deserves from the Ministry of Finance, even if not every email identifies a case of tax avoidance. This pressure should help return these properties to families and residents over time.

We will maintain and continuously update our data on problem properties – please send information about additions to the list (or removals) to council@uelcommunity.com. Many thanks to Moony, who has agreed to chair the CAC's new Neighbourhood Committee to track this problem.

ADP Survey

The CAC is asking for community input on requirements in the development permit process (ie. any application to re-develop a site within the UEL). We ask residents to take a few moments to respond a short survey that will be helpful in this process ([here](#)). Thanks to Marg and Moony for their time and effort on this.

Photography Project – photos wanted

The photography project is underway. The CAC is asking residents to contribute photos of their neighbourhood as a record of what our community looks like now. Residents are asked to contribute two photos of something they love about our community and two photos of something to be improved. We would like to have a comprehensive profile of the good and the bad: a time capsule of where our community is in 2020.

We will compile (anonymously) the photos into an on-line album, which will be completed before the end of the year and will be linked to the UEL CAC website.

Please send photos to council@uelcommunity.com. Thanks to Judie who has initiated this project.

Bylaws and Governance – signs of progress?

The Minister of Housing has written a letter in response to a recent CAC request for more work on the long-term problems of bylaw enforcement provisions and requests for more tools to deal with unsightly properties. The Ministry's [letter](#) is posted on the CAC website.

Some of the language in the letter regarding additional approaches, including “potential legal or financial remedies” is encouraging. The CAC will continue to push the Ministry forward on this, but the pace of progress has been too slow to date. Thanks to Vanessa for maintaining contact with Dan Huang of Urban Systems, who is running the Ministry-sponsored governance study underway now.

School Tax letter & RCMP staffing update

We have posted the response from the Ministry of Finance sent to the CAC following our position statement on the School Tax ([here](#)). Addressing the Tax is one of the CAC's five priorities for 2020/2021. In short, the Ministry refers to the School Tax as contributing to their housing plan, “Homes for B.C.”. Council has written several letters to the Ministry of Housing pointing out that while the community is paying tax to support housing, some of these funds go to the Ministry's own Housing Hub that is working on a multi-family development in single-family Area A (on the former Lutheran site) that has been widely opposed by residents.

We have also finally had an update on our request for increased staffing at the local RCMP detachment. We have been told that the detachment's request for more resources has been “escalated” to the next level of seniority within the force. This answer is encouraging, but is vague and comes very late. The CAC will continue to push to find answers and move this forward.

Area D representative for Council and the ADP

The UEL Community Advisory Council continues to look for a representative for Area D for Council and for the Advisory Design Panel. If there is a resident who would like to volunteer to fill either of these roles, please send an email to council@uelcommunity.com. Any representative must live in the area of the UEL they would represent and will be asked to send a short bio and statement of interest to Council at least 10 days before the meeting. We are hoping to fill this seat soon!