

For Immediate Release

From: Pacific Spirit Park Society and the Wreck Beach Preservation Society

## **GVRD BOARD HOLDS THE LINE-OF-SIGHT ON WRECK BEACH**

Vancouver, BC -- August 2, 2005 -- In its plans to go ahead with more towers overlooking Wreck Beach, UBC isn't being a good neighbour, says the Pacific Spirit Park Society (PSPS) and Wreck Beach Preservation Society (WBPS).

Unfortunately, UBC hasn't been listening -- prompting the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), at its full Board meeting on July 29, to pass a motion directing UBC to not build towers visible during the spring/summer foliage season from the beach -- or demonstrate that UBC has explored all reasonable locations and site design alternatives, and prove that there is no alternative that can be achieved without unreasonable hardship to UBC's student housing program.

In the motion passed at the meeting, "Option (b) means the GVRD has the final say," said Anne Roberts, Vancouver City Councilor and GVRD Director, "UBC has to come back to the GVRD Board if they can't adhere to (a) or (c)." (The full text of the resolution is in the backgrounder below.)

UBC is part of Electoral District A, which is administered by the GVRD. And GVRD staff have advised the Board that the GVRD has the authority to regulate building guidelines on the UBC site.

At issue is whether the GVRD should allow UBC to continue developing residential towers that can be seen from low tide -- the best part of Wreck Beach. A Phase One tower is nearing completion, and UBC proposes to build more towers like it in Phase Two.

"Just because UBC has managed to sneak the first tower in under the nose of both the public and the GVRD, it does not make it a just or correct benchmark," says Stephen Biduk, a member of PSPS and WBPS.

Since it has already built one tower that has undermined the natural viewscape, UBC officials take the position that it should be allowed to build even more towers that will be visible from the beach.

"There is much underutilized space at UBC that could be used for student housing," said Judy Williams, chair of the WBPS. The GVRD resolution asks UBC to consider other locations for student housing to preserve the viewscape from the beach. "Replicating more towers like the first one is unacceptable," stated Williams.

At the July 29 meeting, the WBPS presented alternate locations for student housing, as well as alternative building designs for the Phase Two towers site. A full range of locations and design alternatives now exist, including a redesign of the Phase Two site where WBPS's architectural consultant demonstrated how UBC could lower the towers significantly, while maintaining virtually the same number of student beds as originally intended at the Phase Two site. The WBPS's design raises the towers' base and lowers their height, lowering the tower closest to the cliff to nine storeys.

Also at the July 29 meeting, the GVRD added a fourth option, option (d), reconfirming the Board's request that UBC develop consultation guidelines that include broad consultation, sufficient advance notice, and a process to incorporate suggestions into any final decisions. Prior to the meeting, a public consultation plan developed by UBC had been rejected, with GVRD Directors raising concerns about inadequate public participation and disclosure.

UBC has yet to release any new plan for Phase Two or conduct any public hearing.

Any towers built higher than the GVRD line-of-sight analysis are not in compliance with the Official Community Plan for Electoral Area A (OCP), a bylaw of the GVRD adopted on July 25, 1997. The OCP requires Park values to be respected by all new development.

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**Background:**

The motion passed by the GVRD Board at its July 29, 2005, meeting:

" That the GVRD Board:

- a) Recommend that the Marine Student Residences-Phase Two not be visible during spring/summer foliage season from Beach Zones "A", "B" and "C" as illustrated in Attachment 1 of the report dated July 8, 2005, titled "Pacific Spirit Regional Park and UBC's Marine Drive Student Residences-Phase Two";
- b) Relax recommendation a) to no visibility of the Marine Student Residences – Phase Two during spring/summer foliage season from Beach Zones "A" and "B" and a maximum height limit of 53 meters including appurtenances be considered if UBC can demonstrate that:
  - i) they have explored all reasonable locations and site design alternatives to minimize the visual impact from Beach Zone "C";
  - ii) there is no alternative that can be achieved without unreasonable hardship on the UBC student housing program;
  - iii) the absence of any visual impact on Phase Two buildings on Beach Zones "A" and "B" has been proven by a verifiable study acceptable to GVRD and UBC staff; and
  - iv) if any issues cannot be resolved by GVRD and UBC staff, that the matter be referred to the GVRD-UBC Joint Committee co-Chairs;
- c) Direct staff to review the GVRD-UBC Memorandum of Understanding regarding the process for institutional development that may have an impact on Pacific Spirit Regional Park; and
- d) Reconfirm that the Board request that UBC develop consultation guidelines that include broad consultation, sufficient advance notice, and a process to incorporate suggestions into any final decisions. "

Attachment 1 of the report dated July 8, 2005, titled "Pacific Spirit Regional Park and UBC's Marine Drive Student Residences-Phase Two" may be found on page 9 of <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/board/agendas/gvrd/july29regular/9.2.pdf>

Questions:

- Will UBC look at alternative locations outside of the Phase One and Two areas, as the GVRD resolution directs it to do, in order to meet its student housing targets?
- Will UBC ask its architects to develop design alternatives in order to protect viewsapes and Park values?
- When will UBC release its revised plans for Phase Two to the public? And have meaningful public consultations?
- Will UBC disclose all relevant information at least two weeks in advance of any public meetings?

WBPS and PSPS releases of July 28 and July 13, as well as other press releases and photos of tower visibility from the beach, may be found at <http://www.wreckbeach.org/towers#background>

Line-of-sight (viewscape) drawings and other background reports and presentations available upon request.

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