

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GVRD TO DECIDE FATE OF WRECK BEACH TOWERS

VANCOUVER, B.C. -- November 2, 2005 -- The controversial plan to erect high rise towers next to Pacific Spirit Park and clothing-optional Wreck Beach suffered another set back last week.

At its October 28, 2005 meeting, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Board of Directors unanimously passed a resolution declaring that the GVRD Board must agree to the University of British Columbia's (UBC's) proposed development before UBC begins construction of any high-rise buildings adjacent to the popular park and beach.

The GVRD has regulatory and planning authority over the area known as Electoral Area "A," which includes the UBC campus and the surrounding Pacific Spirit Regional Park and Wreck Beach. However, UBC seems determined to ignore both public opposition and GVRD resolutions.

On October 5, 2005, UBC held a public meeting as required by GVRD, to receive public input on the towers project. The meeting was well-attended, and the public response was overwhelmingly negative toward the towers. But, less than 24 hours after the meeting, UBC quietly submitted its controversial plans to its internal Advisory Urban Design Panel (AUDP) for approval -- one of the last hurdles for UBC to clear before it issues itself a building permit.

Earlier this summer, the GVRD Board placed constraints on UBC's plans to build additional high-rise towers above the beach. The GVRD resolved that UBC should not construct any buildings that would be visible from low tide. But the GVRD Board also stated that it **might** consider allowing UBC to construct towers visible from the outer reaches of the beach if UBC could satisfy two conditions. First, UBC must demonstrate that there are no reasonable alternative sites or designs for the development. And second, UBC must prove that changing its plans to protect viewscapes from the beach would result in unreasonable hardship.

Judy Williams, Chair of the Wreck Beach Preservation Society (WBPS), finds it incredible that UBC is forging ahead with its plans while apparently declining to consider alternative sites and building designs for the development.

"The housing density UBC is determined to inflict on this site is too high," says Williams. She points to a study commissioned by UBC which UBC relies on to show that the development is appropriate for the site. "UBC's original study was premised on the development of an 1000-bed complex. Now UBC wants to ram hundreds more students into high-rises, using a design guaranteed to ruin the natural view of the Point Grey bluffs that are so treasured by park visitors," says Williams.

To date 45,000 persons have signed petitions and have written 1,026 letters opposing the project.

On November 25, the GVRD Board will be making further recommendations to UBC the high rise towers project. The public is welcome to attend that meeting at 4330 Kingsway, second floor boardroom, 9 a.m.

WBPS applauds the recent GVRD resolution, which demonstrates GVRD authority to resolve planning disputes on UBC Campus and protect public interest.

The WBPS urges those who have not yet written or signed the petition to do so now. Sample letters and background information on the struggle may be found at www.wreckbeach.org and any letters should be sent to judyw@wreckbeach.org.

For more information, please contact:

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