

# UNIVERSITY HILL Connections

Spring Issue:  
March 2013

This newspaper is sponsored by your elected Community Advisory Council of the University Endowment Lands

## Block F Team Shows us What They are Thinking

***Huge real estate development will almost double the population of the UEL***

Residents of the University Hill community got their first glimpse of what the developer of the Block F lands is thinking at the second open house held at the University Golf Club on February 6th. The developer is working toward a rezoning application to adjust the types of buildings and uses that can be permitted.

The presentation included three options for the placement of various pieces of the puzzle, although did so with very little explanation or rationale for why one should choose one over the other. There were also few statistics with the presentation so understanding the basic scope of the development was not easy. No note was made of the size of buildings, number of units or final density of the development.

All University Hill residents should pay close attention to this development as it will mean very large



Aerial view of Block F

changes to our community, with something like 3,000 people being added to our current population of about 4,000. The Block F development could be a good addition to our community and make a significant contribution to our ability to support such things as common amenities,

but to ensure that this happens we all need to learn and understand the plans as they evolve and participate in the planning process.

See the proponents option on pages 4 and 5, and a critical analysis of the open house presentation on pages 6 and 7.

## Council Votes to Look at Becoming a Village

At the December 10th CAC meeting Council approved the first steps in investigating the public support and process for moving toward an eventual referendum on the UEL becoming an incorporated village municipality.

Although it is recognized that there are some in the U Hill community who feel that there is no need to change, and are quite happy to continue being administered by the provincial government, there are also many who think that it is well past the time that we should be self-governing.

During the December 4th town hall meeting a show of hands was asked for on the simple question of do you

want to be a self-governing village municipality or not, and the vote was 90% in favour. This was just an informal straw vote of those who attended the meeting, but it is indicative of a strong interest.

**Council is proceeding with looking at this important issue.**

If you have thoughts about restructuring to be a democratically-run independent municipality, please write to the editor at [uhillconnections@gmail.com](mailto:uhillconnections@gmail.com). You can also express your thoughts, for against or anything else to the President of the CAC, Ron Pears at [ronald.pears@gmail.com](mailto:ronald.pears@gmail.com).

### NOTICE OF TOWN HALL MEETING:

**Come to the Next Town Hall Meeting!**

**Monday April 22**

Take part in discussions on Block F and other issues of interest.

**When:** Monday 22 April 2013

Coffee and informal social:  
6:00 to 7:00

Town hall meeting  
7:00 to 9:00

**Where:** The UEL Community Space  
Suite 300, University  
MarketPlace (over Starbucks)  
300 – 5755 Dalhousie Rd

**Please note that his meeting is for residents of the UEL only.**

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### Your Editor is Lonely: Please Write

Got a comment on something you see in this issue of Connections? Like it? Don't like it? Got a gripe about something? Got a story idea you want to pass on? Got a news item or notice about an upcoming event you want to share?

We like to get mail. Write us at: [uhillconnections@gmail.com](mailto:uhillconnections@gmail.com)

**Be in the know! UEL residents please register your email address**

<http://www.uelcommunity.com/joinmailinglist.htm>







Sixty attended the December 4th Townhall meeting.

## December 4th Town Hall Meeting

A well attended community town hall meeting was held on December 4, 2012 in our community “suite 300”. Some of the successful events of 2012 were reviewed, including:

**Our newspaper:** The publication of *Connections*, our community newspaper, in a new tabloid full colour format

**Heritage firehall:** The successful completion of the first study for the renovation of our heritage firehall to a community facility

**Spring picnic:** Holding of a spring community picnic in Area C

**Community space:** Discussions to obtain occupancy of our community space, Suite 300

**Visioning workshop:** a workshop was held to look at ways to improve the University Hill community

Issues that were a concern to the community were discussed:

**Area D:** The need for more attention to the concerns of the residents of Area D, our multi-family area. Two qualified candidates, Hong Chen and Hillary Li, stepped forward to fill the vacant CAC positions for Area D.

**Recycling:** How to deal with the existing recycling center’s problems of unauthorized users and the dumping

of unacceptable materials; more frequent garden waste pickup; possible future closing of the centre and a move to curbside recycling pickup.

**Governance:** Should the UEL finally get democratic government? A call for a show of hands indicated about 90% of those present in favour of becoming a village municipality.

**Block F project:** The current rezoning process was discussed, although at that date, it was too early to discuss the property owner’s plans.

**Library:** the possibilities of gaining access to a public library for UEL residents was discussed and the CAC urged to look into the matter.

**Police report:** Staff Sargent Kevin Jones of the local RCMP gave an update on the activities and goals.

**Cottages:** Questions were asked about the five cottages on Acadia Circle in the administration campus and the CAC was urged to look into their refurbishment and occupancy, preferably by fire or police staff (a tradition with these cottages).

The Community Advisory Council expects to host a number of these town hall style of meetings in the coming year.

## Community: We Need a Vision

The UEL has been changing steadily over the past 10 years or so. The demographics have changed in the single family areas as these mostly larger lots skyrocket in price and long term residents retire and sell to newcomers. Also, the major construction work in Area D has resulted in many new rental and ownership townhouses and apartments that have both increased our population and changed the type of resident.

Many more changes are on the way. A dozen years ago the U Hill community was largely single family. We are now about 73% multiple housing units and 28% single family. If Block F adds, say 1,200 (just a guess) new units, our community will be 84% multiple housing and just 16% single family.

What kind of a community do we want to be? Well, we probably don’t know. Some old time residents would like things to stay the same as they have been for decades. This is unlikely to be the case. University Hill has changed already.

One major influence will be the recreation needs of a large multiple housing population. In the past the relatively small number of residents living in houses on big lots voiced few demands for playgrounds, sports facilities, a community centre or any other of the amenity needs that are important to people living in a higher density situation.

It is time for the UEL community to have a vision. As the saying goes, if we don’t know where we are going we probably won’t get there. We need to get on with looking at the future of our community now.



## Suite 300: Moving in Date is April 1

After many months of discussion and negotiation, the CAC is pleased to announce that we will be taking occupancy of Suite 300 in University MarketPlace on April Fool’s Day!

This space is a 1,000 square foot suite on the third floor (above Starbucks, 300 – 5755 Dalhousie Rd). It was allocated for community use as a condition of the rezoning negotiations before the building was built. It has one room that will hold up to 75 people seated, a small kitchenette and one restroom.

Once we get possession of the space we will be doing some minor renovations such as carpet and maybe some paint and acquiring basic furnishings. It will then be available for any bona fide community use. Certainly our regular Council meetings will be held there, as will the numerous meetings about community issues and the working meetings that put this newspaper together.

Once we have moved into Suite 300 the CAC will be publishing a policy for usage, including instructions on how to reserve a time.

## Heritage Firehall Revitalization Plan

For two years the CAC has been working on a plan to renovate our old firehall and convert it to community use. The building has been sitting vacant for some time, although we have been paying to maintain it. It is an attractive Arts and Crafts style building constructed in 1929 and originally had space for two fire trucks, barracks for the firemen and the police station.

This document is viewable in full on the CAC website:  
<http://www.uelcommunity.com>



### We need community space

The building has value as part of the heritage of the University Hill community, and is worth saving on that basis alone. We also need community amenity space. There are no facilities in the UEL for the community to use for public functions, or for private functions related to the community. This building is well placed and its condition, size and general layout are very suitable conversion to public use.

### The second study is now complete

A preliminary examination of the building conditions and the renovation options was finished in January 2012 by Don Luxton and Associates a firm of heritage planners. Luxton has now completed a second phase of planning which takes the design and costing work to greater detail.

### Concept in a nutshell

- Main entries all relocated to east side of building
- Main hall in old fire truck bay
- Flexible public spaces of a variety of sizes
- Restrooms and storage
- Attractive landscaping including spaces for outdoor functions
- Vehicle entry off Chancellor Blvd
- Parking at the building and overflow at the recycle station location
- Two-storey rental suite with private garden to support operations costs

### The next step

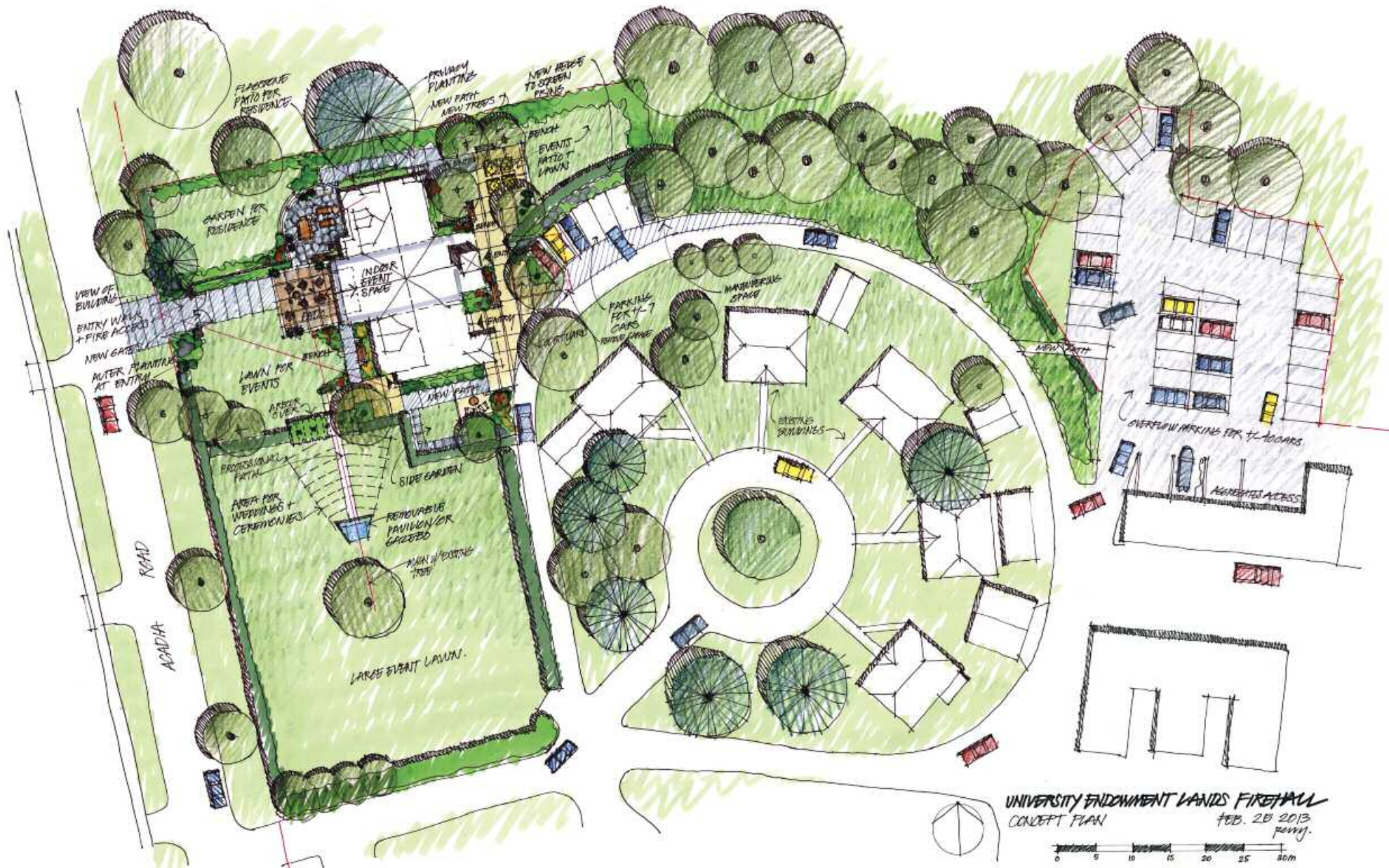
There are a number of issues, including land tenure and financing, that will need to be solved before this project can proceed.



Concept drawing: entrance to the Firehall community centre.



Concept drawing: main hall in old fire truck bay during a wedding.



Plan drawing: the Firehall community centre on Acadia Road beside cottages.

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**Attention Readers!**  
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A block F corner: University Boulevard and Toronto Road.

## Block F: A Critical Review

### Looking at the Project From the Community’s Point of View

#### Part 1: Rezoning the Property

##### Why rezone?

This is the first big question. The applicant says that “they can do better”, but the questions that naturally follow are “better for whom” and “how is this better”?

##### Three aspects to rezoning

The rezoning can be thought of as having several distinct components:

1. Flexibility: to escape from the four storey straightjacket of the existing MF-1 zoning to allow for greater flexibility in housing types
2. Additional uses: to add uses not permitted in MF-1, namely hotel and commercial
3. Additional floor area: to add the hotel and commercial as a bonus on top of the existing maximum allowable floor space

##### More flexibility could be win-win

Rezoning to gain flexibility in site layout and the type of buildings that could be built could be good for the owner and good for the community. The property owner gets to create a more attractive and more marketable development and the community gains more variety to housing types and more open space.

##### Many think adding a hotel is questionable

At the first open house only 36% of the respondents agreed that a hotel should be included. It is easy to see how a hotel could benefit the owner and probably UBC, but how does it benefit the community, besides providing food and beverage facilities? The case has to be made for this function, which is not allowed under the current zoning.

##### Community is lukewarm on commercial space

At the first open house only 50% of the respondents thought that commercial space was a good idea. A food store and coffee shop could be a good idea, but the property owner cannot guarantee who will rent any of the commercial spaces. The “strip mall in a loop” idea presented at the second open house was not very appealing. The concept of commercial space needs more work.

##### Why bonus the hotel and commercial?

It is not clear why the community should support the additional floor space unless significant benefits accrue to the community to offset the additional building bulk, and additional traffic and parking loads. If the added floor space is not demonstrably a benefit to UEL residents it makes no sense to agree to it. To put this in perspective, if the additional floor space is worth \$200 to \$250 per square foot and the additional floor space is something around 100,000 to 120,000 square feet, the value of the bonus to the property owner is in the area of \$25,000,000. Where is the value to the community of such an increase in property value? The owner can always propose the new uses within the existing maximum allowable floor space.

##### Here are a few possibilities

1. Rezone for residential only and gain design and housing type flexibility
2. Rezone for hotel and commercial, making a strong case for these functions, but within the current maximum allowable floor space
3. Rezone for hotel and commercial as bonus space, but making a strong case for the functions and offer a substantial benefit to the community, such as a contribution to community amenities (how about splitting the increased value?).

##### What about just developing the property under the current zoning?

The property owner has the right to develop the land with the current MF-1 zoning. What would this be like? It would be a fairly dense development of four storey apartment buildings. It might make sense to rezone the site to gain the benefits of flexibility, but It would be interesting to see a well worked out option for the existing zoning.

#### Part 2: What We Saw... and What Was Missing

##### Where are the studies?

Only limited information was presented regarding an analysis of the site conditions and context. We expected to see more. A comprehensive impact study is needed. Effort needs to be put into describing how the development of Block F will be integrated into the existing University Hill community. These impacts include both physical and social aspects. Natural systems such as hydrology and vegetation, critical views into the site from University Blvd, and way the large additional population will be handled regarding recreation facilities.

A major concern is traffic. In the future Acadia Road will be a main street with the new school and the upcoming rebuild of UBC’s Acadia Park housing complex. University Blvd. is a major artery and is in very poor condition. A future transit line might run under, hopefully not on, University Blvd. A traffic study is needed now, and this should include an indication of how the decade long construction period will be handled to minimize disturbance to residents.

##### Is this project trying to be a suburban development or an urban development?

One benefit of rezoning would be the possibility of having everything from row houses to tall high-rise towers. This can make an interesting development and also free up some land for open spaces. This is great, but not all open spaces are equal. For example a layout of tall towers spaced apart with lots of un-built land between them can be a bit deadly, with the open space inaccessible and unusable to the general public. This is a suburban development with tall towers. Open spaces are best used very deliberately to create activity spaces or relief from the built environment: parks, playgrounds, wetlands, lineal parks along paths, buffer zones, etc. We suggest the applicant look at creating urban places where the buildings are, and wonderful natural spaces where they are not.

##### Contributing to the building of a healthy community

This development will have a massive affect on the UEL community, almost doubling our population. How can the Block F development really contribute to the building of a healthy community? Firstly by being an outstanding example of the urban design craft with the provision of a wide mix of housing types and sizes, excellent open spaces and perhaps a great little shopping and commercial area. Secondly by making a contribution to recreation needs of the community. As this development will eventually be almost half of the University Hill community population, it is right and fair that it make a contribution to the common amenities. UBC charges a \$3.25/s.f. Community Amenity Charge that is specifically for the capital cost of community facilities. This is in addition to a \$31.82/s.f. Infrastructure Impact Charge. The City of Vancouver imposes development cost charges as well. The UEL should be doing the same.

##### We want families

A community needs a mix of residents, including families. For a stable population we need places where families can grow. Families need larger units. There are not many 3 bedroom residences in the current multiple housing units in the UEL. What about affordable housing? This should also be addressed in the next open house as it is important for many people working in the UBC area.

##### Missing numbers

The open house presentation was woefully lacking in statistics, including the number and size of housing units, amount of site coverage, size of hotel, indication of ownership vs. rental housing, and so on.

##### The required minimum three acre park

All the options shown place the required major park at the location of the second growth timber. This is an attractive and obvious location and there is a consensus that this makes sense. One option shows a wetland adjoining the second growth park, and this also makes sense as it would serve the water-course that feeds the salmon-bearing Salish Creek.

##### Why no comments on the proposed options?

This article does not directly comment on the three options presented for two reasons. One is that the applicant has received at the open house and through PlaceSpeak a number of responses from individuals. The second reason is that this article was prepared after considerable consultation with members of the community and the only consensus obtained was that none of the options shown were very appealing and that to comment in detail was to give them more credibility than warranted.

#### Part 3: The Consultation Process

##### Consultation is appreciated, but...

Members of the University Hill community have expressed their appreciation of the effort that has been put into the open houses. We thank the proponent and their team for holding the two open houses so far and look forward to continuing discussions. However, we do have some comments about the process and hope they are taken in the positive spirit in which they are offered.

##### Where is the rationale behind the ideas?

There has been very little urban design rationale described in the presentations to date. One difficulty in commenting on the options presented at the open house is that without some explanation of the options and the thinking behind each option comments were seen as random. Where is the analysis of conditions and context? Where is the design philosophy? Where is the design vision? Tell us the reasons.

##### Options as presented were too simplistic

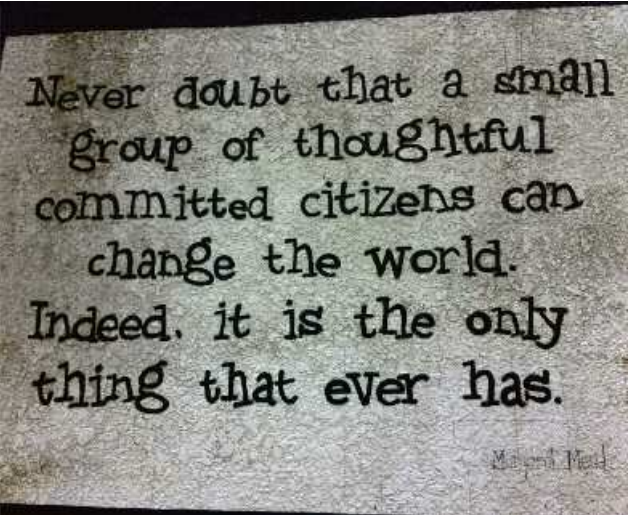
Some citizens have expressed concern with the narrow range of unexplained and formulaic questions that were presented. Many felt the options presented lacked any spark of interest. Some of those who diligently filled out post-it notes and answered the questionnaire were not comfortable doing so as they felt they were making uninformed, almost blind, choices. In some cases they felt that by taking part they were giving credibility to a flawed process and perhaps just assisting the proponent to say in the future “we listened to you and this is what you said”. There most certainly is a broader range of more interesting possibilities than what was shown.

#### Our suggestions are...

- Provide good research and analysis of the situation and context
- Present a comprehensive set of project goals
- Describe the rationale that led to each set of options or question
- Spend enough time on urban design so the concepts look believable and attractive
- Show enough detail so we can understand what you are asking
- Describe the pros and cons of choices, particularly as they effect the UEL community

##### What is the rush?

The timeline for the rezoning seems to be very rushed. What is driving the process? It seems to us that not enough time and care is being taken to really think things through and come up with well-reasoned creative plans.



Quote by Margaret Mead



##### Our Much Loved Golf Course to Go Private?

For almost 85 years the public has been welcomed to the University Golf Club. How much longer will that be the case? The current leaseholder has only a few more years to go on his lease with the Musqueam Indian Band. Will his lease be renewed? Well, many of us in the region who regularly play this wonderful course certainly hope so.

The Reconciliation Agreement between the BC Government and the Musqueam states that the land must remain a golf course until 2083, but it does not specify public golf course. In a *BC Business magazine* article in November of 2010 writer David Jordan reported then Chief Ernie Campbell as saying that the Musqueam could buy out the lease of the private and exclusive Shaughnessy Golf Club’s lease (which has about 20 years left) and move Shaughnessy to the University Golf Club site. This would free up the huge prime waterfront acreage of the Shauhgnessy course for real estate development.

*Does this sound like a good idea to you?*



Block F Development, Birds and Pacific Spirit Regional Park

By Bev Ramey, Nature Vancouver Director and June Ryder, Caretaker for Pacific Spirit Regional Park Important Bird Area

We are wonderfully fortunate to live near Pacific Spirit Regional Park, to walk its trails and enjoy its rich and diverse population of birds, including songbirds, flycatchers, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, hawks, owls, and eagles. The native trees, shrubs and forbs provide shelter and food for wintering birds, resting areas for migrating birds, and nesting habitat for spring and summer visitors such as warblers, vireos, swallows and many other resident birds. Birds are attracted to the Park as a result of its size, its location surrounded by the Fraser River Estuary and the ocean, and its diverse habitats. It is the largest (over 700 hectares), wild, forested area remaining within Vancouver city, and the second largest lowland green-space (after Burns Bog) in Metro Vancouver.

In comparison to the large size of Pacific Spirit Park, the 22 acres of Block F is small. But from the perspective of people who enjoy nature for its spiritual value, for the health value it affords by encouraging exercise, for the role it plays in contributing to the diversity of natural species, and for the natural services it provides, our wish is that the planned development retain as much natural area as possible.



Rufous Hummingbird



House Finch

Development of Block F will impact birds. When habitat is removed, birds cannot simply move to an adjacent area because such areas are already populated with birds. Even Song Sparrows establish winter territories! In addition, the fragmentation of habitat will make the remaining habitat less desirable. More edges and smaller “clumps” of trees may be good for some species, but unfortunately will allow more access for predators, such as cowbirds, introduced squirrels and domestic cats. Development of Block F will further constrict the already narrow connection of Pacific Spirit Regional Park across University Blvd and will impact the park through the close proximity of more people and traffic. For some birds, nearby development may not be as detrimental. Birds such as chickadee, bushtit, house finch, song sparrow, dark eyed juncos, rufous and Anna’s hummingbirds often frequent people’s bird feeders. But other species, such as wintering Varied Thrush, nesting warblers and flycatchers, will decline in number in areas of the park near Block F because these species prefer the ‘deep woods’.

From a birds’ perspective, here are a few suggestions to reduce the impacts of Block F development:

**Conserve habitat:** Protect the core natural habitat of the central area of Block F: namely the stand of large evergreen trees (conifers) and adjacent wetland extending to University Blvd with its surrounding deciduous woods and snags. This is the wetland

pond that the unofficial trail to the bus stop circles past. Although at first glance the snags (dead trees) that edge the pond may appear ‘messy’, these provide food and roosting sites for birds. Woodpeckers drill into the snags searching for insects and these cavities are used for nesting by several species such as woodpeckers, chickadees, and tree swallows. An added benefit of protecting this wetland and its water storage capacity is the natural service of retaining surface and groundwater for flow to Salish Creek.

**Roads:** Minimize construction of new roads. Wherever possible utilize the existing roads along the perimeter of Block F. Where interior vehicle flow is necessary, use ‘soft’ paving, that

will not only slow traffic but provide a permeable surface to help rain water infiltrate and minimize surface runoff.

**Forest and Shrub management:** Retain wherever possible larger native trees, especially in groupings with companion trees and shrubs. Preserve tall snags or stumps as wildlife trees. Retain groups of trees of varied heights, shrubs, groundcovers and decaying wood on ground. For new landscaping, “naturescape” with bird friendly shrubs and trees, planted in groupings so that birds can fly from ground to tree branches without undue exposure.

**Windows:** Design windows to minimize collisions with birds in flight.



above: Spotted Towhee

below: Sharp-shinned Hawk on a lawn in Area C



Milk home delivery

In 1929, 24 Ayrshire cows were brought from Scotland to form the basis of the UBC dairy herd. John Young and his family accompanied the cows on their journey by sea and rail to Vancouver. The Young family had left a dairy farm in Scotland where they had lived in a manor house. By contrast their first accommodation in the UEL was a small apartment on the second storey of the building that housed the original UEL Office (where McDonalds is today).

Only two years later, in 1931, UBC was in financial strife and John’s appointment as Herdsman and Farm Manager was terminated. John then leased the farm and the dairy herd from UBC which he and his family operated during the 1930s and 1940s. He established a retail milk business delivering milk to the newly built homes in the UEL. When John retired in 1951 Dairyland bought his milk business and they have continued to provide home milk delivery in the area up to the present.

The John Young Reading Room in the Old Barn Community Centre on the UBC campus contains photographs and information which serve as a tribute to John’s life and the many ways he and his family contributed to the UEL and UBC communities.

Sue Hurd receives an Outstanding Achievement Award

Congratulations to Sue Hurd, long-standing resident of Area A, for being awarded the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of her outstanding fundraising and volunteer support services for those needing palliative care. This medal honours significant contributions and achievements made by Canadians.

Over the past 10 years, Sue has helped raise more than \$3.5 million in support of the construction and operation of the Vancouver Hospice, a six bed home at 4615 Granville Street in order to provide compassionate care to as many as 150 and short term respite to up to 800 people annually. Thanks to her dedication, the Vancouver Hospice Society (“VHS”) has grown to over 1000 members and 300 volunteers, all sharing a common goal of advocating for a dignified end of life for the dying and their families.

Sue reflected, “We recognized that there is nothing more important for a person at the end of their life than to live with comfort and dignity. Our hospice can provide that care in a home away from home. Families are relieved of the physical and medical responsibilities so they can care for their loved ones in a relaxed and supportive environment.”

The mission of the VHS is to support and advocate for compassionate care for those facing advanced illness, death and bereavement. Its vision is to establish hospice homes, respite care and day care programs and bereavement services to ensure that those facing end-of-life have the medical, emotional and spiritual support they need. Currently, the VHS offers home hospice visiting volunteers, caregiver education programs, bereavement walking programs, children’s grief and

family support programs, healing touch and home hospice volunteer training . The VHS is funded 100% through charitable donations, fundraising events, and proceeds

from two volunteer operated Dunbar thrift shops, the HOB which sells women’s clothing and HOB Too which carries vintage collectibles.



An outstanding neighbour in our community. Sue Hurd being congratulated by Joyce Murray.

The strange borders west of Blanca Street

Many visitors, and some residents, on the tip of Point Grey west of Blanca Street at times confused about exactly where they are. Maybe we can help clear it up.

**It’s simple: there are only two jurisdictions** There are only two jurisdictions west of Blanca Street. One is the University Endowment Lands, which contains about 1,600 residences, Pacific Spirit Park, some commercial properties and a few small areas of provincially owned land. Traditionally the community located in the UEL has been called University Hill and this is administered by a local office of the Ministry of Community, Sport and Community Development, with citizens being represented by the Community Advisory Council.

The other jurisdiction is the University of BC. It owns all the land not in the UEL. Within the campus are a number of land uses, the biggest being the academic lands and the next largest being the neighbourhood housing lands. The market (i.e. not student) housing is on land leased for 99 years by UBC to developers, but it remains UBC land. The University Neighbourhood Association (UNA) administers this area, in concert with UBC. The UNA communities now number seven, with one more to be added in the future when the aging Acadia Park student housing is redeveloped.



**We should switch names** One of the ironies of all this is that the University Endowment Lands has nothing to do with the university

and is not an endowment. It is also almost entirely owned fee simple, notwithstanding that some in the region still ask if we live on leased land. On the other hand, the UNA

housing and commercial properties are on leased land and do serve as an endowment for UBC. So, the names are really backwards!



Urban Wildlife of the UEL

The many acres of Pacific Spirit Park afford local wildlife a wonderful place to live and thrive. Due to the proximity of the University and local residences, those of us who live in the UEL are often in close contact with these critters. The most visible of these tend to be moles, coyotes, rats, raccoons, squirrels, woodpeckers, skunks and owls. Most of these creatures have adapted well in the relationship with their human neighbours, as evidenced by holes in our lawns, garbage & power poles.

Moles: Making Mounds in Your Lawn

The adult mole measures approximately 16 cm in length and has dark grey or brown velvety fur. Its eyes are small and its broad front feet have strong claws for digging in soil. Moles are insectivores and most do not eat plants, but feed mainly on earthworms, insects and grubs. You are more likely to see the evidence of it tunneling than you are the actual creature. Some moles may damage tubers and the roots of garden plants but any plant damage is most likely incidental, or may be caused by other small herbivorous animals using the tunnel (such as voles). Most surface activity happens in the spring and fall. Moles are solitary animals, and it is likely that only one or two moles are responsible for the damage to your lawn or garden. Attempts to protect your garden can often be met with frustration. People try flooding the tunnels, trapping (humane and otherwise), poison, ultrasonic devices (which are billed to work for all small mammals), smoke bombs and a method that one of our neighbours has reportedly used successfully... human hair in the tunnels!

Masked Bandits

Perhaps the urban animal who has the least fear of people is the raccoon. Raccoons are most active at night. Many people will look out their windows in this area, only to see one on their back porch looking for a hand-out. Never attempt to feed them, as doing so causes them to lose their fear of humans. This makes them more likely to be hit by cars or to decide that your home is theirs. Raccoons



are still wild creatures and can be dangerous to humans and cats. As with other urban wildlife above, taking precautions to make your property less attractive as a place to feed or nest is the best solution to keep these critters safely in the forest.



Coyotes Eat Anything

Coyotes are smart pack animals who are very valuable to our ecosystems as scavengers and predators. They are omnivores who capitalize on their proximity to humans. They will eat just about anything besides small mammals, including garbage, compost, fallen fruit, seeds from bird feeders, and pet food. Pet guardians need to be particularly careful because coyotes will prey on free-roaming cats and small dogs if given the opportunity and other resources are scarce. Using a leash on your dog walk can reduce the risk since the dog is close to you. If confronted by a coyote: yell, stamp your feet, look big, wave your arms and scare the coyote away. Kids, especially, need to know this!<sup>1</sup>

Squirrels Like to Move In

The most commonly seen squirrel in the UEL is the large Eastern Grey Squirrel. It is actually an import from eastern Canada which was released into Stanley Park in 1909.<sup>3</sup> Our own native squirrel is the Douglas Squirrel, which is reddish-brown with a yellowish belly and is about half the size of a Grey. The Douglas Squirrel's numbers have greatly decreased with increased urbanization, unlike the Grey. Many people feed these squirrels, but end up attracting rats instead! If squirrels get inside your house, they start to cause damage to buildings, chewing electrical wires and using insulation as a nest. A chimney, attic, or small opening in a building wall can make a comfortable resting area which can quickly create a nuisance for people. Use best urban wildlife prevention practices (above) as well as using squirrel-proof bird feeders to prevent these critters from taking over your home.

Isn't One Kind of Rat Enough?

Two of the rat species that we are most likely to see are the Norway rat and the roof rat. The Norway rats, are larger than roof rats. They build elaborate systems of tunnels and burrows, and usually remain in the basement or ground level. The roof

Woodpiles next to your house can become homes for rats.

rats, are agile climbers and usually found in elevated spaces such as attics, walls, rafters, or roofs, and upper stories of buildings.<sup>2</sup> It is usually easier to keep the rats away from your home than it is to get rid of them once they have established themselves. The best way to do this, is to make



With the help of a pick mattock, volunteers work to remove the roots of a holly tree.

Volunteering in Pacific Spirit Regional Park

As UEL residents, we are so privileged to have as our neighbour the wonderful recreational and environment resource, Pacific Spirit Regional Park. So many UEL residents regularly enjoy walking, running or cycling along the trails, but even UEL residents who aren't in the park regularly, no doubt still appreciate the quality of air created by the forest and the sounds that only a natural living environment emits.

What many of us may not often consider are the various pressures that negatively affect the natural ecology within the park. Not only do the thousands of annual visits by humans and dogs takes their toll on the park, but growing within the park, in quantities so large that they choke out native plant species, are invasive plant species. Pacific Spirit Park Society in partnership with Metro Vancouver Parks, West Area, has been waging war on invasive plants like English Holly,

sure that there is no entry point left uncovered, that you remove potential hiding places next to your house (woodpiles etc), trim back branches and foliage and do not leave garbage or compost in unsecured containers (important for preventing many other urban wildlife from taking advantage of this as well).

Coho Salmon in Salish Creek!

by Ben Seghers, a retired zoology professor

**How Block F is Designed Matters** Many readers of this newspaper will be aware of the impressive restoration work carried out since 1999 on Spanish Banks Creek by our local Streamkeepers group. Following this success they began looking at other streams as potential candidates for similar salmonid enhancement work. Salish Creek (also known as Acadia Creek) had been on their back burner for many years partly from rumours that small fish had been seen in the short section of the stream between Acadia Beach and Marine Drive. It was assumed that the culvert installed under the road in 1947 blocked the passage of fish further up the watershed.

My first assignment when I joined the Streamkeepers in the fall of 2011 was to go on 'coho watch' where I spent many long, dark, cold and rainy days observing the stream. Eventually on 23 November I was thrilled to see a female coho jump out of the pool and attempt to swim up the culvert. Fortunately I had my camera and took some video of a few more jumps as each time the fish was thrown back by the torrent at the mouth of the culvert. A few days later I found her dead body, still full of eggs (3140 of them... yes, I counted each one!). She weighed 3.5 kg and was 69.5 cm in length.

The Uneasy Mix of Cats and Coyotes

Pacific Spirit Park people report finding cat bones among other detritus in the coyote dens within the park. They believe that coyotes play a crucial role in the urban ecosystem, keeping down the populations of rats and other small animals. Unfortunately, small pets are also on their dietary list.

Cats must be careful out there.

**Don't Mess with Roda** Meet Roda... a sleek jet black cat with a glistening coat who, despite her beauty, is one tough cat. When the shower goes on, Roda jumps in to let water pour over her. Raccoons are no threat: one summer Roda amused herself by smacking small raccoons as they slid off the roof. And every night, Roda slips out an upstairs window to prowl in the dark.

Her best friend is a large golden retriever. Big as he is, the dog defers to Roda, letting her cuddle and check out his dinner. One night this friendship went awry when the dog, startled from sleep, bit down on Roda's entire

To assist the fish, DFO along with other partners installed a series of wood baffles in the culvert just in time for the 2012 spawning season. I was on coho watch again but saw no fish this time although it's possible that some passed by undetected and managed to spawn in the long section between Marine Drive and Chancellor Boulevard. Traps will be set this spring to determine if there are any juvenile coho in the stream. Stay tuned!

But what does this have to do with Block F?

Block F is actually the source of Salish Creek and also (via Cutthroat Creek) the source of Musqueam Creek, therefore it's fortuitous that some water from the Musqueam property actually manages to get all the way to their reserve on the Fraser River! With both Salish and Musqueam Creeks being salmon-bearing streams it will be important for the Block F development to consider not only pollution issues during the construction phase but also the long-term hydrological consequences of the development.

I have attended both open houses on the Block F project and was pleased to note that the wetlands and the mature coniferous forest region featured prominently in their preliminary landscape designs and are very likely to be retained. Hopefully we will continue to have salmon in Salish Creek for the foreseeable future.



above: Baffles installed in the culvert under NW Marine Drive.

below: Coho salmon recovered from Salish Creek in November 2011. She weighed 3.5 kg and contained 3140 eggs. Ruler is 30 cm.



The Beautiful Ladies

Pippin and Tilly are lady-like cats whose owners have gone to considerable trouble to keep the cats close to home. Pippin and Tilly are two-and-a-half year old sisters, born in the same litter. Pippin is the fun-loving one who teases the dog by playing hide-and-go seek or jumping over her.

Pippin also exhibits an interest in music, walking across the piano keys at least once a day, any time of day.

Tilly has other things on her mind. She's the adventurous one who plots to escape beyond the house's yard. Aware of the coyotes' fondness for cats, the family tries to confine them with an electric wire around the property that sets off beeps in the cats' collars. But cats are cats and clever Tilly has figured out what tree to climb to get past the fence to freedom. Homebody Pippin is quite happy to hang out in the yard. Both cats are safe at home at night.



Roda

Tilly

Pippin



# Property assessments and your taxes

## Some owners report puzzling increases this year

Did your property assessment go up this year? Some UEL residents were surprised, even shocked, at their home values on this year's assessment notices. Increases were in the 15% to 20% range have been reported even though the real estate market has cooled noticeably. So, what happened, and how does this affect your taxes?

## Each property gets assessed each year

BC has a "full-value" assessment policy, so your house is supposed to be valued at what it would fetch on the market. Clearly not every house and apartment is actually looked at each year, instead the system uses sales information to generate updates that are supposedly reasonably accurate. If you think your assessment is too high, it can be appealed.

## This year time lag is a problem

The situation this year appears to be the lag between the time the BC Assessment office processes the assessments and the date when you get your notice. Assessments are supposed to be fixed at July 1 of the previous year, in this case July 1, 2012. Assessments can also be skewed by a low volume of sales in your area, with one or two sales leading to erroneous values to nearby homes.

## Calculating taxes

The UEL administration office works out a budget for the fiscal year and submits this to the Surveyor of Taxes. The Surveyor of taxes takes the total amount of money needed by the various authorities that get a piece of the tax pie (UEL, School Board, Translink, Metro, Police, etc.) and does a simple mathematical calculation (total assessment divided by amount of money needed). This provides the "mill rate" or amount of taxes to be levied against each property based on current value. The total tax bill in 2011 for the UEL was \$8,750,000. Most of that went to the school board, etc. The UEL itself only received 32% of this total tax take, or about \$2,800,000.

## Is the system fair?

Property taxes are a crude way to raise money as it is based on the value of an asset, not the cost of servicing the property or even the ability of the owners to pay. For example, a retired couple living in a house they bought decades ago at a modest cost can be faced with a very large tax bill because of a massive, but unrealized, increase in value of their home. In a community such as U. Hill, with a huge range of property values from modest apartments to large estates, a relatively small number of larger and more expensive residential properties pay a disproportionate share of taxes.

# New CAC Members for Area D

The Community Advisory Council is pleased to welcome Hong Chen and Hillary Li as new members. Both Hong and Hillary are residents of Area D and join Mischa Makortoff to bring the complement of members of Area D up to full strength.



Hong Chen



Hillary Li

# Rooming House Blues

## Should the renting of houses as student rooming houses be permitted?

From time to time a house becomes a "problem house". The UEL bylaws do permit unrelated people living in the same house, but there is a specified limit. Sometimes this is clearly exceeded.

Issues include, unruly parties with excessive noise, slovenly and inconsiderate behaviour, garbage, un-cut lawns and lack of building maintenance resulting in slum like appearance of the property. Safety such as fire protection is an additional concern. Parking becomes problematic, with numerous tenants there is the potential for numerous vehicles.

Well, one of our citizens found several difficulties when he was trying to solve a problem with a house a few doors away from his.

## First is the UEL Bylaw definition of Single Family, and problems with enforcement.

"A single family can be up to three people unrelated by blood or marriage". In addition two boarders are permitted. That is, a house could be rented to five unrelated individuals. However, it is difficult to determine the number of people living in a house and the bylaw is almost impossible to enforce.

What appears to happen is that owners rent the house to an individual who then sublets on a room by room basis. There are cases where the bylaw has been ignored and the house openly advertized as having rooms for eight persons.

## Second is the problem of nobody in charge.

With a conventional family someone assumes the role of "head of the household" and takes responsibility. With an unrelated group it is unlikely any individual has authority or will take responsibility for such things as behaviour of the tenants, basic building and yard maintenance. When the bylaws were written this situation was not an issue.

It has been difficult for neighbours to contact property owners when problems arise and to find ways to have the owners take responsibility and take action to remedy the situation.

## The bottom line is:

- It is difficult for the UEL Administration to enforce the single family bylaw.
- The police can do little more than respond to complaints regarding such things as infractions of the noise by-law.
- It appears there is little that neighbours can do.
- What are the responsibilities of owners and tenants and how can they be held accountable?

What do you think? Write your editor a letter and tell us.



Would you know a problem house if you saw one?

### Your Editor is Lonely: Please Write

Got a comment on something you see in this issue of Connections? Like it? Don't like it? Got a gripe about something? Got a story idea you want to pass on? Got a news item or notice about an upcoming event you want to share?

We like to get mail. Write us at: [uhillconnections@gmail.com](mailto:uhillconnections@gmail.com)

# How do You Get Your Books?

From time to time the issue of access to a library comes up. At the present University Hill residents do not have access to a library. It is possible to pay the Vancouver Public Library VPL) for a card, but these are only good for six months. This short life and the cost can be a hassle for a family.

The CAC is looking at the options. The University Neighbourhood Association has an arrangement with the Vancouver library system and this seems to work well. Any UNA resident can get a card upon application with proof of residency. Perhaps we in the

UEL could make a similar arrangement. Other ideas include starting our own library on a modest level, perhaps focusing on loaner e-readers and a collection of digital books.

What do you think about access to a library? Is this important to you? Please let us know. Send a letter to the editor. [uhillconnections@gmail.com](mailto:uhillconnections@gmail.com)

