

UCV Campus Redevelopment Proposal: Member Concerns and Responses January 19, 2020

Over the past year, several sessions and Board forums have been held to allow UCV members to express their concerns about the potential redevelopment of the UCV campus to include a 6-storey residential building and a new Hewett Centre. Members of the Redevelopment Committee and Board of Trustees have distilled the principal concerns expressed in these sessions, and provided responses to them based on the work of the committee and others.

Concern

Response

- Congregational activities will be disrupted during the construction period*
 - Some disruption and inconvenience is inevitable, but need not constrain congregational activities.
 - A transition plan has been developed to accommodate congregational activities during construction with portable buildings and re-purposing parts of the Administration Building.
 - The plan has been costed at some \$220,000 which has been included in the business plan.
- Redevelopment while we are searching for a new settled minister will jeopardise the process of finding a new minister*
 - Enquiries about this concern with the wider UU community in Canada and the USA have been inconclusive. Potential settled (and interim) ministers may or may not be attracted to a congregation that is undertaking campus redevelopment to enhance a sustainable future for itself that is consistent with its Unitarian values.
 - Redevelopment would not seem to unduly limit our “pool” of potential ministers.
- With the combination of an interim minister and temporary meeting rooms, we may lose congregants, not be able to attract new members, and create divisions within our congregation*
 - Redevelopment at this time would call for strong leadership and commitment from our congregation to sustain us through the transition period.
 - We would especially need to focus on sustaining and even growing our membership and donations.
 - Effective, ongoing communication and issue resolution within the congregation would be essential.
- The aging of our congregation poses a significant financial risk to UCV sustainability, especially if we take on a major redevelopment of our campus*
 - The analyses of our Financial Sustainability Task Force will inform our consideration of this important concern.
 - We are facing reduced levels of pledging and possibly static membership growth. Essentially, we are never sure, year-to-year, if our income will cover our expenses, and we know we do not have long-term financial security.

Concern

Response

5. *We seem to be responding to Vancouver's agenda for more affordable housing rather than seeking to meet our own needs*
- A renewed focus on growing our membership and donations is required even without redevelopment.
 - Redevelopment offers a significant opportunity to enhance UCV income sustainability.
 - The risk to our financial sustainability as a congregation was identified by the UCV Board some three years ago.
 - Current government policy and financial incentives strongly support affordable housing development, thus providing an opportunity for us to both enhance our financial sustainability and provide a significant social benefit for our city.
 - This opportunity may not last more than five years.
 - We can redevelop or not, with no consequences for our legal or tax situation.
6. *Our values for environmental sustainability aren't adequately embedded in the project design*
- Vancouver building codes are essentially equivalent to the "Passive House" standard for energy-efficient design.
 - The building design incorporates a number of features (e.g., air-source heat pumps) to come as close to "net-zero carbon" as is practically possible. Further options will be explored during detailed design, and cost allowances for them are included in the business plan.
 - An actively useable "garden roof" for the new Hewett Centre is costed and can be included in the business plan.
 - Practical options for installing solar photo-electric panels on the roof of the residential building (and perhaps the new Hewett Centre) have been identified and will be developed further during detailed design.
 - UCV's location at a major Vancouver road intersection will demonstrate these environmental design features to the general public.
7. *Our social values aren't adequately embedded in the project design*
- The business plan is based on providing below-market housing for about 90 families in the proposed residence.
 - Both non-profit rental housing (with Catalyst as a partner) and co-op housing (with the Community Land Trust, or CLT) alternatives are being actively investigated. The Redevelopment Committee will recommend one option to the UCV Board.
 - Both alternatives allow for implementing UCV values (e.g., housing for UCV members and UCV-sponsored refugees).

Concern

8. *UCV doesn't have the volunteer capacity to undertake the proposed redevelopment, especially at the same time as we are searching for a new settled minister*

9. *Catalyst is proposing a non-profit rental housing model for the redevelopment. Co-op housing represents UCV values much better than non-profit rental housing. Why aren't we considering the co-op model?*

10. *Catalyst is leading the preparation of the business plan, and they are committed to the non-profit rather than the co-op development model. Can we have confidence that they will take UCV values into account?*

11. *If the redevelopment goes ahead, UCV would lose control over a big part of our campus and no influence over decisions by our "partner"*

Response

- We would undertake the redevelopment with a partner (Catalyst or CLT) deeply experienced in leading such non-profit projects through permitting, detailed design, contracting, construction and operationalisation (e.g., filling the residential building).
- Upon congregational approval of the redevelopment proposal, UCV would hire an "Owner's Representative" to ensure our financial and "values" interests are reflected in the project through permitting, detailed design and construction. The Owner's Representative would be accountable to the UCV Board through a small management committee. Fees for the Owner's Representative are included in the business plan.
- Thus, UCV capacity requirement is for high-level oversight of project development and long-term management.
- Non-profit rental housing (with Catalyst as a partner) and co-op housing (with the Community Land Trust, or CLT) alternatives are being actively investigated by the Redevelopment Committee.
- The committee will recommend one of the two approaches to the UCV Board.
- Catalyst was recommended to us by Vancity which helped to finance the planning work so far. Catalyst is competently providing the service it has been contracted for by UCV with the utmost integrity.
- The Redevelopment Committee has worked diligently with both Catalyst and CLT, and has full confidence in either partner to undertake the redevelopment to meet UCV financial and "values" objectives.
- Catalyst demonstrated its integrity by providing all the financial analysis of the business plan to CLT so that UCV can explore the co-op model with them. Catalyst has also offered to work with CLT in the transition of the business plan to CLT should UCV decide to partner with CLT for the redevelopment project.
- A separate "UCV Society", created for CRA tax purposes and controlled by UCV, would lease the project site from UCV and manage UCV's interests in the new development.

Concern

Response

- 12. There seems to be no plan for how UCV would move forward should there be no redevelopment.*

 - Legal agreements with either Catalyst (for non-profit housing) or CLT (for co-op housing) would ensure UCV Society participation in how the residential building is designed, built, managed and operated.
 - Under either arrangement, management and operation of the new Hewett Center would be controlled by UCV.
 - Legal agreements would ensure that UCV is effectively isolated from any financial risk posed by the residential development.

- 13. The new 6-storey residential building would overshadow the Sanctuary*

 - With no redevelopment, the Building and Grounds Committee has determined that operating and maintaining the Hewett Centre would continue as now. Needed upgrades would be funded through future capital campaigns.
 - Opportunities for enhancing UCV revenues from the Hewett Centre are being actively considered.

- 14. Indigenous peoples have not been consulted about the project*

 - Preliminary analyses indicate that the UCV Sanctuary would not be in the shadow of the new residential building until late in the day.
 - Further analyses are ongoing.

- 15. Indigenous peoples have not been consulted about the project*

 - We will consult with Indigenous nations on whose land we are located.
 - We have been advised to wait on these consultations until we have made a firm decision to proceed with the redevelopment and there is a substantive plan to discuss.

- 15. The local community has not been consulted about the potential redevelopment and may well be opposed to it.*

 - Local consultations would be unproductive until we have a redevelopment proposal approved by our congregation.
 - Substantial consultations with the local community are required by the City of Vancouver during the next permitting phase of the project.
 - As a responsible neighbour, UCV would take local concerns into account as much as possible in the plan for redevelopment.
 - An application for townhouse development is already underway for the block of Oak Street north of UCV.