

COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Urban Academy (UA) has proposed an expansion of its private school facility in the Queens Park neighbourhood. They have applied to the City for an amendment to the Official Community Plan and a Heritage Revitalization Agreement to accommodate their project.

A group of residents have serious concerns regarding the UA proposal and the negative impacts it will have on our community. These impacts should lead council to conclude that this is the wrong building in the wrong place, and so deny the rezoning request.

Impact of Site Size

The consolidated property in the Urban Academy proposal is 3,341 m². A review of regional and local standards and guidelines indicate that this site is too small.

- BC Ministry of Education Area Standards¹ recommends a site area of 2.5 to 2.8 hectares (25,000 to 28,000m²) for a school with a nominal capacity of 400 to 450 students. The proposed site is 8 times smaller than these guidelines
- Based on City of Burnaby P5 guidelines², the proposed site is 4.7 times smaller
- Verbal conversation with a City of Surrey planner indicated “they would follow provincial guidelines”

These size criteria are not arbitrary. They reflect best practices, foster positive educational outcomes, provide open space for unstructured play and physical education, create a safe space for students, and a buffer zone for the surrounding neighbourhood.

To make up for the shortfall, UA proposes to use public space in Tipperary Park for its students' recess and lunch hour outdoor space. This is essentially creating a private monopoly over public space on a scale that Tipperary Park cannot accommodate.

Do we want to ignore existing “site size” best practices?

Impact on Official Community Plan (OCP) and Building Guidelines

The OCP is designed to preserve existing neighbourhoods, foster new neighbourhoods, and promote harmonious growth within our city. It balances the interests of various stakeholders.

The UA proposal deviates from the OCP and current P-CD-1 zoning in 5 separate and significant ways³:

1 See <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/capitalplanning/resources/areastandards.pdf> p. 32

2 “Private secondary schools and private schools that offer both elementary and secondary programs shall have a minimum lot area of 1.6 ha (3.9535 acres). (B/L No. 11688-04-03-08)”

FSR density	1.49 (UA) vs 0.40 (P-CD-1)
Site Coverage	41% vs 20 %
Height	40.9 ft vs 30 ft
Setbacks	4.4 ft vs 25 ft side, and 6.5ft vs 25 ft back
Number of students	450 vs 150

Any one of these deviations is reason not to proceed with the project. The cumulative effect is a gross breach of the OCP.

UA suggests that their proposal is more similar to PS-2 Public and Institutional (Medium Rise) zoning criteria. Even under those rules, they do not meet any of the above criteria⁴. While UA is requesting School zoning, it is in effect seeking Public and Institutional zoning in an established residential neighbourhood.

Do we consider this a useful/appropriate application of the OCP?

Impact on Heritage and Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) process

This proposed building will be in an entirely different style than Robson Manor: a modern, flat-roofed, glass-walled building surrounding the 1937 heritage house. It will be more than 4x the size of the existing building. Its mass will be foreboding, rising 40 feet vertical, 4 feet from Manitoba Street. This new building clearly dominates Robson Manor and adds nothing to the heritage value of the neighbourhood.

UA has offered to enter into a HRA under a Heritage Design Bylaw in exchange for OCP variance approval. The Heritage Design Bylaw was a condition of their initial zoning variance application in 2006. They have already played this card and are offering the City nothing that it doesn't already have the right to enforce.

Are we getting good heritage value out of this HRA process?

³ See page 5 of Development Services Department Report #569577 presented to the Advisory Planning Commission meeting July 15, 2014

⁴ *ibid.*

Impact on Safety and Traffic

The surrounding streets are narrow, not wide enough for two cars to pass each other safely past a parked car. Given the lack of transient parking onsite, UA parents and visitors will park on Third Street. Manitoba Street is even narrower.

The lack of side lot setback on Manitoba Street means that Fire, Police and other first responders will have no room to manoeuvre to access the large new building proposed to be built behind Robson Manor. How will they create an evacuation plan for 450 students?

The UA proposal contemplates a mid block crosswalk across Third Street connecting to the footpath across Tipperary Park. This crosswalk will be heavily used before and after school from the parking lot in Tipperary Park, and at recess and lunchtime for outdoor play in Tipperary Park. Again, given the narrowness of the street and parked cars, this is a dangerous configuration.

Do we want to compromise the safety of school children?

Impact on Parking

Currently UA parents park on Third Street, Queens Avenue, Manitoba Street, Peele Street and Tipperary Park/Fourth Street parking lot when dropping off and picking up their children from school. They are encouraged to also park on Royal Avenue. However the Tipperary /Fourth Street parking lot is also the official drop off site for Qayqayt parents. This already creates a noticeable “rush hour” in the neighbourhood during the school year.

The UA proposal contemplates a campus populate 3.5x larger than current. The proposal provides on-site parking for only half the teachers, and no parking stalls for senior students. There would only be 7 on-site transient parking stalls (5 compact and 2 for persons with a disability) for visitors and parents of the 450 students. While these provisions meet the city guidelines, they will create parking chaos in the neighbourhood.

To the extent that UA plans to use Tipperary Park parking lot for their parents’ parking, they will be effectively converting public space into private use. This parking lot is used by the New Westminster tennis club, the Royal City Farmers Market, St. Peter’s Church, wedding parties for photographs, and general park visitors. All of these groups stand to be affected by the UA expansion.

Do we want to knowingly exacerbate parking problems in the area?

Impact on Parks and Public Spaces

Tipperary Park is a cultivated, treed, green space. It has a few picnic tables. It is not suitable as a playground for organized sport. It has no playground equipment. It would be overwhelmed with 450 students using it twice daily.

Does this public space have the capacity for this kind of use?

Impact on Affordable Housing

UA proposes to demolish the residential low rise at 228 Manitoba Street. Until UA acquired an interest in this property it was home to 8 families, many of whom had been long term residents of our neighbourhood. The uncertainty over this project has already disrupted the lives of these families. The property remains viable as an affordable housing complex and should be protected.

Is this in line with the city's Affordable Housing strategy?

Impact on Livability

UA's current zoning allows for up to 150 students on the Third Street site. They have approximately 160 students attending both campuses, roughly 125 at the Third Street site and 35 at the Eighth Avenue site. The current complement of 125 students already creates parking and traffic "rush hour" in the neighbourhood, which the neighbourhood struggles to absorb. The UA proposal is for a student body 350% larger than the existing, placing 450 students directly into a quiet residential neighbourhood with no buffer zone. The residential neighbourhood cannot cope with that scale of activity.

The impact of the UA expansion extends well beyond the actual site. The proposal's heavy reliance on public spaces will stress the fabric of our neighbourhood.

In light of all the above impacts: ***Is this not the wrong building in the wrong place?***