

WHAT WE HEARD

UNIVERSITY DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT 2 DESIGN DIRECTIONS

APRIL - MAY 2024



University
of Victoria

For updates or more information on this project, please visit uvic.ca/udistrict

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

In the Spring of 2024, we engaged the community in the second stage of the University District project where we delved into important aspects of the development including housing and land use, public spaces, urban design and transportation. We asked the community to share feedback on a series of Design Directions that will provide guidance to future development on the site including buildings, transportation networks, and open spaces. The purpose was to help us shape the master plan for the UVic lands at Gordon Head Road and McKenzie Ave - the Ian Stewart Complex and nearby properties.

Over 450 individual engagements were made in this second round of engagement, which was held at the end of the semester in order to capture student voices as well as neighbours, community members, university employees, and others. Engagements included in-person meetings, campus and community open houses, and an online survey.

Overall, the community showed support for the Design Directions presented. Housing remained front of mind for community members, with many seeing this site as an appropriate location for density in their community. Affordability of housing remained a high priority. The housing and land use Design Directions received the greatest engagement, indicating that this remains the top priority for the community.

Themes from this round indicate that the community would like to see the site become a vibrant, green, and connected community that is accessible by multiple modes of transportation and offers a variety of shops, services and opportunities for gathering. Concerns raised showed us that the Design Directions should optimize outcomes such as traffic generation, parking demand, building scale, and ensuring a portion of non-market housing.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

OVER 450 INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENTS



As we contemplate land redevelopment, we acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̓ SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. Engagement with Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̓ SÁNEĆ communities is occurring in parallel and integrated with this project planning process.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

The University of Victoria's [Real Estate Strategy](#) lays out a vision for making our campus more inclusive, connected and accessible, diversifying revenue streams to support university priorities for years to come. The first phase of the strategy directs the development of a new mixed-use district near the main UVic campus, at the north corner of Gordon Head Road and McKenzie Ave. The objectives of the plan are to:

- **Build a connected community**, including providing much-needed housing, enhance connectivity and accessibility, and create new ways to support community-university engagement.
- **Deliver new housing**, including diverse and quality housing and services that will support a more vibrant campus and provide housing solutions in the community.
- **Generate revenue to support long-term university objectives**, including continuing to diversify revenue streams and provide greater resources to support long-term university objectives and the ability to adapt to change.



University District Development Lands

The first round of community engagement was held in November and December 2023. Over 900 individual engagements occurred with the campus community and broader Saanich neighbours. The top responses were a desire to bring vibrancy to the neighbourhood and develop new housing options near the main campus.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Informing and consulting the community are essential to planning a new University District. UVic follows a community engagement process for land use planning and development projects that promotes working collaboratively and respectfully with neighbours, the campus community, and other stakeholders.

The project timeline for University District includes four key engagement stages:



We are currently in the Planning Principles & Design Directions stage of work. This stage focused on informing the public of the master planning process and collecting feedback on the Design Directions. The goal was to collect input from the community to help guide the preparation of a draft master plan in the next stage.

The engagement focused on four key design directions:

- Housing and Land Use
- Urban Design
- Public Realm
- Transportation and Parking

HOW WE ENGAGED

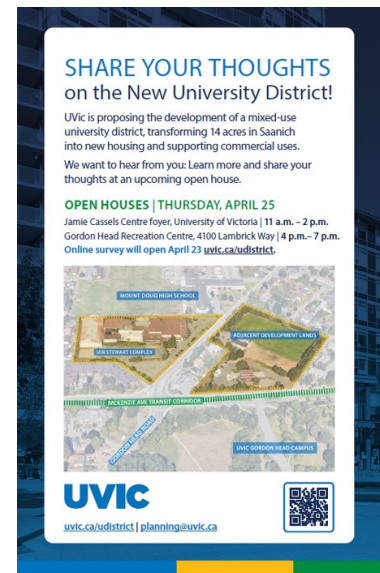
Throughout this stage, we sought feedback from both the campus community, neighbours, and others living in the area through online and in-person opportunities.

OPEN HOUSES: We held two open houses on April 25, 2024. One on campus from 11 am - 2pm and one at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre from 4pm to 7pm. Over the two sessions, we heard from nearly 200 people. Many UVic students, staff and neighbours attended the on campus open house, while primarily neighbourhood residents attended the evening open house at Gordon Head Recreation Centre. We collected hundreds of responses, discussed the project, and answered questions with attendees.

SURVEY: The online survey ran from April 25 to May 5 and received 321 responses. The open houses and survey were advertised in two issues of the Saanich News print distributions, a direct mail out to residents within a 200 metre radius of the site, and promoted on the project website and social media channels.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DISTRICT OF SAANICH: We met with several staff as well as members of Council to explore possible areas of collaboration.

IN-PERSON PRESENTATIONS: We received in-person feedback from the Community Association Liaison Community and members of the Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association.



WHO PARTICIPATED

An online survey received 321 responses. The survey was promoted online, at the open house, and through mail-outs to the community. Of the 321 respondents, most were UVic employees (41%), followed by almost as many residents of the neighbourhood (39%). Around one third of respondents are UVic alumni. Just under 10% of respondents were students at UVic. Of the neighbours, the largest group (around one quarter) of respondents live in the Gordon Head neighbourhood. Saanich residents represented over 60% of respondents and 17% of respondents were from outside of Saanich or Greater Victoria. Most (86%) of survey respondents were new to the project and had not been involved in previous engagement events.

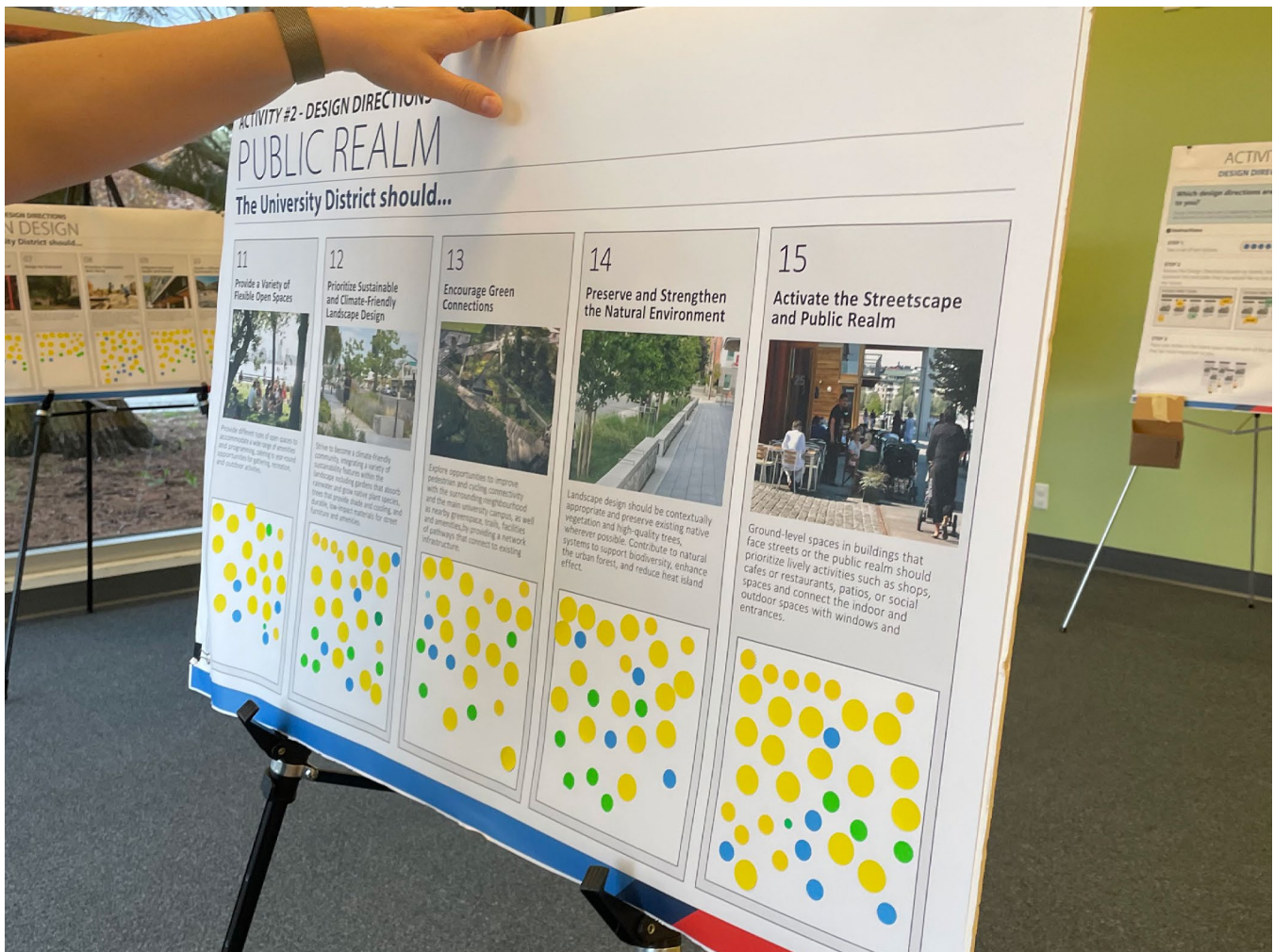
A campus pop-up and off campus open house were both held on Thursday, April 25, 2024. The campus pop-up was held at the Jamie Cassels Centre from 11a.m. – 2 p.m. Approximately 70 people attended including university employees, students, and neighbours. The open house was held at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre from 4 p.m. – 7 p.m., also approximately 70 people attended, primarily neighbourhood residents. Eight comment cards were submitted, in addition to participant responses to interactive stations designed to gather input on four key topics.

WHAT WE HEARD

DESIGN DIRECTIONS

As a part of the work for the second stage of the project, Planning Principles & Design Directions, the design team established Design Directions based on site analysis, project objectives, and key themes shared in the first round of public engagement. Design Directions are a set of statements that provide guidance to future development on a site including buildings, transportations systems and open space.

The Design Directions were grouped under four key topics, each including five directions that are intended to guide the development of the master plan. Participants were asked to indicate which of the directions were most important to them. Participants who attended an open house in-person indicated their preferences by placing a sticky dot on the directions they preferred. Survey respondents shared their preferences by choosing “important” or “very important” on the directions most important to them. This provided insight into how much community support there was for each of the Design Directions and helps prioritize the directions in the plan development. The results below provide a combined summary of what we heard from those who participated in-person and through the online survey.



Topic 1: Housing and Land Use

Maximize Housing



Create a Vibrant, Mixed-Use Place



Promote Sustainable Design



Collaborate with Partners and Government to Support Future Development



Integrate a Range of Market-Viable Housing Options



Q. What do you like about these Design Directions for housing and built environment? What would you add or change?



Summary of comment card and written survey responses

- The written responses show support for these design directions with housing and affordability emerging as clear priorities.
- Written responses showed engagement in the range of land use considerations for this project, and showed support for sustainable design and a mix of uses including shops and services, with strong community interest in vibrant places where people can gather socially.

COMMENTS

“I would increase the focus on high density, affordable housing and accessible green space.”

“Sustainable design is critically important for addressing climate change and for distinguishing the University district from its older neighbouring built structure.”

“The focus should be on affordable housing for families – students, faculty staff, affordable.”

“Mixed-use with commercial retail, restaurants to attract people.”

Topic 2: Urban Design

Create a Unique Sense of Place



Design for Everyone



Prioritize Community Well-Being



Integrate Increased Height and Density



Create a Vibrant Community Focal Point



Q. What do you like about these Design Directions for urban design? Is there anything you would add or change?



Summary of comment card and written survey responses

- The written responses showed general support for the urban design directions. Priorities emerging from the written comments were housing and vibrant social gathering spaces.
- Several of the written comments raised concerns related to building height, community change and traffic.

COMMENTS

"I like the options for building height. I'd love to see set back high rises – stepping in building as they go up to increase density while still at a human scale."

"Sustainability focused, green blue (water) spaces are valued, saving local trees. 6 or more storeys for additional housing, businesses and coffee shops on lower level for community gathering and safe spaces."

"Like prioritizing community well-being and creating a community focal point."

Topic 3: Public Realm

Provide a Variety of Flexible Open Spaces



Prioritize Sustainable and Climate-Friendly Landscape Design



Encourage Green Connections



Preserve and Strengthen the Natural Environment



Activate the Streetscape and Public Realm



Q. What do you like about these Design Directions for public realm? Is there anything you would add or change?



Summary of comment card and written survey responses

- Fewer written comments were submitted for the Open Space and Land Use design directions, through written comments showed support for the design directions.
- Supporting green spaces emerged as a priority, with strong community interest in walking, biking and rolling in a vibrant community space.

COMMENTS

"Minimize impermeable surfaces and heat island effects. Rainwater catchment should be used for watering landscaping. Our droughts are here to stay."

"Safe, wheelchair accessible flower Blvd. like Sydney waterfront, garden and playground for kids."

"Community hub, these are lacking in the area, place to gather in a green space, not directly beside vehicle infrastructure."

Topic 4: Transportation and Parking

Support Complete Streets and Access for All Users



Promote Active Transportation



Encourage Safe and Inviting Streetscapes



Promote a Transit-Supportive Environment



Minimize the Impact of Vehicles on the Public Realm



Q. What do you like about these Design Directions for transportation and parking? Is there anything you would add or change?

1



**ENCOURAGE SAFE
AND INVITING
STREETSCAPES**

237

2



**PROMOTE
A TRANSIT-
SUPPORTIVE
ENVIRONMENT**

216

3



**SUPPORT
COMPLETE STREETS
AND ACCESS FOR
ALL USERS**

186

Summary of comment card and written survey responses

- The written comments showed full support for these design directions, with comments stressing the importance of the transportation and parking elements of the project.
- Written comment showed strong support for providing sufficient parking and strong support for the ability to walk, bike roll and access transit from the site.

COMMENTS

“Side streets in neighborhoods should not bear the brunt of insufficient parking for the public.”

“Walkable green space good, all good for healthy capable of walking biking and not really sure from plans what parking availability will look like for those who are disabled. Bus not always the answer.”

“Not focused on cars/vehicles, safe place for pedestrians and cyclists, on a bus route and added transit stops.”

Look and Feel

In addition to helping define the Design Directions, we also asked those who attended the in-person events to help shape the overall look and feel of what could be developed on the site by selecting their preferred images from a series of photos of urban places and activities. Common themes in the choices included:

- A mix of soft and hardscapes
- Buildings softened by plants and trees
- Natural materials for street furniture and play structures
- Public spaces large enough for events
- Inter-generational uses such as playgrounds
- Places with lighting and activation after dark
- Ground-level shops and services with independent small businesses and spill-out seating
- A connection to nature and water

The below figures show the top images selected, with their key elements highlighted.







NEXT STEPS

Thank you to everyone who shared their time and thoughts with us! The feedback we've received will be used to inform the next steps in our University District work. We're moving forward to develop a draft master plan, which will provide a clearer picture of what the site could become. This involves examining site constraints and opportunities, conducting technical analysis, assessing economic feasibility and continuing to work with the District of Saanich and the provincial government to explore what we can do together.

In the next phase of engagement, we'll share the master plan concept with the community, so we can hear your feedback and ideas before we start the detailed design. This stage will explore specifics like density, housing types and plans for public spaces.

Future opportunities for engagement will be shared widely including on our project website.

uvic.ca/udistrict

If you have any questions or additional feedback, please do reach out:

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