

To: Mayor & City Council, City of Burnaby  
Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission

cc: Joanne Curry, VP External Relations, Simon Fraser University  
Mark McLaughlin, Chief Commercial Services Officer, SFU  
Dale Mikkelson, COO, SFU Community Trust  
Mary Morrison-Clarke, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, City of Burnaby  
Ed Kozak, General Manager Planning & Development, City of Burnaby  
Margaret Manifold, Senior Social Planner, City of Burnaby  
Katrina Chen, MLA, Burnaby-Lougheed

April 16, 2023

**Re: Lack of access to amenities and services in UniverCity**

Dear Mayor, Council and Commissioners,

We're writing on behalf of the UniverCity Community Association and the residents of UniverCity, a geographically-isolated community of 6,000+ in Burnaby, to raise four issues of concern to our neighbourhood. Three of these are longstanding problems that are becoming worse over time as our neighbourhood grows toward its final size of 8,500 people.

- 1. Off-leash fenced dog area:** The closest off-leash dog area to UniverCity is a 75-minute walk (8 km) away. We probably have the worst access to off-leash dog areas of any Burnaby neighbourhood. There are hundreds of dogs in our community, translating to thousands of km driven by our community each week if people must drive to a dog park (and accompanying CO2 emissions). Because of the lack of a designated space, many dogs are off-leash in the streets and parks of our neighbourhood at all times of day and night. There is increasing conflict in our community over this issue and the SPCA has started to make visits. We ask that the city create a fenced off-leash dog area in UniverCity or within walking distance. If no city-owned space is available, we ask that the city seek to lease space from SFU for this purpose. It would not need to be a large area.
- 2. After school programs:** Prior to COVID, 15 after-school (OST) programs operated at University Highlands Elementary each week. Since programming restarted we have had between two and four programs per week. OST programs are essential to families without child care, as they provide a supervised place for children to go after school. We are sympathetic to Parks & Recreation's struggle with staffing shortages since restarting their programs. However, there has seemingly been no progress since September. Families in Burnaby desperately need real progress to be made on this issue before next September. We ask that the City urgently identify new measures to address the staffing shortage since the approach taken so far is not working.
- 3. Child care:** The child care situation in UniverCity is worse than ever. We need child care facilities that are open to all who live in UniverCity and are not restricted for SFU's sole use. Perversely, the conversion of the SFU Childcare Society (SFUCCS) to a \$10/day site has decreased access for our community members by increasing demand from SFU alumni living outside UniverCity to a level that **blocks all access** by the UniverCity community. This, combined with the upcoming closure of the SFUCCS Verdant Childcare Centre means that there will now be no access whatsoever to licenced childcare for UniverCity residents within our geographically-isolated community. In-home child care is not a viable solution in our neighbourhood. Residents cannot realistically set up in-home child care for more than 2 children

because our community is entirely composed of multifamily buildings: units have no access to greenspace, and fire escape route requirements for child cares can't be met in residential towers. There are hundreds of infants, toddlers and children in our community who can't access licensed child care because of the geographical isolation of our community and a community plan that overlooked this need from the outset. We ask that the city take the following steps:

- a. **Lease the Verdant Childcare Centre**, bring in a new non-profit child care provider to operate it, and work with the province to subsidize these spaces to make them financially viable to operate.
  - b. **Work with SFU and the SFU Community Trust to rezone the Verdant Childcare Centre** to allow flexible use by a wider range of ages to better meet community needs and be financially viable.
  - c. **Purchase permanent space** in UniverCity for child care, to be operated by a new provider that does not have financial obligations to SFU. We ask that the city look at *UniverCity Lot 24 Mosaic development on University High Street* as a potential site for a child care center, which could be co-located with a general-purpose programmable community space also owned by the city.
  - d. **Lease temporary space** in UniverCity for interim child care or child programming (as the Lot 24 build will not be complete for several years). If necessary, work with Fraser Health and the Province to secure exemptions to child care facility requirements that cannot be met in UniverCity, such as adjoining green space.
  - e. **Identify a city representative for a working group** to develop a long term plan for childcare on Burnaby Mountain. The UCA, SFU, SFUCCS and the SFU Community Trust are all willing to join such a working group should the city agree to take part.
4. **Community space:** Our community was planned and developed without any bookable, programmable community space. The nearest community space is 30 minutes away by public transit. We wrote to the city about this issue in January, requesting that the city work with Mosaic, SFU and the SFU Community Trust to buy or lease community space in *UniverCity Lot 24 Mosaic development on University High Street*. We would like the majority of the ground floor of this site to be purchase by the city in order to accommodate both programmable community space and childcare. Since that development is several years from completion, we ask that in the meantime the city lease an interim space in UniverCity and seek a non-profit partner to operate it.

The number of residential units in our Community has grown by 20% over the past 2 years, intensifying the issues listed above and are causing increasing difficulties for our community. With the Province's recent announcement that it will provide Burnaby with \$28,784,000 as part of the Growing Communities Fund, we request that some of these funds be used to address these issues in our geographically isolated, underserved, and growing neighbourhood that will soon be home to 8,500 citizens.

We believe that all of these issues can be addressed if the city has the will and we are eager to discuss with you how we might help the city progress toward successful solutions. We will follow up with a phone call over the coming days, or please feel free to call us anytime at the numbers below.

Kind regards,

Mario Guisado  
President  
(604)562-1250

Clea Moray  
Vice-president  
(604)729-9273