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Media Statement

October 7, 2020

Wesbild Statement Regarding The Future Of University Heights

Wesbild can confirm that it has placed the \$230-million University Heights project on pause as it attempts to address an impasse with an existing tenant.

After years of planning, consultations and reaching a broad base of community support, all work on the Saanich project has been paused following a series of requests from existing tenant Home Depot. The U.S. retailer seeks a major expansion and significant financial concessions which affect the viability of the project.

The redevelopment, which would address much-needed community needs such as permanent rental homes, daycare spaces and affordable rental suites, remains uncertain. At this late stage, Wesbild is doing all it can to address Home Depot's requests and is hoping a final round of discussions can resolve the outstanding issues.

For years, it has been widely reported that the Home Depot location, constructed in 2005, would remain unchanged in the redevelopment. The retailer insists on strict compliance with a provision in its lease which restricts construction of buildings on a portion of the site. Alternatively, it requests a 10,000-square-foot expansion, \$5 million in compensation and other concessions in order to permit such construction. In addition to the financial burden, it is estimated the Home Depot requests at this advanced stage could add up to another year to the planning and approvals process.

Wesbild's Victoria-based planning and construction teams have been asked to pause all development activities.

Quotes attributed to Wesbild President & CEO Kevin Layden:

"We are disappointed, and we know the people of Saanich and Greater Victoria will be disappointed. We do not take this action lightly. But we cannot move forward with unreasonable requests. This project will address the region's top priorities including affordability, rental accommodation and the dire need for additional daycare spaces. For many years, the people of Saanich have been generous with their time and care in helping create a sustainable project that addresses the needs of the community. It is our sincere hope that this valuable project can continue."



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About the University Heights Re-development

- The University Heights redevelopment has been in the planning and approvals process for more than three years.
- The redevelopment would update the 1980s-era shopping mall with 598-permanent rental homes, 60 affordable rental suites, an up to 11,000-square foot daycare, cycling infrastructure, public plaza, community spaces, B.C. Transit hub, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and modern, new commercial space.
- The project has benefited from significant community consultation over the course of three years.
- The mixed commercial-residential project recently received first and second reading at Saanich Council with a public hearing yet to be scheduled.
- Construction was anticipated to begin in the spring of 2021 with occupancy in 2024.
- The project is estimated to have an economic impact of \$410 million to the local economy, creating 300+ construction jobs and 200+ permanent positions.

About Wesbild

Since 1981, Wesbild has been creating livable, environmentally responsible homes, neighbourhoods, and community gathering places. A privately held real estate development company, Wesbild specializes in master-planned communities, shopping centres, industrial and golf courses. Each Wesbild project has one thing in common: it is an inviting, thoughtfully designed place that brings people together. For more information visit Wesbild.com

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