

# Business leaders to guide False Creek Flats campus development

New Great Northern Way Campus president wants plans for the site underway when the economy rebounds

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**T**he Great Northern Way Campus (GNWC) is looking to leaders in the real estate development and business community for guidance as it drafts a plan to finally break ground at the campus' proposed site in East Vancouver.

Long on promise but short on results since it was first proposed in 2001, the GNWC has appointed the likes of **David Podmore**, president and CEO of **Concert Properties Ltd.**, and **Tamara Vrooman**, CEO of **Vancity**, to its new board.

**Matthew Carter**, previously a vice-president of **UBC Properties Trust**, has been named GNWC's president.

**Dennis Pavlich** stepped down as president last November to return to a teaching position.

The campus has been without a sitting board for months, following the expiry of the previous board's term.

That board was composed solely of academic members of the four institutions that



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hold a stake in the campus: the **University of British Columbia**, **Simon Fraser University**, the **Emily Carr University of Art + Design** and the **British Columbia Institute of Technology**.

Although the four schools are represented on the board, half its members are independent, as recommended in the campus' governance

review conducted last year.

As well as Vrooman and Podmore, the independent board members are **Eric Martin**, vice-president of development at **Bosa Development Corp.**, and **Andrew Grant**, president, the **PCI Group**.

"It's about getting some independent advice on the board," said Carter, "and it's

about getting some business and real estate development advice on the board."

The new GNWC board, which has its first meeting May 7, will create a development plan for the campus' 18.5-acre property and present it to the city.

A city-led public consultation process is expected to begin soon after.

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-Andrew Grant,  
president,  
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"We have an exciting vision, and the job of myself and the board is to attach a business plan to that vision," said Carter.

The GNWC unveiled three potential campus designs last June, but Carter said they were set aside while the campus developed a proper governance model.

He noted that the campus is fully aware of the perceived conflict of interest in having developers and business leaders as board members.

But Carter said that the campus doesn't want to eliminate the possibility of partnering with businesses

simply because representatives from such businesses sit on the campus board.

Martin said groundbreaking at the campus could still be two to three years away.

He didn't think his appointment to GNWC's board made it any more or less likely that Bosa would become involved in development of the campus.

He said he would likely step down from the board if Bosa became involved in that development.

Martin added that finding capital in the current financing climate is among the hurdles the campus faces.

Grant noted that the property's advantages include its location and proximity to public transit and major thoroughfares.

Like Martin, Grant noted that the board faces some challenges: "there is going to have to be a very intense planning process to figure out what the best uses of the property are. I'm sure that is going to take awhile." ■