



UNIVERSITY ENDOWMENT LANDS

Maintenance and Security of
Vacant and Unoccupied Homes

POLICY

Purpose: The purpose of the policy is to:

- Clarify the University Endowment Lands (UEL) Administration's approach to vacant or unoccupied dwellings in Single Family (SF-1 and SF-2) zoned lots; and
- Provide homeowners or authorized agents with directions to care for and secure vacant or unoccupied dwellings as per UEL bylaws and public safety standards.

Background: Vacant or unoccupied dwellings can become a nuisance to the community and can pose a hazard to public health and safety.

For the purposes of this policy:

A **Vacant Home**, is a dwelling unit that has been unattended for 30 or more days; its utilities are not currently drawing from a system (water, gas, electrical); or is devoid of any regular use, including appliances, pools, among others. Homes of this nature may also be in disrepair and cannot be reentered by the owner due to structural, environmental, or other hazards.

An **Unoccupied Home**, is a dwelling unit that is temporarily uninhabited. For example, occupation could be seasonal in nature or prolonged absence for other reasons by the homeowner and/or tenant. In most cases utilities will continue to be connected and appliances still function. Generally, these homes will have a management company or other periodic visitors that enter the dwelling.

The UEL's [Land Use, Building and Community Administration Bylaw](#) (LUB), [Official Community Plan](#) (OCP) or [Works and Services Bylaw](#) (W&S) does not specifically mention vacant or unoccupied dwellings. However, the LUB contains standards of maintenance for all properties in the UEL. Schedule 12 – Standards of Maintenance (section 2-4) states that:

2. All property shall be kept clean and free from rubbish or debris, objects and materials, except for materials for immediate use in the construction, alteration or repair of a building on the land.
3. All land shall:
 - (a) be kept in a neat and tidy condition.
 - (b) lawns and gardens are to be kept clear of weeds.
 - (c) lawns are to be mowed on a regular basis so as to keep grass height from exceeding 10 cm (4 inches).

4. No vehicle, trailer, boat or mechanical equipment which is in a wrecked or dismantled condition shall be parked, stored or left on any land.

Regardless of the reasons for vacant or unoccupied buildings in the UEL, this policy shall be followed.

Application:

Security of Vacant or Unoccupied Homes

If a dwelling is vacant and shows signs of disrepair, or if the property has perimeter fencing or construction hoarding but the dwelling has not yet been demolished, the dwelling must be secured against unauthorized entry that could lead to fire and/or public health and safety hazards.

The Standards of Maintenance (Schedule 12 of the [LUB](#)) prescribes standards for the maintenance and occupancy of building sites within the UEL to ensure that such buildings and sites are free from hazard and are maintained continuously in conformity with accepted health, fire and building requirements.

In addition to the above, the UEL Manager encourages owners or authorized agents of unoccupied or vacant dwellings to take steps to ensure that the [LUB's](#) Standard of Maintenance are met, the property is secure, and maintenance is continuous (i.e. hire a property management company or have a neighbour, friend or family member check and maintain the property).

Board up Standards

The following is considered the minimum standard for board up which provides security against unauthorized entry to vacant or unoccupied dwellings:

1. Board-up of all windows and doorways is done with the following materials:

- a. Plywood sheets of minimum 5/8 inches thickness
- b. Studs minimum 2-feet x 4-feet
- c. 3-inch screws capable of drilling into metal
- d. 3-inch nails

2. Method of board-up is done as follows:

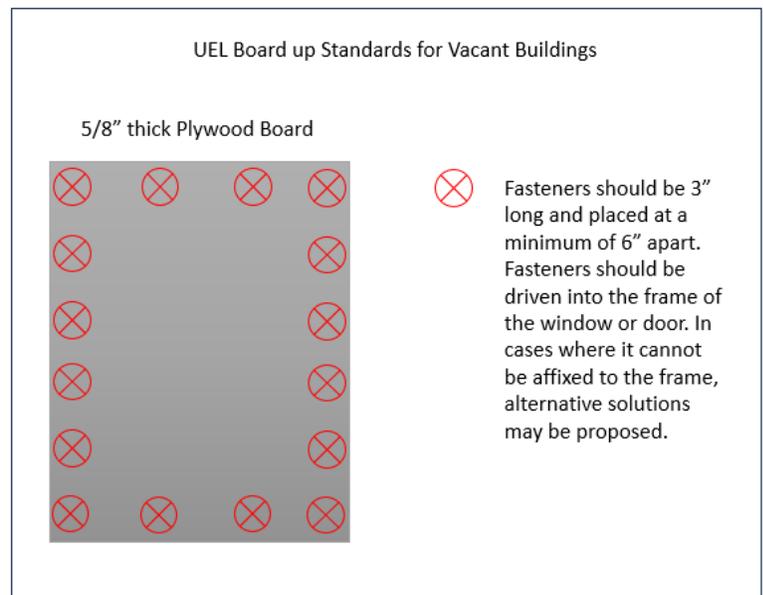
- a. Using the above said required materials fastened with alternating Phillips head Robertson head 3-inch screws intermingled with 3-inch nails to board up structure.
- b. Using the above said required materials fastened with 3-inch metal use screws to drill into metal (door and window frames for example).

c. Fasteners are spaced not more than 6 inches apart.

d. All windows and doors within easy access from ground, decks or roofs are boarded.

e. All broken windows and doors open to the elements are boarded.

3. All broken glass on the premises, on UEL property or sidewalk, which has fallen from the building, is swept up and removed to a safe area.



Building owners can install the boards themselves, or they can employ a company that specializes in this service in accordance with the above noted standards.

Swimming pools must also be secured to prevent deaths or injury from drowning and falls, as per Schedule 9 Section A of the [LUB](#). Draining a pool does not preclude an owner or authorized agent from following Schedule 9 Section A of the [LUB](#).

Despite the steps taken above and if, in the opinion of the Manager, a property continues to be a fire and/or public health and safety risk, the owner or authorized agent will be responsible to erect a construction fence of six (6) feet around the property line (but not on public land, i.e., on sidewalks or boulevards).

Removing Hazards

When a building is vacant and boarded up or no longer intended for occupancy:

1. Natural gas supply to the property is to be disconnected. The building owner or representative is to notify and request the utility company to disconnect the natural gas service as soon as practicable;
2. Unless the building has an active monitored intruder alarm system, or an active monitored fire alarm system (note that local smoke alarm devices are not part of a fire alarm system), the electrical service to the property is to be disconnected. The building owner or authorized agent is to notify and request the utility company to disconnect the electrical service as soon as practicable;
3. Unless the property has an automated irrigation system, or a water connection is required for other systems, the water service to the property is to be discontinued. The building owner or authorized agent is to notify and request the UEL to shut off the water as soon as possible to prevent leaks and flooding; and
4. The owner or authorized agent must also remove hazardous or potentially hazardous material that are not materially connected (i.e., walls, floors, pipes) to the dwelling. Materials may include, but are not limited to chemicals, paints, propellants, etc.

Accessory buildings and other occupiable spaces

The standards shall also be applied to accessory buildings and other occupiable spaces, including but not limited to sheds, garages (attached or detached), green houses, cabanas and pool houses, among others.

Enforcement: The UEL may consider a range of enforcement approaches, depending on the extent of non-compliance with this policy and/or Section 12 of the [LUB](#). Enforcement options for building permit non-compliance may include:

- Liens on land title;
 - Provincial Court Orders to remove structures and/or issue fines;
 - Withholding of occupancy permits and/or business licences;
 - Working with partner agencies including Technical Safety BC and the Vancouver Fire Rescue Services to impose fines;
 - Architectural Institute of BC/Engineer & Geoscientists of BC disciplinary committees; and
 - Suspension of waste collection services to the offending property.
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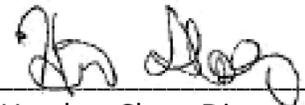
If the property owner and/or authorized agent has a permit application (development or building permit) in process during a time in which a dwelling they own and/or have agency over contravenes this policy, the Manager may suspend or put the permit on hold or halt the review of permit applications until the conditions of the above policy are met.

Limitations: This information is provided for clarification purposes only and does not substitute any applicable Bylaws or Provincial/Federal codes or legislation.

For More Information: More information may be obtained at www.universityendowmentlands.gov.bc.ca



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