

British Columbia

## Thousands sign online petition to prevent dozens of trees from being cut down on UBC campus

Resident Su Wang, who started the petition, says trees should be preserved for ecological value

[Chad Pawson](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 14, 2022 6:45 AM PST | Last Updated: February 14, 2022



A stand of western red cedars on the UBC campus near Carey Hall. A petition organizer says as many as 35 trees, some estimated to be around 100 years old, have been earmarked for removal as part of a new development at the site. (Su Wang)

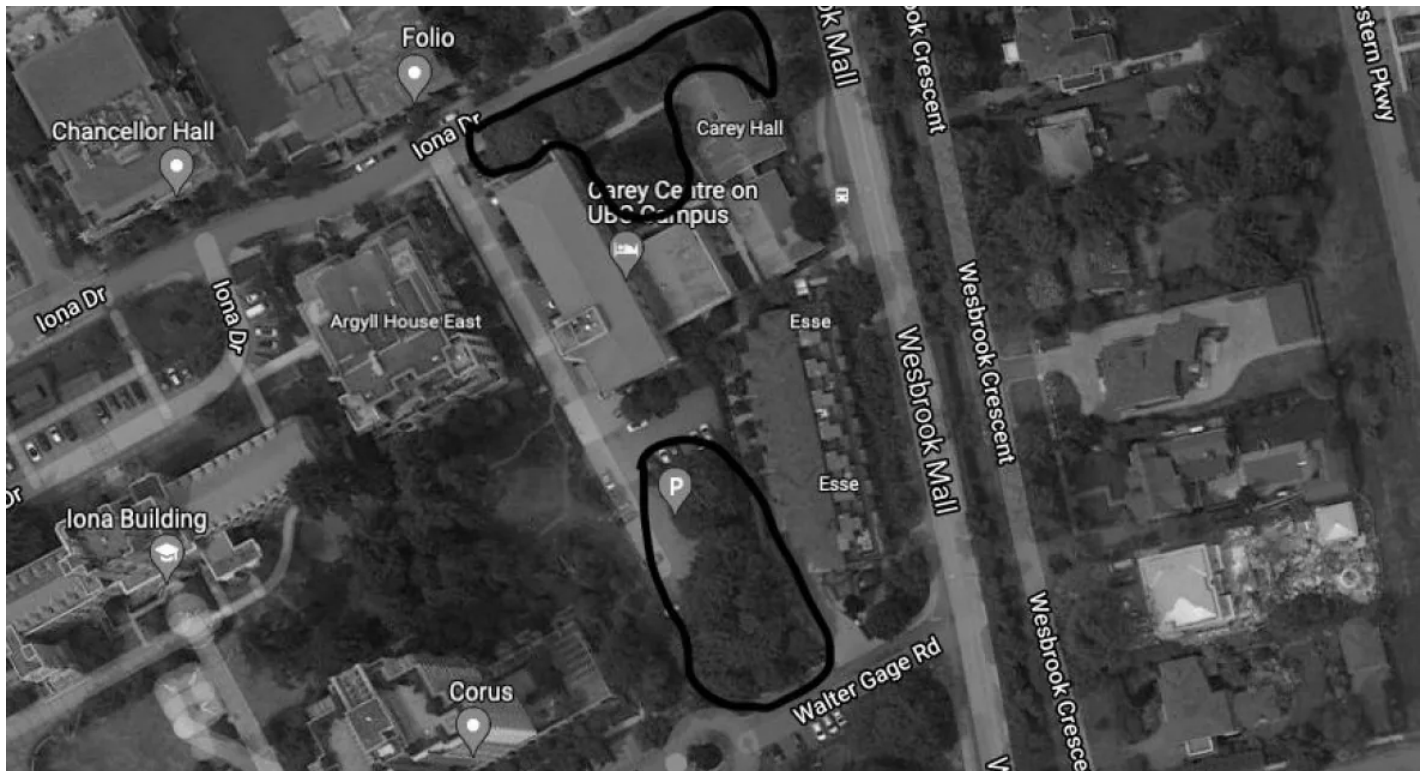


More than 18,000 people have signed an online petition to try to prevent dozens of trees on UBC's campus from being cut down to clear the way for two new buildings.

Former student Su Wang, who has lived at UBC since 2012, began the petition after seeing development billboards off Chancellor Boulevard along Westbrook Mall and Iona Drive on grounds used by an independent theological college at the university.

She says more than 30 trees are slated to be cut as part of the development, including mature western red cedars.

"The thought of them going down is extremely distressing and heartbreaking," said Wang, 27.



The areas circled in black are the trees slated to be removed so that two new buildings can be built on campus. (Google Maps)

She argues that the trees' ecological value, including their ability to provide shade and habitat and to help keep cities cooler, is more important than new buildings on campus.

"When they remove these mature trees and replace them with seedlings we're really not recognizing the role of mature trees in this ecosystem and we're not recognizing how

irreplaceable these trees are," Wang said.

## New development

UBC said in a statement that the theological college has applied to expand its facilities at Carey Hall with a new six-storey building on Walter Gage Road and the redevelopment of its existing administrative building on Wesbrook Boulevard with a four-storey building.

The new six-storey building will replace an existing parking lot and result in the removal of "some mature trees," UBC said.

It said plans for the new buildings aligns with the school's goal of increasing housing on campus, and also that a tree replacement policy exists.

"Staff have heard from the community that there is concern regarding loss of mature trees," said the statement. "When there are trees on a development site that cannot be retained, UBC has a one-for-one tree replacement policy — this policy applies to the Carey Hall site."

- **More UBC trees get axed to make way for market housing**

The school says 32 trees will need to be replaced and it will plant 68 total in conjunction with the proposed project.

It also said that a mature forested area adjacent to the development would be protected, along with other nearby mature cedars.

## Trees estimated to be 100 years old

UBC said as part of the development process, work is still being done to assess the health and age of the trees that would be removed.

Wang has not had an arborist independently assess the trees she wants saved, but she believes some of the cedars and maples, which she measured, are around 100 years old.

As part of the development application, Surrey's Goode Arboriculture Consulting prepared a 29-page report assessing more than 60 trees at the site, their size and health, but not age. The

report advises whether the trees, which include Japanese maples, Pacific dogwoods, magnolias, ash and pear trees should be retained or removed as part of the project.

Tree experts CBC News spoke with said there are several Norway maple trees on the site, which are used as street trees to create natural screens but are considered by some experts to be an invasive species. They often freely seed themselves in unwanted places.

Of the majority of trees the Goode report recommended for removal, 19, are maple trees.



A couple of the Western red cedars near Carey Hall on the UBC campus. (Su Wang)

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## Virtual open house

The development is still under review and public consultation is ongoing, said the school. This coming week there will be [a virtual open house](#) for anyone to attend and provide feedback about the project.

Wang said she, along with other people who signed the petition, will attend.

UBC has faced criticism in the past about development projects where building location, size and design have been perceived to be prioritized over the preservation of mature trees. Some of the projects have also been criticized for not adequately engaging local stakeholders.

- **[Metro Vancouver creates tool kit for cities to retain, grow tree canopies](#)**

UBC is [part of an unincorporated area](#) that is a member of the regional district of Metro Vancouver.

In June 2021, Metro Vancouver published a guide for its 21 municipalities to manage urban forests, which are proven to make cities more livable, more healthy and cooler.

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