



SHARON TIFFIN/OAK BAY NEWS

The 77-year-old Oak Bay Beach Hotel will be razed to make way for a new resort complex.

# Oak Bay's "finest" chosen to advise on hotel's future

**David Lennam**  
Oak Bay News

**OAK BAY** • Kevin Walker followed through on his promise to include a panel of local residents in his redevelopment plans for the Oak Bay Beach Hotel & Marine Resort.

Walker, the property owner, released the names of 14 of "Oak Bay's finest citizens" who form a community-based advisory committee providing input to his redevelopment project team of architects and engineers.

"We are moving with measured steps and I have to say the level of enthusiasm we're sensing on the street is very high. Residents of Oak Bay are very charged up about this process."

Walker said he's been more than impressed by not only the number of people who wanted to get involved, but the credentials they bring with them — from Heritage Foundation members to tourism officials to the son of the man who built the original Oak Bay Beach Hotel.

"I was amazed at the quality of individual wanting to be involved in this," said Walker, noting that the workshop concept he's introduced has been embraced with zeal.

That said, Walker is hesitant about rushing the process.

"I want to tread gently and carefully and proceed very slowly."

The advisory group consists of representatives from the community nominated by residents and special-interest groups who have a stake in the outcome of the redevelopment. The call for nominees went out June 30.

The advisory group participants are: Dr. Hinda Avery, Dorothy Bishop, Dr. Benwick Bradley, Bruce Cline, Marion Cumming, John Crowe, Jim Gauer, Dr. Christopher Hodgkinson, Henry McCandless, Jim Merston (the builder's son), Margaret Palmer, Michael Prescott, Patricia Wilson and Tricia Timmermans.

Walker made plain his desire to raze the existing, 77-year-old waterfront hotel and build anew.

His plans call for something in the nature of a 100-room, state-of-the-art resort with spa, more green space, underground parking and the sort of amenities found

in high-end boutique hotels.

The citizens' group started their work Monday, taking part in a design workshop to create a concept for the future development of the Beach Drive site.

Walker hopes to deliver a "concept" for redevelopment by tomorrow — one that reflect the comments and concerns of residents and neighbours.

Tricia Timmermans is one of those neighbours. She lives next door to the hotel in a co-op condominium complex.

"As a neighbour, I wanted to stay informed so that I would have some sort of idea how my particular property might be affected," she said.

"I'm also interested to see the area maintains a hotel. I don't want condominiums there, that's for sure and most people in this building don't want condominiums either."

Timmermans said most of the residents of her building would like to see reduced hotel traffic on narrow Satellite Street.

"Anything that would reduce traffic on Satellite Street would be great."

Marion Cumming is excited to be part of the group. A member of the Oak Bay Heritage Foundation, Cumming has long

been a vocal advocate of heritage preservation.

"I hear a number of people who have been familiar with the Oak Bay Beach Hotel over the decades who would love to see that sort of ambiance maintained. They're in love with the character and that neo-Tudor... although they agree there's a degree of modernization needed."

Cumming suggested that Walker might be interested in incorporating a First Nations theme in the new building — "something of the Coast-Salish culture in a sympathetic way."

Cumming explained the land the hotel sits on was home to the Coast-Salish people for centuries.

She said she's particularly pleased that Walker is being up-front with his plans.

"I'm just so impressed that the hotel has divulged the facts and figures surrounding its reasoning. Generally, developers try to keep that thing very confidential."

A public unveiling of the initial design for a new hotel will take place Thursday, July 29, 7 p.m. at the hotel.

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— Tricia Timmermans