

Comments on Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report for “Student Housing West” Project

by Alec and Claudia Webster, UCSC Trustees

Dear Ms. Klaus:

This letter comments on the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (“RDEIR”) for the “Student Housing West” Project (“SHW”), which now has most of its acreage on the east side of campus, in the East Meadow. As suggested to the administration immediately upon learning of this project, for clarity, it more properly should now be referred to as SHW/E. Even the naming of this project has been designed to confuse, rather than inform, the concerned public.

We specifically will address the **Child Care Facility**, which is proposed for the East Meadow or “Hagar” site. We request our comments be part of the official record.

While parts of the Revised Draft EIR (“RDEIR”) have been changed in some way as compared to the original DEIR, the childcare facility is one of the exceptions. It is minimally described as 13,500 sq. ft., up to 140 kids, up to 30 staff — just as it was in the original DEIR. Given that it has been 6 months since release of the original DEIR, and that the childcare facility was the part of the entire project for which there was the least information and the least design work done, one would have thought it would be the part of the project that would have most benefitted from the extra 6 months to resolve issues and do design work. **But that has not happened.** The design work and the information provided is as minimal in the revised DEIR as it was in the original.

The same issues are unresolved, such as a facility right next to a busy road and a busy intersection. We are told by administrative representatives that “studies show traffic noise helps infants sleep.” We have been told that “wouldn't it be lovely to drive onto campus and see children playing?” There is no discussion of the siting area's increased traffic congestion specific to child care. There is no discussion of the effect on infants and young children of the emissions from cars, buses and trucks that often idle at the stop lights. And all of this is not to even mention the potential for a traffic accident with young children of all ages in large numbers in close proximity to busy traffic and confused efforts of busy parents to park and drop children off.

There is no mention whatsoever of the need in today's society for security! Architects and planners all over our country, and indeed all over the world, are taking special care and measures to plan for SECURITY and SAFETY. Instead, our planners have announced that we should consider it lovely our children are on display as we “drive onto campus”. This RDEIR IS TOTALLY INADEQUATE. If this facility is being designed without the most current safety measures, it is poorly designed. Because there is NO discussion of this at all in the RDEIR, it is, as a document, inadequate.

In one notable respect the information provided about the facility is worse than it was in the original: The site plans give at least a basic footprint for the childcare facility. It’s just an outline in both Draft EIRs, but at least in the original Draft EIR it was a consistent outline. In the

revised Draft EIR it is shown as **two** different outlines in two different illustrations, so that it is not even clear what the outline of the building would be. Compare the childcare facility in figure 3.0-6a to the one in figure 4.11-1 — not at all the same. The childcare facility is shown to be quite close to the road. But in "renderings" provided by campus, the entire facility and housing is shown in the distance, camouflaged by full grown trees. A campus information official offered to create a computer generated artificial rendering of the site to show a more accurate view. But, when I pointed out that the CHILDCARE facility hadn't been designed yet, she noted that would make an accurate computer-generated visualization impossible. The public is being poorly deceived by the renderings that have been presented. One cannot represent what has not been designed. Again, the RDEIR is totally and completely inadequate. On one hand we are told how important the child care facility is, but on the other it is plain to see it has ranked last in regards to planning and design

Additionally, not only is the new Revised Draft EIR lacking in the same pertinent information as before, it has clouded the information further by providing conflicting information.

It is difficult to respond to information that is missing and even more difficult to respond to conflicting information. Once again, this DEIR is totally inadequate and shows lack of planning and even proof-reading.

Information given by the administration and representatives of project developer, Capstone, further confuse the project. Issues discussed in public meetings that are not included in the Revised DEIR include the eventual size of the Child Care Facility. Information in the RDEIR say the Facility is designed to provide for 140 children and 30 staff members. But when questioned about the inadequacies of the planned enrollment (140 doesn't even meet current needs), the public is told "it is being designed to be enlarged." (YIMBY meeting 2018) There is NO discussion of this planned enlargement in the DEIR. In comparison with other high-quality childcare centers, the planned enrollment projected to be 140 is completely outsized, while at the same time fails to provide childcare for CURRENT needs. If the center is designed to be enlarged NOW, that information MUST be included.

Centralization of a massive center does NOT provide new parents access to their infants (many of whom will be nursing). What sense does it make to have the required "Lactation Rooms" for new mothers all over campus, when their children will be in a distant singular location (especially with the Coastal Campus, Scott's Valley, and Silicon Valley campuses)?

The administration's own *Child Care Work Group*, Summer 2017, recommends a "necklace" or satellite model. This concept has been completely unexplored by this administration. Why has Vice Chancellor Latham charged and tasked the workgroup only to ignore its comprehensive plan? Better child care satellite sites would include: Life Lab campus, The Seymour Center, the VARF building, the HAAN Art Center, the (currently being renovated) Science and Engineering Library, the Barn Theatre, The Cooperage etc. Instead we are told the only option is to pour money into an extremely large singular building co-located with Family Student Housing. The administration has presented this as a 50's style car-centric development. Meanwhile, current facilities are purposely being allowed to disintegrate with no standardized maintenance. This is not planning. This is not leadership. This is irresponsible stewardship of public funds.

There is currently on campus a excellent well-run childcare that tends to the needs of the student parents. Why should this quality, working Child Care be dismantled in favor of a corporate, for-profit massive, institutional facility that, if the truth were told in this RDEIR, is already being planned for expansion? Why are an outstanding childcare director, and teachers, being laid off only to hire potentially sub-standard workers?

Since the provider, Bright Horizons, was chosen before the *Child Care Work Group 2017 Study*, the administration had to go about systematically ignoring its own study. Student parents will lose their state subsidies with this new corporate child care. Bright Horizons, the ONLY provider ever to be presented to the student parents, will not release information regarding fees. They would not even provide sample fees from other institutions. Bright Horizons also has NO requirements for teachers other than they "hope they will be nice people." They also said they "hoped" the director would have a BA. (April 2018 meeting) This is unacceptable for a number of reasons, most notably: is this is a University of California campus, where the mission is to educate, not to babysit! Neither the original, nor the RDEIR give any information as to how this facility will interface and inform the mission of the campus. To repeat: this is not a child care center in the middle of just any community. This is ON the campus of one of the world's best Universities! It should not be designed in mediocrity, but in excellence! Building this facility requires previous LRDP's be negated and the Design Advisory Board be ignored.

The dismantling of the current child care presents another concern. As the fees for Bright Horizon corporate childcare will increase for students (and again students will lose state subsidies), the child care may well only be affordable to the wealthy and/or most probably to the faculty and staff. Therefore, you have created a situation whereby students are not able to take advantage of the very childcare that has been "designed" to be co-located with Family Student Housing. Additionally, you will have the MAJORITY of people driving onto campus to drop their children in a child care facility.

This is the result of the rapidly changing P3 project that was originally designed for the West side of campus. The RDEIR reflects the resulting knee-jerk reaction in its inadequate thought and planning.

There are alternatives that have been presented to this administration in public meetings, in a written Child Care Work Group Report, in meetings with the Chancellor, the CP/EVC, VC Latham, architects, and many others.

This RDEIR has NOT been designed to adequately inform the public to enable comment, rather, like the entirety of this project, it has been designed to **prevent** comment and input. This RDEIR is again UNACCEPTABLE.

Indeed, while the desire is supposedly to provide childcare for the students, faculty and staff, the design (or lack thereof) would seem to suggest another purpose. Hasty, closeted last ditch efforts cannot mask the results of lack of leadership and thoughtful long range planning.

There is no way that this RDEIR can be considered adequate, let alone comprehensive. It is a document that represents not careful planning, but a hasty effort to confuse and push poor design on our community. The University of California can and should do better.

We look forward to your response to my concern.

Sincerely (in unofficial capacity),

Alec & Claudia Webster

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