

To: Director of Campus Planning, UC Santa Cruz

From: Michael Warren
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STATEMENT RE: THE “STUDENT HOUSING WEST” PROJECT

Having attended the public meeting concerning the Revised EIR on October 23, 2018, I wish to record my opposition to the proposed construction of a residential development and child-care center on the East Meadow.

Earlier this year I attended three meetings at which representatives of the campus gave presentations about the (still misleadingly named) “Student Housing West” project. On one occasion (May 3) when the Draft EIR was presented, I spoke in opposition; since submissions concerning the Draft EIR are not automatically included within the responses to the Revised EIR, I shall reproduce those remarks before making further comments relating to the revised document.

STATEMENT AT THE DRAFT EIR MEETING MAY 3, 2018

My name is Michael Warren. I live at 218 Escalona Drive in Santa Cruz, the junction of Escalona and Storey Street, where for the last 46 years the traffic from the campus has poured past my house. But I am NOT here to complain about possible increased traffic from the proposed development on campus. As an emeritus professor—I joined the university fifty years ago this July—and I had the great good fortune and happiness to teach for thirty-three years on the campus—I support the campus’ efforts to provide more housing for students.

However, I wish to protest the planned building of a housing project and child-care center on a fifteen-acre site on the East Meadow.

Three things strike me as important to state.

First, to build on the East Meadow is the destruction of a place of singular beauty, a feature of our university that (I suspect) is unique not just in the UC system but perhaps in the universities of the nation, a landscape that has been treated for the last fifty years as worthy of stewardship rather than exploitation and that has sustained the spirits of many, something whose preservation has been emblematic of what the campus stands for.

Secondly, the EIR proposes constructive alternatives to building on the meadow. The many thousands who have signed petitions implicitly advocate reconsideration of the

campus' rapid and devastating decision. I use the word "devastating" specifically, not as hyperbole. I would urge prompt reconsideration and change of location.

Thirdly, the circumstances by which the East Meadow development has come into being are distinctly strange and should be an embarrassment to the campus administration. I know I am not the only person who did not learn of it until recently; it would take an exceedingly acute watchdog to have spotted the transfer of part of the Student Housing West project to the East Meadow last fall. What continues to appall me now is that this project is still deceptively named Student Housing West when construction in the East Meadow is its most obviously controversial feature.

To me, persisting with that project title unmodified reeks of dishonesty, of suppression of facts; it is simply not true. To talk of Student Housing West is a misrepresentation of the reality of the project. The motto of Cowell College, of which I remain a fellow, is The Pursuit of Truth in the Company of Friends. If a student had made such a misrepresentation of facts in one of my classes, I would have regarded them as having failed to live up to the values of the college and the campus. I believe that this East Meadow project is unworthy of the campus, a betrayal of its values.

REMARKS CONCERNING THE REVISED EIR

At the public meeting on Tuesday October 23 concerning the Revised EIR, I listened first to the staff presentation and then to the responses of members of the community.

From the presentation and the responses it was apparent that the Revised EIR is an inadequate document; that in the process of revision little, if any, serious attention was given to alternatives to building on the meadow; and that serious issues remain that should have been addressed in an EIR. Further comments that I have since read have provided further evidence to confirm the inadequacy of the document.

It is apparent to me that the campus administration had in the spring and has now in the fall no intention of giving serious thought to any alternative to building on the meadow. Here are three observations that I wish to record.

First, the "necessity" of moving part of the development from the west campus to the East Meadow was occasioned by the discovery of the territory of the red-legged frog on the proposed Heller site and the consequent need to protect the frog's environment. Observations by others whose reports will be submitted to you indicate that no similar thorough survey or census of the flora and fauna of the East Meadow was conducted; I would refer you to the report of Joanne Brown dated October 22, 2018. The same systematic attention to the nature of the Heller site should have been given to the Hagar site.

Secondly, in the hearings concerning the Draft EIR many spoke critically of the lack of attention and apparent ignoring of the potential problems in building on the karst

landscape of the East Meadow. The materials submitted by the East Meadow Action Committee make clear how superficial, and consequently irresponsible, has been the exploration of this issue in the Revised EIR.

Thirdly, in response to what appeared to many to be the blithely optimistic visual representations of the appearance of the projected buildings on the East Meadow and their impact on the visual experience, in May there were requests that story poles be placed so that some better physical approximation of the planned structures might be achieved for all to see. The campus has declined to conduct this simple public experiment. It is hard to imagine an innocent reason for not making such an inexpensive and genuinely informative demonstration.

These three omissions (and probably many others that will be cited) from the activities that led to the preparation of the Revised EIR indicate a delinquency on the part of the campus in fulfilling its responsibilities. In my earlier statement I focused on the idea of developing the East Meadow as a breach of trust in relation to the campus' tradition of stewardship of the land over the last fifty plus years. Now I find I must conclude by stating that this Revised EIR document again manifests a dishonesty in conducting the affairs of the campus that is both embarrassing and reprehensible.

The campus officials who are responsible for the Revised EIR have not reviewed the issues concerning the East Meadow with the thoroughness displayed in the review of the Heller site. One can only suspect that they have no desire to reveal the true state of affairs: presumably, driven by haste in response to a genuine crisis in campus housing, they have sought to produce a document that justifies their desired ends rather than making a detailed and accurate assessment of the issues. Alternatively, of course, those who have conducted these proceedings can still plead incompetence.

In my fifty-first year as a loyal member of the UCSC community I find it painful now to see shabby work presented to justify a decision that will transform the nature of the university, its public image and reputation, and its physical identity negatively and irrevocably. I repeat what I said at the conclusion of my public statement on May 3: I believe that this East Meadow project is unworthy of the campus, a betrayal of its values.