

May 10, 2018

CHANCELLOR GEORGE BLUMENTHAL
CAMPUS PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR MARLENE TROMP

Re: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Report for “Student Housing West”

Dear Chancellor Blumenthal and CP/EVP Tromp:

We sincerely appreciate you meeting with several of the signatories to this letter concerning the proposed Student Housing West and East development, and we renew the May 1 suggestion by three Regents *emeriti* that consideration of the DEIR briefly be deferred pending prompt consultation by the campus with a small group of qualified volunteers. In accordance with the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) process, and also noting your request that this letter should be submitted for the DEIR review, we submit the following comments on the DEIR.

The signatories of this letter have long dedication to UC Santa Cruz, variously as faculty, administrative officers, alumni volunteers, Regents of the University of California, and Presidents, Chairpersons, and/or Trustees and/or Councilors of the UC Santa Cruz Foundation and UC Santa Cruz Alumni Council. However, at this time, this letter expresses our individual opinions only, and we do not purport to speak on behalf of our current or former employers, or University support organizations with which we may be affiliated. We write candidly out of deep loyalty as friends of UC Santa Cruz and you personally.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the outset, let's state where we agree: We acknowledge the need for and support the building of 3,000 beds of housing on campus. We also understand the need for prompt and cost-effective building projects, and the simplicity of the current proposal in terms of staging/phasing and an easy move of Family Student Housing (FSH) and the adjacent childcare center into the proposed East Meadow development.

However, the current proposal contains three avoidable elements which would cause material and irreversible damage to UC Santa Cruz: (a) the East Meadow development would forever destroy the iconic main entryway face of the campus, in exchange for a very small benefit—a mere 148 beds of FSH and childcare; (b) the West Meadow plan is way too large in number of beds, and the height and massing of buildings, and would create an off-putting West Wall for those approaching, or looking out from, the campus; and (c) the West Meadow plan for 2,852 beds would be a free-standing small town in fundamental conflict with the college system.

We note with concern that the campus Design Advisory Board of outside professionals, though advisory only, voted unanimously against the project *as presently proposed*.

Fortunately, there are much better ways forward, and the University's own Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) contains the blueprint for those better ways in any of (1) Alternative 4 (a 47% smaller West Meadow development (1,500 beds), combined with the North Remote site); (2) a 16% smaller West Meadow site (2,400 beds) combined with the East Campus Infill (ECI); or (3) a combination of West Meadow, North Remote and ECI. Each of these alternatives would yield 3,000 beds but preserve the East Meadow and the cherished look and feel of the campus.

We should not underestimate the value of the stunning East Meadow and West Meadow faces of the campus in attracting students, faculty, staff and donations, and their impact on the overall ambience and sense of identity of the UC Santa Cruz community. Once gone, those iconic “signature” faces of campus would be gone forever, and we should not give them up for short-term expedience. For sure we should not give up the stunning East Meadow for 148 beds of prefabricated housing and a small childcare center on an inefficient, low-density 15 acre site, which could be situated elsewhere, nor build a massive 2,852 bed, high-rise, stand-alone small town in the West Meadow. (See DEIR pp. 2.0-1-2, 3.0-19, 5.0-5.)

DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVES AND PROS AND CONS:

Advantages Of Alternative 4:

Alternative 4, which includes use of the North Remote site, is discussed at DEIR pp. 5.0-31-41.

1. Use of the North Remote site would allow 3,000 beds for the total project (half at the North Remote site and half at the West Meadow site) without invading the East Meadow, and without undue over-massing of buildings in the West Meadow.
2. This would preserve the iconic East Meadow view and ambience entirely, and mitigate the size of West Meadow buildings to a 47% smaller scale (1,500 beds vs. 2,852 beds) that would not create an unseemly West Wall, nor overshadow Porter, Carson and Oakes Colleges.
3. The North Remote site is within second growth redwoods, which can both accommodate and complement high rise housing—just as the larger buildings at Colleges Nine and Ten are tastefully and harmoniously sited within similar redwood forest.
4. ***North Remote is currently planned for student housing in the LRDP (DEIR Figure 5.0-3)*** and has a favorable write-up in the DEIR, with no apparent downsides. Indeed, North Remote was the original site for College Eight (including a schematic design by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes), and from time to time has been discussed as a site for College Eleven.
5. Further, the North Remote student housing could be laid out on a footprint to allow for the flexibility of either (a) later adding an academic component and making it Colleges Eleven and/or Twelve, and/or (b) later adding more student housing, if needed.
6. A dining hall for North Remote would be a win-win for both student housing and Science Hill. If the dining hall were located at the part of the site closest to the Engineering buildings, it

would be readily accessible to the engineering faculty and students (a two minute walk) and all of Science Hill (a five minute walk). Science Hill desperately needs food service, and this dining hall could get heavy lunchtime patronage, and thus be a very economically viable facility.

Advantages Of East Campus Infill Alternative:

The ECI alternative is mentioned at DEIR p. 5.0-11 in a cursory and dismissive fashion without serious analysis, history or context, and in a manner that does not satisfy EIR standards.

7. ***The ECI project already was approved by the Regents in 2009*** and would allow 594 beds, thus allowing a 3,000 beds total project without invading the East Meadow.
8. ECI would provide four times more housing than the low density East Meadow, thus partially mitigating (by 446 beds or 16%) the over-massing of large buildings in the West Meadow.
9. As with North Remote, ***the ECI site is already in the campus map and LRDP as student housing***. See DEIR p. 5.0-11 and Figure 5.0-3. Moreover, the ECI project previously was fully planned, and ***approved by the Regents*** (budget approved March 2009 and design approved July 2009), which means the project EIR was certified. The ECI building plans were either complete or nearly complete when the project was cancelled in late summer 2009 due to apprehension about potentially falling enrollment and shrinking housing demand due to the Great Recession.
10. The DEIR at p. 5.0-11 inaccurately states that “[a]lthough the student housing project was approved, the project was not constructed due to a very high per bed cost of construction on a site underlain by karst as well as determination made by the Campus that locating unaffiliated housing in an area surrounded by housing affiliated with colleges was not desirable.” While the ECI costs per bed were anticipated to be relatively high, due to the Great Recession’s negative impact on the construction industry, bids for the initial five subcontracts came in 19% ***below*** the estimate. We understand the project was cancelled due to apprehension about potentially falling campus enrollment and housing demand due to the Great Recession. Further, given the present DEIR proposal to build 3,000 beds of housing not affiliated with colleges, the last clause of the above-quoted DEIR language is not persuasive and runs at cross-purposes with the whole DEIR.

Advantages Of Combined West Meadow, North Remote And ECI Sites:

11. The DEIR does not discuss at all the potential of an advantageous hybrid of the West Meadow, North Remote, and ECI sites. The 50-50 allocation of 1,500 beds to each of the West Meadow and North Remote sites in Alternative 4 could vary depending on details of the site, building locations, and build-around phasing issues. Use of all of West Meadow, North Remote and ECI could allow the further advantages of:

- A. Greater flexibility at West Meadow and North Remote regarding land and site details;
- B. Greater flexibility regarding the staging of construction, especially with FSH and childcare;

- C. Building North Remote to allow later inclusion of more housing or academic space; and
- D. Overall lower density, dispersed housing in the spirit of UC Santa Cruz.

Advantages Common To Both North Remote And East Campus Infill Sites:

12. Avoidance of Controversy: Because North Remote and ECI are both already planned and appropriate for student housing, they are not likely to be controversial. The current proposal for the heavily massed West Meadow probably will be controversial; the East Meadow already is controversial, and it could give rise to litigation. Controversy often creates delay, so either Alternative 4 or ECI could wind up being faster and less expensive than the current proposal.

13. Better Locations For Students: The North Remote site is a much better location for students than either West Meadow or East Meadow because it is immediately adjacent to Science Hill and very near the campus center. The ECI site also is much closer to the campus center, and the same walking distance as Crown/Merrill from the rest of campus. Either site would facilitate more pedestrian use and less shuttle bus use, and thus less shuttle bus traffic on campus.

14. No Hagar Traffic Impact, And Less Heller Traffic Impact: The North Remote and ECI sites would diminish the additional transportation/bus service on Heller needed to accommodate the more remote West Meadow development, and eliminate altogether the East Meadow site and its attendant shuttle buses and resident and childcare traffic impact on Hagar.

The Staging And Siting For Family Student Housing And Childcare Can Be Accommodated:

15. Alternative 4 and ECI each would be more complicated for the sequencing and staging for temporary FSH and childcare, while the existing FSH and childcare were demolished and rebuilt in the West Meadow first phase. This need might be met in several ways, including potentially:

A. Build now the planned Phase II of the Rancho University Terrace housing (40 houses with approximately 140 beds), and use it temporarily for FSH. Supplement as necessary with leased housing in Santa Cruz and/or some limited temporary use of mobile homes for FSH or childcare.

B. North Remote could be built with 148 beds of 74 apartments suitable for FSH to relocate into temporarily while the old FSH and childcare was demolished and rebuilt in a first stage on the West Meadow site. Such apartments could later be used by undergraduates, and would not have to be a perfect configuration for permanent FSH, but simply suitable for 1-2 years of use.

C. Large commons areas at North Remote could be built first and used as temporary childcare. Again, the configuration would not have to be perfect for childcare (and it isn't now), but simply suitable for 1-2 years of temporary use before becoming permanent commons of housing areas.

D. Childcare and/or part of FSH temporarily could be relocated to mobile home structures.

E. There may be better build-around scenarios not listed here. The point is that build-around projects are commonplace—such as closely spaced projects in downtown San Francisco, or keeping SFO fully open while Terminals 1 and 2 were expanded and renovated, or keeping the gigantic LAX airport fully functional while it was expanded and renovated before the Los Angeles Olympics—all vastly more complex building tasks than we are talking about here. The work-arounds can and should be done as a relatively small proportional part of the whole project cost to achieve a much better overall result and preserve the character of the campus.

16. Childcare Permanent Location: Under either of the scenarios we recommend, the permanent new and expanded childcare would remain near the West Entrance, readily accessible to commuting staff. FSH also would remain as part of the new West Meadow project, co-located with childcare. Most of the users of childcare are students rather than commuting staff, so the co-location of FSH and childcare would remain the same as it is now. But even as to commuting staff, the West Entrance location of childcare is readily accessible.

CONCLUSION:

For all these reasons, we believe that Alternatives 4 and ECI, and/or West Meadow and North Remote and ECI, are superior to the current proposal. If it were a binary choice, we recommend Alternative 4 over ECI because (a) Alternative 4 would allow a smaller and more proportional West Meadow project, and (b) the larger and simpler North Remote buildings (tastefully sited in harmonious second growth redwoods) also could be more cost-effective than the smaller ECI buildings. ECI always could be left for additional housing when needed as a stand-alone project. However, even at somewhat smaller scale than the North Remote site, compared to the current proposal ECI would supply 594 beds and thus be four times larger but on less land, appropriately more dense, tastefully sited, and superior to the very low density and view-destroying East Meadow proposal. As noted above, however, the best alternative (not addressed by the DEIR at all) might, upon careful study, include a combination of West Meadow, North Remote and ECI.

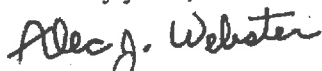
While our analysis stands independently of this point, the recommended alternatives also would have a significant collateral benefit for the College System that makes UC Santa Cruz distinct and desirable. The presently proposed West Meadow development, *by itself*, would be substantially larger than most elite American small colleges (*e.g.*, Amherst, Williams, Bowdoin, Swarthmore, Middlebury, etc.), and it literally would be a stand-alone small town within UC Santa Cruz. This would be antithetical to the core UC Santa Cruz value of small residential college units, with an academic component, situated to fit within and retain the natural beauty of the surroundings. The College System is facing enough challenges without exacerbating them with the overly large and stand-alone West Meadow development as presently proposed.

Those of us with history at UC all know about the dreadfully bad, blocky buildings put up at UC Santa Barbara or Berkeley's Boalt Hall in the 1950's and 60's era, to name but two prominent examples. We should not repeat those mistakes with an overly large West Wall in the West Meadow. And with even greater zeal we should avoid the permanent spoliation of the East Meadow, with only a tiny amount of low density housing in return. The injury to the University could be immediate in terms of potential alumni and donor rebellion, fall-off in donations, and

controversy perhaps causing delay of a much-needed student housing project. But for sure that injury would be forever if we destroyed the iconic East Meadow face of the campus—all for 148 beds of prefabricated housing, and the short term convenience of easier staging of construction.

We strongly recommend that the University withdraw the present DEIR, reexamine Alternative 4 and the ECI, make one or both work, and avoid rushing into a mistake we would regret forever.

Sincerely yours,



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