

## March 2024 Update

Dear Friends of the Meadow,

It's been a long time since our last update. That's because not much has changed. We expect the University to break ground in the meadow soon, but when is unclear.

EMAC recently published a guest editorial in the Sentinel (attached below), reviewing the sorry history that has brought us to this point and anticipating the Administration's claim it was all for the benefit of UCSC students. The fight to protect the meadow has been a long one, so we've also put together a timeline which appears on our website.

A few days ago, after a long silence, Chancellor Larive said publicly that construction in the East Meadow would begin in the Spring or Summer of 2024. Is that likely?

Since the Fall of 2017, every major decision the UCSC administration has made about the Student Housing West project has come with the claim it would result in the project moving forward quickly. Yet every time, the actual result has been further delay. What is said to be the fastest way forward repeatedly turns out to be the slowest.

No construction can happen until a revenue bond to finance it is successfully sold, and the standard practice in the market is that no bond can be sold if there is litigation pending against the project. At present, there is a lawsuit pending against this project (by a group other than EMAC). Is the Chancellor hoping the litigation will be resolved quickly? Or is there a plan to move ahead while it is still pending?

Last March, the UCSC administration went back to the Regents for the *third* approval of the East Meadow portion of the project, claiming that the new plan "allows the project to move forward without further delay from ongoing litigation." They never actually explained what the plan was, but the Regents quickly approved. In response, a new round of litigation was promptly filed. The UCSC administration had informed the Regents that the East Meadow portion would move to construction "in late 2023 or early 2024." That has clearly not happened.

Was the moving-ahead-despite-ongoing-litigation plan a bluff? Is the bond market reluctant? Are there yet other snags that are holding things up and not being disclosed? No explanations are forthcoming.

What we do know, in retrospect, is that the key mistake was the decision, in the Fall of 2017, to depart from the original plan of building this entire project on the west side of campus. Instead, the administration decided to put 5% of the proposed housing in a sprawl across the East Meadow, hoping to save six months and be finished by mid-2022, as planned. Instead, the decision has already cost six years of delay. Throughout those six years the administration had multiple opportunities to get this project moving forward by going back to their first choice -- all on the west side,

none in the East Meadow. They always chose to stay with their second choice, and the result was always further delay.

What about the latest claim that construction will begin by Summer? Who knows? But what we do know is that whenever they move ahead with destruction/construction in the East Meadow, it will do nothing to alleviate the very real shortage of on-campus housing. To be specific, the East Meadow will be torn up to provide 140 units of family student housing, and those 140 units are planned to replace 200 units of similar housing, for a net loss of 60 units.

And all the talk of roughly 3000 beds of new housing? That's still supposed to be built on the west side of campus, but at this point it's just a plan. When the administration went back to the Regents a year ago they did not tell them how much more that project would cost students nor did they ask the Regents for their approval. So as of today, the 3000 beds are not cleared for construction. The administration can't ask for approval without acknowledging its large additional cost, to be carried by future students—all a result of the insistence on tearing up the East Meadow.

So, will the destruction/construction in the East Meadow commence this Spring or Summer? We don't know. And we're not sure anyone else does.

**East Meadow Action Committee (EMAC)**



After the recent rains, 3/24.