

To: Chancellor Larive

July 31, 2020

cc: Campus Provost and EVC Kletzer

We are long-time friends and supporters of UC Santa Cruz. We admire and are grateful beneficiaries of its achievements, believe in its even greater potential, and appreciate your good work to realize that potential. As long-time friends of the campus, we have been concerned about the Student Housing West project, a project that began with such promise and then, with the addition of the East Meadow component, turned onto what has been a more divisive path. Several of us wrote to and met with former Chancellor Blumenthal in April and May of 2018, regarding our concerns, and we and a larger group write you now with shared hope for a brighter future both for the project and for UC Santa Cruz overall.

When the Student Housing West project was first proposed, no new student housing buildings had been constructed on campus in a dozen years, years in which enrollment continued to increase. In the course of this project's planning, it was increasingly clear that on-campus housing supply was well-behind the fast-rising curve of on-campus housing demand. Under the pressure of that fact, the previous administration initially proposed the largest housing project ever attempted at UCSC, to be built entirely on the west side of campus. Then midway through the planning of that project the previous administration changed its direction by shifting 5% of that proposed housing to inefficiently occupy 57% of the total project land as pre-fabricated wood structures in the East Meadow, structures that could be built very quickly and could therefore speed up the entire project.

All that was in response to a rising sense of urgency driven by an ever-increasing gap between housing supply and housing demand. All decisions were driven by an effort to save time, to compress schedule, to play the fastest possible catch-up.

We now live in a very different world. You are now hard at work on the extremely difficult task of planning how the campus can best deal with the consequences of a pandemic that no one can predict with certainty and that tragically is now getting worse by the day. One consequence of that pandemic is that you, unlike your predecessor, need not be rushed into a housing decision driven by the need for speed. The pandemic has depressed and will for some time continue to depress the demand for on-campus housing, and quite likely will deny the project financing for some considerable time to come. The biggest near- and mid-term housing problem is empty beds, not excessive demand.

You therefore now have a longer period of time in which to make sure this project is done right, and done in a way that unifies the UC Santa Cruz community. You have the opportunity to decide based on what is best for the campus in all respects, not simply based on what is fastest.

There are alternatives. It is not that difficult to consider them and to choose from among them. People of goodwill are eager to help. Getting it right is actually the best way to get it done, ultimately with less delay than has been the case to date and with greater certainty.

The timing now allows more fulsome consideration of alternatives that may include:

- Go back to the project the administration originally wanted to build, entirely on the west side. It was dropped because it was estimated that devising a Habitat Conservation Plan with the US Fish and Wildlife Service would add 6 months to the project schedule. You now have considerably more than 6 months to spare, so this really would cost nothing on the timeline.
- Utilize the East Campus Infill site or the North Remote Parking site (close by Science Hill) or both, possibly as either temporary (to assist with phasing of the overall project) or permanent Family Student Housing. Both sites are marked for student housing in the 2020 LRDP, so are considered feasible and even desirable locations for student housing. And either or both could be developed in conjunction with new housing on the west side.
- If it is considered preferable simply to find a better location for Family Student Housing, there are a number of alternatives that, unlike the proposed East Meadow location, would not put Family Student Housing and the childcare facility immediately adjacent to the most heavily trafficked intersection on campus. These locations include sites just to the west and just to the east of the Historic District and just to the southwest of the Farm.

We are not advocating for any particular alternative, and we assume there are alternatives beyond those listed here that would be worthy of your consideration. Our point is simply that there are good alternatives, and you have the time interval in which to consider them and determine which is in the best interests of the campus.

For the good of the campus, we urge you to make it clear that you will not take this project back to the Regents for further action until you have a project that best serves the broad interests of the UC Santa Cruz community and can therefore win the broad support of that community. This project did enjoy broad support before it veered into the East Meadow, and can enjoy that again. We would be happy to be part of that broad support.

We believe that the person who can make all that happen is you, and we believe you now have the time interval in which to reset this project on a path to success. We stand ready to help in that endeavor.

Wishing you all the best in these difficult times,

*The University affiliations of the following signatories are for descriptive purposes only and do not purport to reflect the views of any organization.*

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