

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: April 19, 2021
Reviewed by: NA

SUBJECT: Study Session on University of California, Berkeley Draft Long-Range Development Plan and Proposed Graduate Student Housing Project at the northeast corner of Jackson Street and Monroe Avenue in University Village

REPORT BY: Jeff Bond, Community Development Director

SUMMARY

The study session is intended to provide the City Council an introduction to campus planning initiatives on the UC Berkeley campus and proposed student housing development at Albany's University Village.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That Council provide direction on the following:

1. position on proposed Long-Range Development Plan (LRDP) as it relates to the City of Albany
2. position on proposed Albany Village Graduate Student Housing Project
3. establishment of an ad hoc subcommittee of the City Council for on-going engagement with City staff and UC staff related to the UC Berkeley decision-making process on the LRDP and Graduate Student Housing Project
4. direct the Transportation Commission to review mobility related aspects of the LRDP and Graduate Student Housing Project

BACKGROUND

UC Berkeley is currently undertaking two parallel planning processes. For the main Berkeley campus and environs, a Long-Range Development Plan (LRDP) is being prepared. Both the current LRDP, approved in 2005, and the proposed LRDP, do not encompass Albany. Central campus development in itself, however, does have implications for the City of Albany. The current draft of the LRPD is attached (Attachment 1).

In addition to the LRDP, the campus is undertaking a planning and approval process for a new graduate student housing project in University Village at the northeast corner of Jackson Street and Monroe Avenue. University Village is a 77-acre site in the southwest portion of the City, owned by the University of California. Much of the site has been developed for housing for student families, senior housing, and retail uses. Land uses are governed by a 2004 Master

Plan that was prepared and approved by the University. Pursuant to the California Constitution, UC facilities that are constructed for educational purposes, including student housing, are not subject to city government regulation.

Although the City does not have land use control over UC facilities, the City's current General Plan, adopted in 2016, has a series of policies and implementing actions associated with University Village.

- Policy LU-4.5: University Village - Recognize University of California (UC) Village as an integral part of the Albany community. Land use decisions on the University's property should be compatible with nearby uses and provide collateral benefits to Albany residents and businesses wherever feasible. Important natural features at University Village, such as Village Creek, Codornices Creek, and significant tree stands, should be protected.
- Policy LU-4.6: Gill Tract - Support future uses of the Gill Tract (San Pablo Avenue at Buchanan Street) that are consistent with the University's academic objectives while also responding to the community's desire to retain a substantial portion of the property for open space, urban agriculture, and recreational uses.
- Policy LU-4.7: UC Financial Support - Work with the University of California to obtain financial and/or in-kind support for City infrastructure, services, and capital facilities that are used by residents of University Village. This could include support for public safety, public streets, parks and open spaces, sanitary and storm sewers, and similar services and facilities.
- Policy LU-4.8: Coordinated Park Planning - Coordinate planning for the park and open space lands owned by the City, the University of California and the Albany School District to improve public access, increase use, and improve traffic safety for students, pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles.
- Action LU-4.A: University Village Master Plan Update - Encourage the University to update its Master Plan for University Village to reflect the completion of the family student housing redevelopment project, the approval of the retail and senior housing project along San Pablo Avenue, and the remaining opportunities for infill development and open space protection on the balance of the site.
- Action LU-4.B: University Village Community Facilities - Explore opportunities for new community facilities on the University Village site, consistent with the University Village Master Plan.
- Policy PROS-5.2: University Village - Work with the University of California to maintain baseball/ softball fields, a recreation center for Village residents, a community garden, and other amenities which benefit University Village residents and Albany as a whole. Promote access to the parks and athletic fields within University Village by Albany residents and sports teams, and encourage the University to maintain a "no net loss" policy for the recreational open space acreage

within the University Village property. In accordance with the UC Village Master Plan, space should be provided for at least one youth soccer and youth softball field, and two youth baseball fields, on the UC Village property. In addition, outdoor recreation should be provided near the UC Village Community Center.

- Policy PROS-5.3: Gill Tract - Coordinate with the University of California for mutually beneficial uses of the Gill Tract. Such plans should protect and enhance Village Creek and other natural environmental features, including significant trees.

In addition to the 2016 General Plan, the City's Housing Element, approved in 2015, contains the following policies relevant to UC Village:

- Policy 1.4 UC Village - Recognize the newly reconstructed University of California Village as an important housing resource for graduate students and their families. Work with the University of California to sustain a supply of student housing in this location.
- Policy 2.13 Additional Housing Sites - Continue to explore possibilities for housing on sites not specifically listed in the Housing Element site inventory. This includes land within UC Village, consistent with the UC Village Master Plan, as well as other public properties not committed to park, open space, or public facility use, where consistent with adopted master plans for these sites.

DISCUSSION

The overall objective of the study session is to provide the City Council an opportunity to provide direction to staff on positions related to the draft LRDP and the proposed Albany Graduate Student Housing Project. Among other things, the City Council may choose to form an ad hoc subcommittee to directly engage with campus representatives on areas of opportunity and concern. In addition, the City Council may wish to provide direction on designating an advisory body to evaluate University Village development plans in greater detail as they become available.

Long-Range Development Plan

Overall, the campus is planning for an increase in student enrollment from 39,708 to 48,200 by the year 2036. Employee population is planned to increase from 15,421 to 19,000. To accommodate this growth, more than 8 million square feet of construction is planned, including 11,731 student housing beds. The net impact on the region, after taking into consideration the new student beds, is an increase in population of 8,173. Albany's share of the population increase is estimated at 327, which is a major share of Albany future growth. Although the LRDP does not address Albany projects, it does provide guidance for projects to be located in Berkeley. The City Council may wish to request that the policies, programs, and mitigation measures that are to be applied to projects in Berkeley also be applied to future projects in Albany.

Pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the campus is seeking input on a draft environmental impact report. Based on direction from the City Council, City staff will prepare a comment letter to the campus. In addition to City Council suggestions, staff will request technical corrections related to the impact on growth in Albany, and seek assurance that requirements imposed on projects in Berkeley also will apply to projects in Albany, particularly as it relates to reduction in vehicle miles traveled and reduction in greenhouse gases. The draft environmental impact report is available at <https://lrdp.berkeley.edu/environmental-review>.

It is important to note that the City of Albany's study session is not intended to be a formal part of the review of the draft environmental impact report, and thus members of the public interested in making comments on the draft environmental impact report should direct comments to the UC Berkeley Physical & Environmental Planning office at planning@berkeley.edu.

Albany Village Graduate Student Housing Project

Within UC Village, UC Berkeley has proposed a housing project for single graduate students that would be up to six stories in height, 400 units, 825 beds, and 240 parking spaces at the northeast corner of Jackson and Monroe. Also included in the project is the construction of replacement facilities that will be displaced by the proposed housing, including support facilities for the College of Natural Resources growing grounds and a new Village community facility building.

Pursuant to the CEQA, the campus has determined that an Addendum to the 2004 University Village Master Plan Environmental Impact Report is the appropriate level of environmental review for the proposed new housing project. The Addendum was published on March 18, 2021 and is attached (Attachment 2).

The proposed housing project will be implemented and operated by American Campus Communities (ACC), which is a publicly traded real estate investment trust, in association with a non-profit housing partner, pursuant to the terms of a long-term ground lease. This type of partnership is an increasingly common form of implementation of student housing at higher education institutions.

The proposed student housing project will have implications across a variety of subject areas of interest to the City. The key subjects include:

- **Mobility** – It is hoped that the proposed project can accommodate the future implementation of transportation improvements that are of shared interest of both the City and the campus. These include: (a) Creating a low-traffic stress bicycle route between the project and the Buchanan Street bikeway to the north, to the Dartmouth Street Bicycle Boulevard to the east, and to Berkeley's 9th Street Bicycle Boulevard to the south; (b) Modifying the Jackson-Monroe intersection to accommodate all modes of transportation; and (c) Maintain and enhance AC Transit facilities that are critical to their operational function. To assist City staff and campus planners in understanding the potential opportunities for

transportation-related improvements, city staff has asked our on-call transportation consultant to provide preliminary technical guidance on the proposed project.

- Creeks - As part of the project, new CNR and recreation facilities will be constructed near Village Creek and Codornices Creek. The ultimate design and placement of buildings can, if properly designed, improve public access, hydrology, ecological enhancement, and the Gill Tract Community Farm.
- Public Services – The City of Albany Fire Department will be the first responder to medical and fire calls initiated from the new project. The Fire Department is in consultation with the Campus Fire Marshal regarding the details of project compliance with applicable codes, operational requirements, and cost reimbursement. In addition, the Albany Police Department provides mutual aid to UCPD and often will be first on scene for high priority calls. Albany Police will coordinate with UCPD on operational requirements associated with the project.
- Housing – Increasing the availability of housing for graduate students is consistent with many of the policies contained in the City’s Housing Element portion of the General Plan. It is not yet clear, however, whether student housing will count towards the City’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) target for the next Housing Element, which is currently being prepared.

At this point in time, it appears that mobility and transit related elements are the most notable City issues associated with the proposed project. Therefore, staff recommends that the Transportation Commission be tasked as necessary to review project plans in detail as they become available and provide recommendations to the City Council. Other advisory bodies can be consulted, such as the Parks Recreation and Open Space Commission, as more information becomes available regarding potential implications on adjacent creeks.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATION

Section 5.7 of the LRDP draft environmental impact report provides a detailed description of University of California Sustainability Policies and the UC Berkeley Sustainability Plan goals. Of note, UC Berkeley Sustainability Plan goals include “By 2050 the campus will use only 100% clean, renewable energy” and “All new buildings and major modifications off of the main campus energy system will eliminate carbon emissions through no on-site fossil fuel combustion for space and water heating, laundry and cooking.”

SOCIAL EQUITY CONSIDERATION

The expansion of UC Berkeley’s enrollment capacity will lead to greater opportunities for historically underrepresented students to attend UC Berkeley. Associated with providing greater enrollment opportunity is the need to provide more student housing.

Within the City of Albany, University Village is one of the most culturally diverse neighborhoods. It is expected that an expansion of student housing would continue to attract

students with a variety of ethnic backgrounds, which in turn can contribute to the vibrancy of the City as a whole.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION

Currently anticipated expenditures associated with engaging in the planning at University Village can be accommodated within existing department budget appropriations and contract authorization authority.

Attachments

1. Draft Long-Range Development Plan
2. Addendum to the 2004 University Village Master Plan Environmental Impact Report