

East Meadow Update, 7/6/20

Dear Defender of UCSC's East Meadow,

Thank you for your long-standing support for saving the East Meadow. Without your efforts and the efforts of so many others, the bulldozers would have torn into the East Meadow nearly two years ago. As we explain below, the struggle has entered a new phase. We are writing to enlist you in an email campaign, and we're hoping for hundreds of emails to the UCSC administration. Time is of the essence.

The trial phase of our litigation is nearly complete. The judge has announced his verdict from the bench. He has found that the approval of the project by the UC Regents was improper due to UCSC withholding from the Regents information that was necessary for approval of the project. And he has directed the Regents to vacate that approval.

We had hoped for a more far-reaching judgment that would direct the university to redo its Environmental Impact Report, a time-consuming process. We were confident that if the university were required to provide a detailed and careful assessment of the project, in contrast to the hasty and careless decision that included the destruction of the East Meadow, this might produce an even more favorable outcome. We may continue to pursue this course in an appeal.

But for the moment, the movement to protect the meadow must shift from the legal arena to the arena of persuasion and politics. The new UCSC administration—Chancellor Cindy Larive and Executive Vice Chancellor Lori Kletzer—must decide very soon what request to make of the Regents:

-Approve the same project, with the missing information supplied.

-Ask for approval of a modified project that protects the East Meadow. At the original Regents meeting that resulted in the approval of the project, several powerful Regents supported this course.

The epidemic and recession, and drastic cuts for the University of California budget may provide a changed context, with significant opportunities. On university campuses across the country, construction projects—particularly of student residences—have been cancelled. There is no word about this possibility at the University of California, but current conditions could buy us time. The administration may now be encouraged to listen more attentively to the large numbers of donors and alumni who oppose development of the East Meadow. Many, over the course of our campaign, have notified the university that they will withhold donations until the plans have been scrapped.

Most of the key UCSC administrators who supported the East Meadow development plan when it was proposed by the Alabama-based developer have left the University. Chancellor Larive and Executive Vice Chancellor Kletzer were not present during the earlier debate and opposition to putting 5% of the larger Student Housing West project on the East Meadow. They need to know how much opposition there is to the East Meadow portion of the Student Housing West project. They need to know how this decision offends the fundamental values that the friends and supporters of UCSC hold dear.

They need to hear from you.

And it's easy. Send an email to: Chancellor Cynthia Larive (chancellor@ucsc.edu or clarive@ucsc.edu) and to Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor Lori Kletzer (cpevc@ucsc.edu or lkletzer@ucsc.edu).

Tell them that you want them to adopt an alternative version of the Student Housing West project, an alternative that does not build on the East Meadow. There are many alternatives to choose from. And please tell them why you feel that way. We're pasting below a list of arguments that others have made in case that helps with your argument. For more details, check out our website: <https://www.eastmeadowaction.org/>.

And please, don't wait. We can't predict when the administration might make this decision. It might be soon.

Thank you for your continued support for the Meadow and for the campus.

The East Meadow Action Committee

Some reasons for opposition.

We offer them as suggestions. Please craft your own letter choosing what works best, or write an original letter. The most effective letters will be concise and pointed.

- UCSC has a long tradition of environmental stewardship – it is one of our strengths when it comes to recruiting in areas such as field biology, environmental studies, biochemistry, marine biology, etc. It's a tradition that pairs well with our system of UCSC Natural Reserves. This tradition of stewardship and long-held design principles has given UCSC worldwide acclaim as one of the world's most beautiful universities. That a public institution should be so acclaimed is a testament to California's democratic and inclusionary promise. The East Meadow project belies that tradition and undermines that core strength.
- There are so many alternatives to choose from: alternatives that were included in the environmental review and many other alternatives as well. Any of them would be preferable to the one chosen.

- The Student Housing West project enjoyed broad support across the campus and the wider UCSC community, until the belated and secret decision to move part of the project from the west side of campus onto the East Meadow became known. The project has been mired in conflict and resistance ever since. The obvious solution is to modify the project to get it out of the East Meadow.
- Once it became known that part of this housing project would be built in the East Meadow, the project became a divisive and corrosive force that afflicted certain specific campus institutions, such as the Foundation Board of Trustees and the Alumni Council, but it also contributed to conflict, division and disillusionment more widely on campus. We need the project to be modified in a way that unifies rather than divides.
- Building on the East Meadow constitutes only 5% of the project, but it's causing 95% of the opposition to the entire project. The sensible thing to do is get that 5% out of the Meadow so that plans for student housing on campus can move forward.
- It is a bad idea to put housing for families with small children and a child-care facility immediately adjacent to the busiest intersection on campus.
- The East Meadow part of this project is an issue that has disillusioned and alienated alumni and other campus supporters, at a time when UCSC needs their support more than ever.
- We're all trying to raise the stature of UCSC. Putting a sprawl of pre-fab housing just inside the main entrance to the campus destroys one of the campus's most distinctive and iconic features.
- With the pandemic in full swing, we don't need housing as quickly as possible. But we will need housing in the long-term. We have the time to get it right, and getting it right would be the best way to get it built. Getting it right means getting it out of the East Meadow.