

# ALBANY CALIFORNIA

CITY OF ALBANY



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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April 2, 2021

UC Berkeley, Physical & Environmental Planning  
300 A&E Building  
Berkeley, CA 94720-1382

Subject: Albany Village Graduate Student Housing

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the EIR Addendum prepared for the Albany Village Graduate Student Housing Project. While the City Council has not taken a formal position on this project, I am comfortable expressing that the City of Albany is happy to be the host community for University Village and the Gill Tract, and look forward to collaborating with the campus as the plans develop further. In particular, this project has the opportunity to advance both City and Campus shared interests in affordable housing development, active transportation initiatives, and creek restoration. The City of Albany and the Campus have a history of successful collaboration, and we hope that we are able to continue this partnership with this project.

Although there are merits to the proposed project, we do have comments on the Addendum document that we believe the Campus should address.

## **Project Description**

The Addendum describes a potential project of up to six stories, 400 units, 825 beds, and 240 parking spaces at the northeast corner of Jackson and Monroe. The conceptual site plan provided in the project description, however, illustrates a smaller scale project. For example, the illustration shows 161 parking spaces instead of 240 spaces described in the narrative, and a floor plan that if built to six stories is more in the 300-to-350-unit range. Furthermore, the LRDP describes the UC Village project as 700 beds with 275 parking spaces.

Also included in the project description is the construction of new facilities to support the CNR growing grounds and a new Village community facility building to replace the “apparatus bay” used by the University Village recreation program. There is very little detail on the location, design, and access to these facilities.

The Fehr & Peers memo makes reference to a floor area ratio of 1.7, which implies a site area of approximately 5 acres. The location of the five acres, presumably including the CNR and Village recreation facilities, is not illustrated or described in the narrative.

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Overall, the gaps in the project description makes it difficult to comment in any substantive way. We request a more detailed project description with accompanying illustrative building and site plans so that the City can provide meaningful comments.

### **Transportation**

The City's hope is that the proposed project contributes to, or at the very least, does not hinder the future implementation of transportation improvements that achieve our shared interests. These include:

- Creating a low-traffic stress route between the project and the Buchanan Street bikeway to the north, and to the Dartmouth Street Bicycle Boulevard to the east;
- Modifying the Jackson-Monroe intersection to accommodate all modes of transportation;
- Maintain and enhance AC Transit facilities that are critical to their operational function;
- Improve bicycle facilities on Jackson Street so that it can be a functional link in the planned regional north-south bicycle route that will connect to the planned Adams Street two-way bikeway on the north, and Berkeley's 9th Street Bicycle Boulevard on the south; and
- Improve safety and active transportation access to Ocean View Elementary School.

We are heartened by the conclusion in the Addendum that adequate area will be provided to accommodate the future implementation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. There is not, however, enough information in the document to independently verify that conclusion. For example, we assume that the "right-of-way" line will be defined during the design of the project, and the building setback appropriately from that line.

### **Village Creek and Codornices Creek**

The project description states that the CNR and recreation facilities will be setback from a "required" creek buffer of 50 feet for Village Creek and 60 feet for Codornices Creek. The ultimate design and placement of buildings near these creeks require much more analysis than a simple linear setback. The basis for the 50 foot and 60 foot buffer has not been provided, nor is it referenced in the 2004 EIR. The details of placement of these buildings should be guided by public access, hydrology, ecological enhancement, and the Gill Tract Community Farm. We look forward to learning more details about the proposed new facilities.

### **Public Services**

We understand that the City of Albany Fire Department is in direct consultation with the Campus Fire Marshal regarding the details of project compliance with

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the California Fire Code. There are important life safety fire and emergency medical service issues to be resolved, but we will defer comment at this time.

**Utilities**

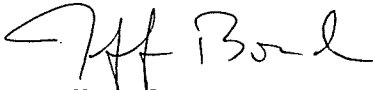
The Addendum does not incorporate any new analysis of infrastructure capacity, and concludes that there are no impacts on City infrastructure. If in the course of future design development, it is determined that modifications to City infrastructure are required, we assume the campus will be the lead agency for the analysis and implementation of those improvements.

**Mitigation Measures**

Finally, I will note that the addendum builds from a 17-year-old EIR. As one would expect, the state of the art for preparation of EIRs has improved over time, and the old mitigation measures are not as substantial as what might be prepared today. For example, the LRDP DEIR, which includes two new housing projects in Berkeley, includes more contemporary mitigation measures. We hope that the more rigorous measures continued in the LRDP DEIR will be implemented as part of this project.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at [jbond@albanyca.org](mailto:jbond@albanyca.org) or at 510-528-5769.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Bond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeff" and last name "Bond" clearly distinguishable.

Jeff Bond  
Community Development Director

cc: Nicole Almaguer, City Manager