UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

May 26, 2022
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Forward Motion

Taking one of the final steps required before breaking ground, UC Santa Barbara has received approval from the UC Board of Regents on business terms and environmental reviews for its planned staff and faculty housing project on Ocean Road. Once completed, the development will provide 540 units — 360 for rent and 180 for sale — at rates significantly below current market values.

“I am pleased to report that the Ocean Road workforce housing project has been approved by the Board of Regents,” said Chancellor Henry T. Yang. “Ocean Road will be transformative for our campus, as we integrate the much-needed housing with our neighboring community.”

The Ocean Road project was approved as part of UC Santa Barbara’s 2010 Long-Range Development Plan (LRDP), which includes the provision of workforce housing.

“The campus has been committed to this for a long time and has always kept attempting to move forward and finally we are succeeding,” said Joel Michaelsen, former chair of the Academic Senate and past interim executive chancellor who is leading the project team. “It has taken a long time to get here but we are finally on the verge of being able to start work on this. It’s real now.”

Pending remaining approvals, groundbreaking is anticipated begin in the summer of 2023, with the first for-sale units coming online in mid to late 2024. Plans include a mix of stacked townhomes and apartments in varying configurations and sizes. The building will include retail space on the ground floor.

According to Rosemary Peterson, executive director of the UCSB Community Housing Authority, the studies required to confirm adherence to the LRDP full environmental impact report have all been completed; designs have been confirmed to be in conformity with the campus pattern book; market comps have been studied on the sale side, and rental rates assessed on the rental side, to ensure that affordability goals will be met.

“We hope that by the time we finish construction and all 159 of our faculty homes at Ocean Walk are done, we’ll be rolling right into groundbreaking and construction on Ocean Road,” Peterson said. “This project also will be done in a multiphase approach, in blocks, to allow people to move in at a steady rate rather than waiting for it all to be completed. The initial phase will include both for sale homes on the south end of the property as well as for rent units.”

Employing the strategy for Ocean Road that proved successful for the Ocean Walk faculty housing development at North Campus, UC Santa Barbara will use third-party developers and property managers. By doing so, the university won’t pay out of pocket for design, construction, financing, or operations and maintenance. Such costs are largely assumed by the developers, who manage unit rentals and sales and then lease the space from the university.

“This approach has become widespread in higher education and it's going to become more of a factor going forward,” Michaelsen said.

Situated along the Ocean Road corridor that runs between Isla Vista and the campus, the 16-acre parcel extends from El Colegio Road to the coastline, parallel to an old windbreak once known as the “eucalyptus curtain.”

Sustainability benefits will be many on the project, which is being targeted for LEED Gold certification — if not platinum — according to Michaelsen. The units will be all electric and commuting impacts will be reduced once hundreds of UCSB faculty and staff are living where they work.

The development also is expected to be a major benefit on adjacent neighborhoods, potentially transforming both the demographics and the economy of Isla Vista.

“The other thing that has always been a major component of our thinking about this project is the effect it will have on Isla Vista,” Michaelsen noted. “With a larger year-round population, the mix of business out there could change, as could some of the older apartment complexes. It could be transformational not only for Isla Vista but

for the campus itself. There will be a significant permanent resident population on campus for the first time.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.