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UCSB Staff

New student housing projects at UCSB progressing on schedule

The UC Board of Regents has approved the scope, design and budget for UC Santa Barbara's East Campus Student Housing Project, which will provide 1,688 beds (412 replacement beds and 1,276 new beds) on the university's main campus. Along with the San Benito project that is already under construction, it is a key component of meeting UCSB's goal to add 3,500 new beds on campus as part of its 2010 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP).

The East Campus project plan will now advance to the California Coastal Commission, with construction anticipated to begin in the summer of 2026.

"After a redesign of the East Campus project to reduce the price tag without reducing the number of beds, we are on schedule with a goal to open this project in the fall of 2028," said Gene Lucas, co-chair of the project's building committee.

The East Campus project consists of one residence hall with singles and designed triples to replace Santa Rosa Residence Hall, and three new apartment buildings with two-bedroom, four-person efficiency apartments and studios. The surrounding residence halls will remain occupied during the construction period, and UCSB's Housing, Dining & Auxiliary Enterprises (HDAE) team is working with students, staff and other campus stakeholders to mitigate the challenges faced during construction.

Also included in the East Campus project is the renovation of Ortega Dining Commons to better serve the increased residential population in this area of campus. Temporary dining takeout facilities are scheduled to open during construction, so students will continue to have access to this popular dining option.

Meanwhile, work on the San Benito Student Housing Project began in spring 2025 and has continued at a steady pace, led by UCSB Design & Construction Services with project partners. With site demolition, utilities, slabs and foundations successfully completed, the project is moving full steam ahead into concrete pours for building structures.

In alignment with UC Santa Barbara's Decarbonization Policy, the San Benito project features an all-electric design, including solar thermal collectors for domestic hot water. Additionally, through the incorporation of bioretention basins and the restoration of existing wetlands, the project demonstrates a strong commitment to preserving and enhancing its neighboring protected habitats.

The San Benito project is progressing within the established budget. On-site staffing continues to increase, with a projected peak labor force of approximately 500–600 workers. Off-site fabrication of the exterior façade is underway, with the first panels scheduled to arrive in early January. Prefabricated exterior panels reduce the need for scaffolding, resulting in meaningful cost and schedule savings.

To date, San Benito is approximately 25% completed and is on schedule for an on-time, anticipated occupancy in the fall of 2027.

Following completion of both the San Benito and the East Campus Student Housing projects, the campus will fully meet the LRDP commitment for student beds and support the campus's established goal to provide housing for all first- and second-year students and an opportunity for a four-year residential experience that would support a vibrant campus community.

"These are the largest capital projects UC Santa Barbara has ever undertaken and both will be campus gems," said Renée Bahl, associate vice chancellor of Design, Facilities & Safety Services.

"We know that on-campus living helps students develop intellectually and socially while having easier access to campus resources, research opportunities and classrooms," added Willie Brown, associate vice chancellor for HDAE. "It's essential

that we plan thoughtfully and remain forward-thinking for the next generation of students who will call our campus home.”

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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.