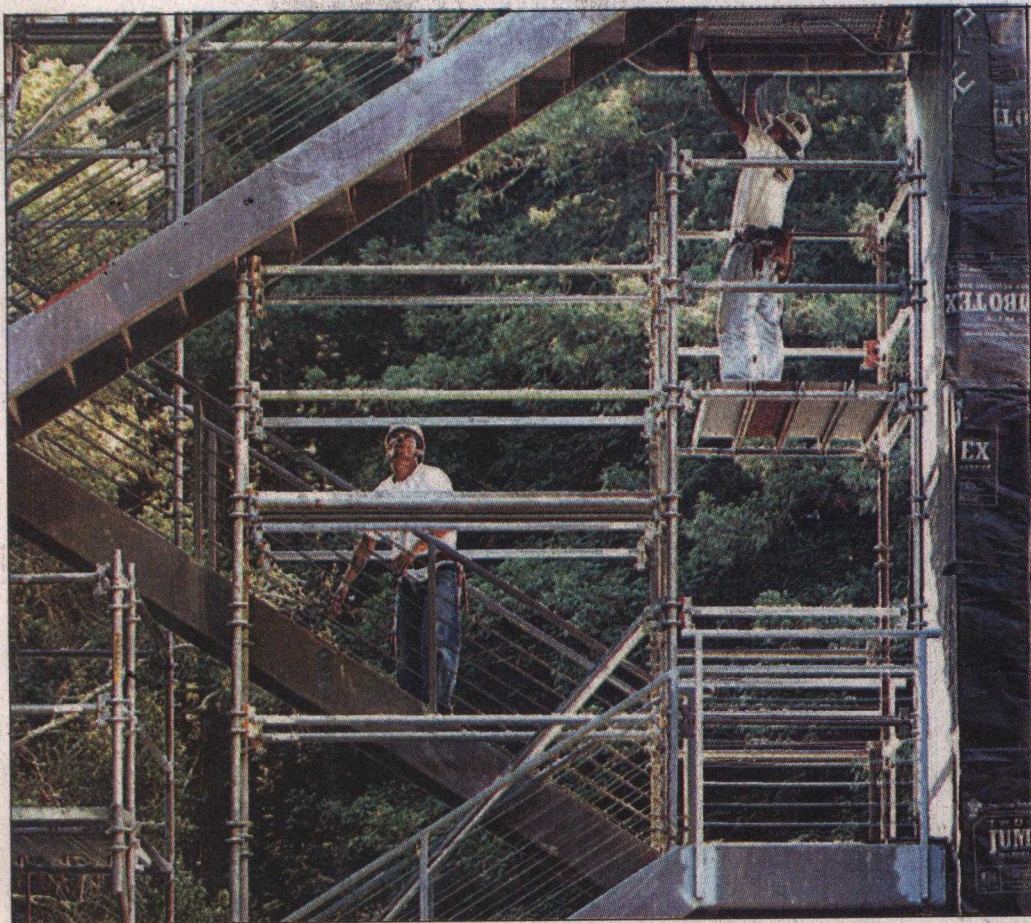


# UCSC growth plan taken to task



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

A staircase rises beside the redwoods on Science Hill at UC Santa Cruz.

## UCSC - Growth Critics say new report shirks key issues

By JONDI GUMZ  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — When UC Santa Cruz constructs new buildings over the next 15 years, will they be shorter than the surrounding redwoods?

If well levels drop or spring flows are reduced, will the campus cut back its consumption of groundwater?

Will historic buildings be preserved?

According to the new environmental impact report prepared for the campus' 2020 long-range development plan, the answer to these questions is: It depends.

It depends whether the decrease in well levels is "substantial," or whether the shorter building or preservation is "feasible," terms that are up to campus officials to decide.

The ambiguity surrounding how campus officials will address key issues, many affecting the greater community, is unusual, according to two local environmental attorneys familiar with land-use documents.

Critics say such uncertainty provides no relief to residents whose quality of life declines with the increase in traffic and student rentals in their neighborhoods.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

The new Physical Sciences building rises above Science Hill.

### More Inside

■ Support, not strife, in Sacramento may offer lessons for Santa Cruz.

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City leaders and campus officials have found themselves at odds for much of the past decade as the campus has grown from fewer than 10,000 students to nearly 15,000. UCSC now anticipates a need to double the size of the campus to accommodate 21,000 students.

Like the residents they represent, city leaders have opposed numerous growth-inducing developments, while the campus, as part of a statewide system, is mandated to meet increasing

demand for higher education yet does not have to comply with local land-use regulations.

In one part of UCSC's environmental report, it states that if a project requires demolition of a building in the Cowell Ranch Historic District, the campus will consider making changes or dropping the project. But if no such measures are feasible, the campus will hire a historian to document the building's existence.

The phrase, "to the extent feasible," along

### UC Santa Cruz: 40 and still growing UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Physical sciences building, \$60 million, due to finish in '06  
Humanities complex, \$29 million, to be completed March 2006

Police & fire department, \$7 million, due to finish in '06  
McHenry Library addition, \$74 million, due to finish in '09

#### ON THE DRAWING BOARD

Ranch View Terrace faculty-staff homes, to finish spring '07

Long Marine Lab science campus, awaiting Coastal Commission OK

Digital arts building, \$21 million, construction in '06-'07

Student health center expansion, \$10 million, design in '06

Silicon Valley Center master plan, \$20 million, start in '07

Biomedical lab, \$66 million, building to start Oct '08

Hazardous waste storage, \$9 million, design in '08

SOURCE: UC Santa Cruz Physical Planning and Construction

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# UCSC

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with “if feasible” and “wherever possible,” pop up again and again in the 50-page section describing how UCSC would mitigate, or reduce, the impact of growing as big as the plan proposes.

Asked for an explanation of those terms, campus planner John Barnes provided this e-mail response:

“The Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) define ‘feasible’ as meaning, ‘capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social and technological factors,’ Barnes explained. “Also, CEQA doesn’t require mitigations that would be infeasible to implement, so the word is used for clarity.”

## ‘Wiggle room’

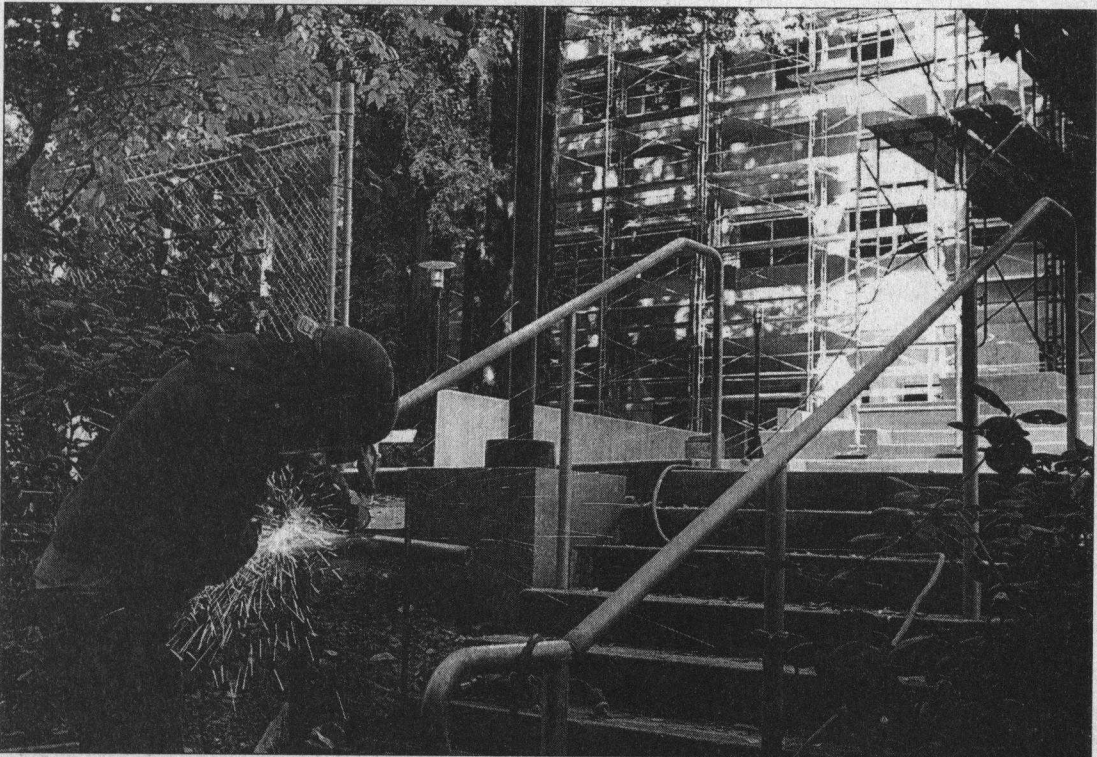
Two local attorneys who specialize in environmental law say use of the phrase “to the extent feasible” in an environmental impact report is unusual.

“Generally you see a mitigation measure, and that’s it,” said attorney William Parkin, who is representing local residents suing the campus to prevent sales of homes built on campus to non-campus employees.

“They’re creating wiggle room,” said attorney Jonathan Wittwer, Parkin’s partner. “It basically results in a nullity.”

He added, “You’re supposed to be telling the public this is what you’re going to do, but they’re not telling you.”

“What’s the basis of feasibility?” asked Parkin. “Who is going to determine that? They really should propose mitigation measures that are feasible, that are



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

A welder grinds a railing leading to the Physical Sciences building nearing completion on Science Hill at U.C. Santa Cruz.

attainable.”

## ‘No commitment’

UC consultants used phrases like “if feasible” and “best practices” when the environmental impact report was written for a long range plan at UC Berkeley.

“Good sentiment, no commitment,” said Sharon Hudson, a Berkeley resident active in a citizen group that contested the campus expansion in that city. “The university gets to define to itself what is substantial.”

For example, the UC Berkeley report said construction would not begin until 7 a.m. to mitigate noise but Hudson heard trucks coming through her neighborhood at 6 a.m.

As in Santa Cruz, the campus offered to pay its “fair share” of

mitigations without clearly specifying what that amount would be.

The campus proposes development and serves as the agency reviewing the development, a process Hudson views as flawed.

She wishes the cities with universities would lobby for legislation preventing a developer from acting as the review agency, the way the law allows now

“It’s like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse,” Hudson said.

Santa Cruz residents Don Stevens and John Aird, who formed a group to contest UCSC expansion, are disappointed with the recommendations of the environmental impact report.

They see no solutions presented for neighbors of the campus who will face more traffic or environmental degradation.

They say the argument made is that “UCSC growth is so important that Santa Cruz will just have to live with it.”

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## On the Net

Click on ‘UC Santa Cruz growth plan detailed’ at [www.santacruzsentinel.com](http://www.santacruzsentinel.com) for more coverage.

## Where to view EIR

It’s available at the Central branch of the Santa Cruz Public Library, 224 Church St., and on campus at the McHenry and Science & Engineering libraries. Public hearings are scheduled for Nov. 16 from 7-10 p.m. at the University Inn & Conference Center, 611 Ocean St., and Nov. 30 from 3-6 p.m. at the Stevenson College Events Center on campus.

Comments must be submitted by Dec. 19 at 5 p.m. to 2005 LRDP EIR Comment, UC Santa Cruz Physical Planning & Construction, 1156 High St. Barn G, Santa Cruz, CA 95064

## Predicting the impact

A report produced by UC Santa Cruz consultants analyzes the environmental impacts of the 2020 long-range development plan to expand enrollment from 15,000 to 21,000 students and double the amount of building space on the campus. The report rates environmental impacts.

More impacts are rated potentially significant rather than significant, and in many areas, the impact is described as less than significant, in which case no mitigation is required. This chart sums up some of the report’s conclusions.

### SIGNIFICANT

- Cumulative demand for water
- Expansion of heating plant
- Volume of traffic, cars, buses, bikes, pedestrians
- Congestion at off-campus intersections
- Erosion and pollutants in runoff
- Damage to archaeological resources
- Air quality
- Conflicts with air quality plan
- Short-term exposure to toxic air

### POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT

- Disturbing human remains
- Disturbing paleontological resources
- Damage to geologic resources
- Damage to historic buildings
- Parking demand exceeds capacity
- Congestion at campus intersections
- Deterioration of recreation facilities
- Flooding
- Landslides
- Collapse of karst caves
- Noise
- Scenic vistas near campus meadows
- Greater use of hazardous materials

- Risk from wildland fire
- Northern maritime chaparral habitat
- Coastal prairie habitat
- Wetlands and riparian habitat
- Ohlone tiger beetle
- Red-legged frog
- Golden eagle, other raptors
- Western burrowing owl
- Big-eared bat, other bats
- Movement of wildlife species

### LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT

- Scenic vistas to Monterey Bay
- Conversion of farmland to other use
- Cave habitat for spiders
- Cumulative impact on wildlife movement
- Cumulative impact on sensitive species
- Erosion due to tree removal
- Flooding due to stormwater runoff
- Lower groundwater table
- Incompatible land use
- Substantial population growth
- Demand for new schools
- Demand for police and fire services
- Demand for library facilities
- Demand for recreation facilities
- Expansion of storm drains
- Volume of solid waste