

# City Blasts UC Development Twist

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UCSC - Growth

In the face of Santa Cruz City charges that UCSC planning is a "travesty," University of California officials announced last week that they plan to throw out the campus's long-range development planning docu-

ment in favor of a new, less specific plan.

The Berkeley-based UC administration has demanded that UCSC planners take their controversial Long Range Development Plan (LRDP)

back to the drawing board to sketch in measures to avoid future lawsuits.

Perpetrators of two planning-related lawsuits against the university, however, charge that this delay will only open the campus to more suits.

City officials caught wind of this bombshell last week, when UCSC Chancellor Robert Stevens released a letter from UC system Vice President William Baker. In the letter Baker states that the university's present

LRDP is too specific, and suggests that some information should be removed from the planning document and put into the LRDP's companion environmental impact report or into a third, non-binding book of campus guidelines.

In a letter Stevens sent to city and campus officials along with Baker's letter, Stevens says the changes will make the plan "significantly less vulnerable to speculative litigation." Although neither Stevens nor Baker makes references to individual changes, observers describe the move as an attempt to thin out detailed portions of the plan so UCSC administrators can later alter projection figures without inviting challenges.

"The university is probably going to remove all references to housing, water and traffic mitigations," charged an irate Santa Cruz Vice Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt. "If they don't set these goals, [they feel] they can't be held to them," she speculated. Referring to the news as "just outrageous," Wormhoudt described a long range planning document as "about how you're going to mitigate university growth," and not "how to protect you from lawsuits." "Growth is growth," she said. "If you do a good plan that addresses the issues in a thoughtful way, you're not going to get sued."

Wormhoudt was one of the city's negotiating representatives for its lawsuit against the university's College Eight last fall. In this particularly hairy incident of town-gown friction, the city charged that UCSC housing construction was blazing ahead without the appropriate plans or environmental impact reports. The suit was settled in the eleventh hour, as university officials were about to delay new housing construction due to the suit.

To the chagrin of city officials, the university is still in the midst of new

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building mandated under its acting LRDP. Since this LRDP has yet to be officially adopted, in essence the university is operating under an LRDP devised in 1978. The 1978 plan calls for a maximum of 7,500 students; UCSC currently holds approximately 9,000.

"They are going to continue what they've been doing ever since we passed the 7,500 mark," elaborated UCSC student Aaron Peskin. Peskin was the university's student representative on its LRDP Planning Committee this year, and he filed an unsuccessful lawsuit in 1986, charging that housing construction at Kresge College was illegally proceeding without an environmental impact report. "All this means is that we are going to continue using a plan that's not a real plan.... Piecemeal planning is not

new news up there."

The university's most recent LRDP was released on a preliminary basis in February, 1987. For the year preceding its original release, community representatives, university officials and student representatives toiled over the environmental mitigations written into the plan. For 16 months, since February 1987, a committee has been making additions and suggestions for the plan and its companion EIR, both of which were scheduled for release last September.

After continual setbacks and irksome communications with councilmembers, the LRDP documents have never been released. At this point, university officials project the final draft and its EIR will come out next September, a delay that Wormhoudt said could pave the way for more suits.

"I think this engenders bad faith," added Santa Cruz Mayor John Laird. "If they're going to grow continuously without a plan... that's a legally vulnerable system."

Judging from reactions within the city, "bad faith" is exactly what will come of the university's latest move. City representatives including Wormhoudt participated in the year-long process leading up to the release of the university's now-outmoded LRDP, what Wormhoudt termed an act of good faith on the part of the former academic administration. But according to Wormhoudt and Supervisor Gary Patton, who also sat on the 1987 LRDP committee, neither has been asked to take part in this revision. "They seem to think... they can involve community members and go back and gut out community concerns," concluded Wormhoudt. ●