

Campus garage plan moves ahead

UCSC - growth
2-27-99
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SANTA CRUZ — UC Santa Cruz's first-ever parking structure is closer to reality now that a campus committee has given it preliminary approval. Planners also have fine-tuned the building, bumping it up from five stories to six.

Planners are halfway done with the design of the proposed 60-foot-high, reinforced-concrete building near McLaughlin and Heller drives. The \$9 million project would have 500 spaces. The structure would be slightly skinnier and taller than a previous version.

The project is a hot issue on the heavily wooded, relatively small UC campus that has never had a multi-story parking lot. Only UCSC and UC Riverside have avoided the UC trend of tall parking structures.

"It is a hot-button issue, all right," said John Wilkes, a senior lecturer in the science communication program. Wilkes, one of the campus's first 550 students when it opened in 1964, has seen dramatic growth at UCSC, which now has about 10,000 students.

But Wilkes said he is "very much in favor" of the parking structure. (Parking) causes me a lot of anguish."

Wilkes said part-time lecturers in his program drive to UCSC from all over the Bay Area, and find it very hard to find parking near their classes.

"It makes them quit their teaching jobs," he said.

"You have to remember the original plans for campus," he added. "The central part of the plan was it was going to be 30,000 students. It was on everybody's mind from the first day." Since those days, the "build-out" has been modified to 15,000 students.

A preliminary environmental-impact report on the project faces a public hearing next month. If regents give final approval, construction could begin in August, with a completion date of August 2000.

The total size would be 180,000 square feet, project manager Steve Ayraud said.

Project critics say it is overkill.

Several people who attended an October planning meeting said UCSC could avoid building the garage by encouraging more carpooling, building off-campus park-and-ride lots and improving bus service.

One speaker said UCSC could diminish the problem by building more on-campus housing, to cut down the number of commuters.

Chancellor M.R.C. Greenwood said the campus is already setting an example with alternative transportation.

"It's very clear we are actually behind on our long-range plan, in terms of the number of parking spaces for the student body," Greenwood said Friday.

The design also has been a subject of debate. While some critics describe the garage as a potential visual blight, planners say its vertical construction would decrease the amount of land that would be developed and number of redwoods removed.

Ayraud also said UCSC has taken extensive, and expensive, measures to reduce parking problems.

"We currently are using an attendant to basically park cars in the aisles of existing parking lots because there are not any spaces," he said. "It is very expensive and it doesn't really reduce traffic. It is just parking cars in the aisles."

A public hearing on the parking garage will be held at March 11 at 6 p.m. at Classroom Unit One at UCSC.