

University students, staff trash plan for parking garage

UCSC - 1990 - 1999
By DAN WHITE
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A proposed six-story parking garage on UC Santa Cruz's Science Hill took a two-hour verbal pounding during a Thursday night public hearing.

The meeting focused on a draft environmental-impact report for the 500-car garage, proposed for the intersection of Heller and McLaughlin drives.

The crowd of 100 was made up of about 30 students, along with staff, faculty and community members. About 20 people spoke, most of them against the project. Christine Aldecoa, who prepared the EIR, and project manager Steve Ayraud listened without comment as speaker after speaker slammed the garage.

"We are the students, we are the majority," said Christine Uhry, a resident advisor at UCSC's Stevenson College. "I will make sure if this parking structure goes into effect, there will be people opposing it."

The garage would be used mostly for faculty, staff and graduate students who work on Science Hill, but it also would have spaces for visitors. It would be built in an area that now includes a 63-space parking lot, although nearby trees also would need to be removed.

The most frequent criticism was that a parking garage would simply draw more cars to campus, exacerbating existing traffic problems. Others said the university did a poor job of publicizing the public hearing while flouting UCSC's environmentally friendly image.

"What does this say to our community,

'This is not the first time I've seen a project scheduled as a fait accompli.'

— De Clarke, campus staff member

to students at a leading institution with an apparently strong environmental vision?" asked undergraduate Philip Coffin, who rode his bike to the event. He said the garage would be a "gargantuan concrete monster" on a beautiful campus.

According to the draft EIR, the garage conforms to the university's long-range plan, which takes into account an expanding campus. With the removal of several existing lots to make way for the garage and other construction, there would be a net increase of 290 parking places.

The 178,000-square-foot reinforced concrete building has wide support among Science Hill staff and faculty members. As of 8 p.m., the three audience members who defended the proposal were science professors.

"Most of the people in Sinsheimer Labs feel there is a legitimate need for parking," said Barry Bowman, Biology Department chairman. He also said the campus has remained a good neighbor to Santa Cruz by scaling back its build-out plans.

Biology professor Daniel Costa said the building's "footprint" requires much less paved land than a large, ground-level

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el parking lot.

But the faculty did not present a united front. Associate professor Peter Scott said UCSC administrators need to redouble efforts to limit cars on campus.

The hearing was just one part of a 45-day

public-input process that ends April 5. The UC regents will ultimately decide whether to proceed with the project. If it goes ahead, construction could begin in August.

But many speakers said the process has left them in the dark.

"There are so few students here because most students don't even know the project exists," undergraduate Kenneth Barch said.

"This is not the first time I've seen a project scheduled as a fait accompli," said software engineer De Clarke, a UCSC staffer for 20 years.

Other speakers said the university needs to expand the input period and hold another public hearing, preferably in a Westside neighborhood that would be affected if the traffic volume increases.

No action was taken at the meeting.

Those who wish to submit written comments or questions regarding the parking structure's draft EIR should address them to Christine Aldecoa, Environmental Assessment Group, c/o Physical Planning and Construction, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.